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**NOTE**

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| From:    | Presidency   |
| To:      | Permanent Representatives Committee  |
| Subject: | Debate on the functioning of the EU system<br>- Activation of the Friends of Presidency Group and Terms of Reference |

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*At the GAC meeting on 23 July 2014 Ministers gave their broad support to the idea of further examining the current functioning of the EU system. Interest and support for such a debate was confirmed by Ministers in Milan on 28-29 August, where broad consensus emerged on the Presidency's proposal to activate a Friends of Presidency Group (FoP) to examine the issues linked to the functioning of the EU system, with a view to making EU action more effective and ensuring implementation of the “Strategic Agenda of the Union in times of change” adopted by the European Council at its meeting of 26/27 June.*

On the basis of these preparatory discussions, the Presidency has decided to activate the FoP Group, and suggests that COREPER adopts the following **terms or reference**:

1. The FoP will assess the functioning of the EU system and its ability to ensure the appropriate follow-up to the 26/27 June European Council conclusions on a Strategic Agenda for the next five years. The Group will focus its discussions on how to ensure that the possibilities offered by the existing Treaties are fully exploited to pursue the EU's overarching priorities.

2. Within the four broad categories outlined by the Presidency in the preparatory talks (Interinstitutional and horizontal issues// functioning of the Council// economic governance//implementation of the Lisbon Treaty) the FoP will focus on concrete issues which necessitate a debate and action in the immediate future.
3. The Group will meet once a month and will examine issues related to the following key strands of activity: i) legislative programming and better legislation; ii) Functioning and working methods of the Council; iii) Implementation and follow-up of European Council Conclusions. Other concrete points may be added in the coming weeks. Thematic issues may be included on the basis of a mandate from the European Council.
4. In order to facilitate discussions and help identify concrete solutions, the Presidency will circulate in advance of each meeting a number of questions on the topics to be discussed.
5. The Presidency will regularly report to COREPER on the outcome of these discussions and a final report of the Group will be submitted to COREPER before its transmission to the General Affairs Council in December 2014.
6. The Presidency will shortly circulate information about the dates and precise themes of the FoP meetings. The FoP will be chaired by Mr Nicola Verola, Head of Cabinet of the State Secretary for European Affairs [contact details: tel: +39 06 6779 5120, email [Segreteria.gabinettoaffarieuropei@governo.it](mailto:Segreteria.gabinettoaffarieuropei@governo.it)].
7. Delegations and the European Commission are invited to inform the Presidency and the GSC of their representative at the FoP at the following email addresses: [Segreteria.gabinettoaffarieuropei@governo.it](mailto:Segreteria.gabinettoaffarieuropei@governo.it); [Samuele.fazzi@esteri.it](mailto:Samuele.fazzi@esteri.it); [coreper.2@consilium.europa.eu](mailto:coreper.2@consilium.europa.eu).

COREPER is invited to take note of the Presidency's intention to activate the FoP and to adopt the above Terms of Reference.