

Joint Statement on Reinforcing Portuguese-Dutch Strategic European Cooperation

The Netherlands – The Portuguese Republic | Signed in English on 11 December 2024

We, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Secretary of State for European Affairs of the Portuguese Republic, met on 11 December 2024 during the state visit of President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa to the Netherlands. Besides the excellent state of our bilateral relations, we discussed the continuously challenging geopolitical and geo-economic circumstances we face as Member States of the European Union.

We reiterated our firm dedication to the original promise of the European project, namely, to ensure peace, stability and prosperity for our citizens, guided by our values and principles, fundamental rights, democracy, and the rule of law. We reaffirmed the key priorities and actions needed for a strong, dynamic and cohesive Europe, as stated in the Joint Non-paper on Open Strategic Autonomy of the EU of July 2023.

Faced with new geopolitical realities and aware of the urgent need to strengthen the European economy, we expressed our determination to work together to make the Union more competitive, productive, innovative and sustainable.

Building the competitive economy of the future and reinforcing the EU's economic base is a *conditio sine qua non* for a strong and resilient Union that is able to safeguard and promote its core interests. The Multiannual Financial Framework is an essential means to deliver on our strategic priorities. Furthermore, truly integrated European capital markets and an open, sustainable, inclusive and fair single market foster the EU's competitiveness and its capacity to innovate, especially in the SME sector. A well-functioning single market also demands strong and secure energy, transport and digital infrastructure and interconnections, as well as sound implementation of the digital rulebook. Simultaneously, we support the development of a European market for strategic technologies, such as AI, cloud, semiconductor and quantum technologies.

We are dedicated to removing unjustified barriers, future-proofing our economy and promoting a sustainable and cohesive Union, including a competitive, sustainable and resilient agricultural sector.

At the same time, we will unwaveringly advocate for an open economy that fosters new and mutually beneficial partnerships that stimulate sustainable development, while acknowledging the importance of safeguarding the human dimension in all EU initiatives, notably by promoting a fair social Europe.

We also agreed that a strong European Union requires a comprehensive and robust approach to migration, in line with national competences, including an effective EU asylum and admission system, strong external borders, complete implementation of the rules as well as legal pathways. The Netherlands and Portugal will focus on implementing adopted EU legislation, such as the Asylum and Migration Pact, and will enhance cooperation with countries of origin and transit including in the area of return and root causes of migration.

Referring to the EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 in which the Member States affirmed that enlargement is a geo-strategic investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity, fostering the values on which the Union is founded, Portugal and the Netherlands reiterate that, looking ahead to the prospect of a further enlarged Union, both the EU and future member states need to be ready. In this context, aspiring Member States need to step up their reforms, notably in the area of rule of law, in line with the merit based nature of the accession process and with the assistance of the EU.

In order to strengthen the European Union's role as a global geopolitical actor, we will need to amplify our voice on the world stage and intensify our global outreach. We agreed that we need to increase our defence readiness and capabilities, in particular by strengthening our defence technological and industrial base. To be more secure we will need to improve defence cooperation, focusing on transport, production and industry.

We are convinced that to strengthen cooperation within the EU, to address these and other pressing issues, heightened collaboration between our countries is essential. Abiding by the principles that

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have guided our collaboration, through collective efforts, we are confident that we can overcome the challenges and seize the opportunities that lie ahead of us, in pursuit of a more resilient and united European Union.

Inês Domingos

**Secretary of State for European Affairs
of the Portuguese Republic**

Caspar Veldkamp

**Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of the
Netherlands**