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'I' ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee

Subject: Joint declaration (on behalf of the EU) on regional transport cooperation within the Eastern Partnership
- authorisation to open negotiations
- decision to use the written procedure for the authorisation

1. Following an information note¹, the Commission on 11 April 2019 informed the Working Party on Transport - Intermodal Questions and Networks of its intention to enter into negotiations with the partner countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) in order to prepare a joint declaration on transport cooperation, to be endorsed on the occasion of the EaP Transport Ministerial Meeting which is planned to be held on the margins of the TTE Council on 6 June 2019 in Luxembourg. This meeting will mark the 10th anniversary of the Partnership and follows up on political commitments from the Eastern Partnership Summit of November 2017² and the partner countries' Ljubljana road safety declaration of April 2018.
2. The aim of the declaration, which should be made by the EU, its Member States and the six partner countries, should be to take stock of the main achievements in the transport relations between the EU and the partner countries over the last years and reiterate a shared commitment to regional cooperation, focussing on existing efforts such as the extended TEN-T network, road safety and aviation.

¹ WK 4947/19 ADD 1.

² See ST 14821/17, in particular paragraph 17 and Annex I paragraph 13.

3. Delegations generally welcomed the joint initiative by the Presidency and the Commission to organise the EaP Transport Ministerial Meeting on the margins of the TTE Council. Several delegations expressed scrutiny reservations on the procedure or on possible elements of the declaration.
4. The Presidency invited delegations to indicate in writing by 18 April 2019 any concerns they might have regarding the start of negotiations on a joint declaration. The Presidency announced that the working group meetings in the month of May would be used to discuss in more detail the content of the draft joint declaration and invited delegations to send comments in this regard³.
5. No objections were raised by any delegation to let the Commission start preparation of a joint declaration in negotiation with the partner countries. The Commission should be authorised to start negotiations as soon as possible, in view of the very tight schedule until the ministerial meeting. Therefore, the use of the written procedure for the Council's authorisation to start negotiations on behalf of the EU is appropriate.
6. It is understood, in accordance with the procedural arrangements for non-binding instruments⁴, that following negotiations with the partner countries the Commission will revert to the Council and its preparatory bodies, in order to seek authorisation for EU's participation in the joint declaration.
7. In view of the above, the Permanent Representatives Committee is invited:
 - to recommend to the Council to authorise the Commission to start negotiations with the partner countries on the joint declaration, and
 - considering the urgency, to decide on the use of the written procedure for the Council's authorisation to open negotiations.

³ Elements of an initial text can be found in WK 4947/2019.

⁴ See document ST 15367/17.