



EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT

Brussels, 5 February 2013

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It is my pleasure to invite you to the meeting of the European Council on 7 and 8 February 2013 in Brussels.

The main purpose of this meeting will be for us to agree on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). It is indeed becoming urgent for the MFF to be adopted if we want future EU policies and programmes to run smoothly and deliver their potential for growth and jobs as of next year. We should use the momentum that was brought into this difficult file by our constructive discussions in November last year. In the meantime my team and I have been in very close contact with all of you or your collaborators, and I am confident that with some adaptations the proposal I made on 22 November can constitute the basis for a deal in the European Council.

After our traditional meeting with the President of the European Parliament Thursday at 15h, I will therefore immediately begin our first working session by explaining what adjustments I believe are necessary for a good compromise to be made. I want to focus our discussion first on the overall amounts of expenditures and on the revenue side, so as to reach a common understanding on the overall framework. Your collaborators will simultaneously be briefed on the more technical details at a meeting convened by my Head of Cabinet starting at 15h. The European Council will continue its discussions over dinner, which will be starting early (at 18h30).

Coming to Friday, the next point on our agenda is trade: I see this very much as part of our comprehensive growth strategy. As was recognised in our Compact for Growth and Jobs, trade must be better used as an engine for growth and job creation. While we remain committed to further developing the multilateral trading system, our immediate focus has to be on our bilateral trade agenda, which offers the Union interesting prospects over the coming months. I will ask José Manuel Barroso to introduce the topic and to brief us on latest developments. Furthermore, two years after the start of the Arab Spring, it is a good moment for the European Council to take stock of events in our Southern Neighbourhood. In this context, I will say a word about the conclusions I drew from my recent trip to the region. Finally, we will look at the situation in Mali.

In the light of the work carried out by the General Affairs Council, as well as the discussions last week in the Foreign Affairs Council, we should be able to rapidly adopt our conclusions on Friday.

&salutations

H. VAN ROMPUY