



**European Council**  
The President

Brussels, 1 October 2021

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to invite you to our informal working dinner in Slovenia on 5 October and to the EU Western Balkans summit on the 6 October kindly hosted by Prime Minister Janša.

During our working dinner of the 5 October, I would like us to have a strategic discussion on the role of the Union on the international stage in light of recent developments in Afghanistan, the AUKUS security partnership and the evolution of our relations with China.

As we agreed in the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024, we need to pursue a strategic course of action and increase our capacity to act autonomously to safeguard our interests, uphold our values and way of life, and help shape the global future. This requires that the EU becomes more assertive and effective. Relations with strategic partners, including our transatlantic partners, and emerging powers have to be a key component of a robust foreign policy. Our objectives in these respects have not changed, but recent developments require us to reflect on how best to achieve them.

Having a common understanding of the global challenges and the way to address them remains key, whether it includes climate, energy, trade or security. As always, unity remains our most important asset.

On 6 October, the EU-Western Balkans Summit will be a timely opportunity to recall the strategic importance of the Western Balkans for the Union and to discuss our engagement with the region. We will focus on a priority agenda divided in two sessions.

In the first session, we are pleased to invite also the key stakeholders for the region – the Regional Cooperation Council, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank, to present their views. The focus will be on intensifying our engagement to foster the region's socio-economic recovery and sustainable development, and building back better after the pandemic on the basis of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans. The President of the European Parliament will also participate in this session.

In the second session, reserved to Leaders both from the EU and the Western Balkans, we will have the opportunity to address how to further deepen our political dialogue, security cooperation and strategic engagement, reaffirming our shared commitment to work towards strong, stable and united Europe. This would also be an important occasion to discuss how to ensure the stability of the region, strengthen regional cooperation and resolve regional conflicts.

I look forward to your presence and active contribution to these two events.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of fluid, overlapping loops and lines, characteristic of Charles Michel's signature.

Charles MICHEL