Remarks by HRVP Federica Mogherini at the joint press conference with Susana Malcorra, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina

2016-04-14

Check against delivery!

It is really a pleasure for me to welcome here in Brussels my friend, Susana, Minister Malcorra more formally, for what is the third bilateral meeting we have had in a month. I was honoured to visit her and to meet with President Macri and other members of the Cabinet exactly one month ago in Buenos Aires to relaunch Argentinian-EU relations and start opening different fields of cooperation. We had then the occasion to have a bilateral meeting with President Macri and also President Tusk together with Susana and myself in Washington DC at the margins of the Nuclear Security Summit a couple of weeks ago and I invited Susana to visit me here in Brussels to continue working on the files we have decided to open for our common work. So let me go through the decisions we have taken and the fields on which cooperation will continue or will start as from tomorrow.

First of all, we have discussed the state of play of the EU-Mercosur exchange of offers. We have shared great satisfaction for the recent announcement that Commissioner Malmstrom and the Foreign Minister of Uruguay in his capacity as pro temporary President of Mercosur made to go ahead with an exchange of offers scheduled for the second week of May. We are both personally committed to do all that we can to make sure that this happens as a starting point of negotiations which we see as strategically important for both Mercosur and the European Union to start. This, knowing that, - again - it will be a starting point covering different sectors, beneficial for both the people of Mercosur and the European Union. Let me also stress here that we welcome very much the measures taken by the President and his Cabinet to end a number of trade restrictions. We are already helping, developing, new investments in the country with also a possible resumption of lending activities by the European Investment Bank. We have decided today that we will have a business promotion mission from the European Union to Argentina in the second half of this year. I have already discussed this with Commissioner Bienkowska who is going to lead that work.

We also see a lot of potential in our cooperation in the area of energy efficiency. Another issue that is relevant, very relevant for both the Europeans and the Argentinians. We have decided today to open a level of cooperation. I am referring to the refugee crisis. Argentina is a country that historically has been hosting many different people from many different

corners of the world, including many Europeans. We have decided today to start a joint working group between the European Union and Argentina, to work on the ways in which the European Union can support further efforts that Argentina can do in continuing to host refugees. Let me recognise the fact that Argentina is doing already a lot. It is receiving hundreds Syrian refugees on Argentinian territory so far and has introduced a fast track procedure for refugees requesting shelters in Argentina. And there is a special programme called "Programa Siria" which facilitates the granting of visas for humanitarian reasons. So, for us it is essential to support Argentina in this humanitarian effort, to globalise, somehow the efforts we are doing to protect the lives of Syrians in a sustainable way and for the Europeans it is essential that our responsibility in this respect is shared with our partners and our friends in the world even when they are far away geographically from our region.

So I would like to thank Susana personally and Argentina for this cooperation that we decided to launch today. The European Union will look at all the possible ways to support Argentina in further efforts that we will discuss in this Task Force, in this working group, that we decided to launch today also in strong connexion with the UNHCR.

We also discussed other issues, obviously the regional common point of interest of the Colombian Peace Process. As you know, we will host in Luxembourg for the Foreign Affairs Council Dr Sergio Jaramillo, the High Commissioner for Peace from Colombia next Monday. The role that Argentina is playing in the region is essential and we are definitely what we can call like-minded partners also in the work we can do in support of the positive processes in the region such as Colombia.

Finally, a couple of additional bilateral things. We also exchanged initial thoughts on a memorandum of understanding between the European Union and Argentina on trilateral development cooperation. This is, we believe, a sector where we can work very well together especially towards countries in Africa that could benefit from our joint experience and resources and we have also explored possibilities for cooperation among our local authorities and regions. I have started to work with the Committee of the Regions and we are preparing the ground for local authorities of the European Union and of Argentina to develop possible forums of cooperation in the future as well as our potential cooperation in the field of peace and security.

Having said that, I reiterated to Susana the invitation from our two Presidents Juncker and Tusk for President Macri to visit Brussels at his earliest convenience and we hope that this can be done soon but most of all, that this can be done with the same spirit of concrete engagement, on concrete deliverables, on things we can and we must do together. I believe having found again in Argentina an excellent partner bilaterally, in the region, but also on global issues. Susana and I know each other for quite some time now. I can say that working together with her is always a personal pleasure and more than that, it always comes to concrete solutions for problems. It is not only exchanges of ideas but it is always trying to find a way forward to solve problems we discuss. So Susana thank you very much for your visit

here today, for this excellent pace of relations and cooperation we have established, for the excellent meeting we have had and also for your personal commitment to this partnership we have. Thank you very much.

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