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BUILDING COOPERATIVE SECURITY IN THE
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Thank you for your invitation, and thank you for your attention. In the interest of time, I will go directly to the subject. There are many things that happen around the world, and some of them in our immediate neighbourhood, but I will resist the temptation of talking about them and focus on the title of this panel.

And I want to make two points about the European Union (EU) approach to security and the cooperative answer to the security challenges in the Indo-Pacific. First, I stress how important is the security of Indo-Pacific for Europe. Second, why and how the European Union in the current geopolitical context is a valuable and credible piece of the regional security architecture through cooperation, tailored partnerships based on common trust.

First, why is the Indo-Pacific important for us in the current geopolitical context? We have to look at each other in a more comprehensive way than not simply through economic lenses, because the strategic and economic interests are more than ever intertwined. Economy and strategy are the two sides of the same coin. And now the Indo-Pacific is the beating heart of the world.

We are 15% of the world trade. The Indo-Pacific accounts for 45% of the world trade. Altogether combined, we are about two-thirds of the world trade. The security in Europe and in the Indo-Pacific are increasingly interlinked. Your security is an important part of our security. China's so-called no-limits partnership with Russia, although everything has limits, and the military support of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to Russia's invasion of Ukraine shows the direct impact on European security with the prolongation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Forty per cent of our trade passes through the South China Sea. That is why avoiding tension in the South China Sea or the Taiwan Strait is of the utmost importance for us. And here, today, I have been listening to different approaches, to a different evaluation of this tension in the South China Sea, but certainly, they are. All this happens in an international context in which we are confronted by the return in both Europe and Asia to a challenging inter-state rivalry, which is taking place through different modalities, from war, inter-state war, high-intensity conventional war, as the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, where one country is trying to crush its neighbour in a blatant violation of international law.

I do agree that it is not the only place where international law is being violated. It is not the only one. And that is why we need to be consistent with our principles and prevent the practice of double standards.

Yes, in Gaza, we have a clear situation where we have to avoid double standards. And if we applaud when the International Criminal Court acts against Putin, we should be able to do the same thing when the same court acts against other actors in the Middle East.

Second, there is the economic rivalry with the weaponisation of trade, including strain on global shipping and on supply chains, which are vital for both Europe and Asia.

Now, third, just inter-state political rivalry, which leads to political realignment and certainly hedging strategies. The second issue is, in face of all this, we are adjusting our strategy and our offer to the region, what the European Union is offering to the region, in order to build a cooperative approach to security.

We are geopolitical actors with no hidden agenda, with a strong commitment to security based on international law and the United Nations Charter, and we have significant experience on conflict and crisis management. That is why I think we can offer a unique contribution to the security in the Indo-Pacific, and we presented a strategy on that issue on 2021. And after the invasion of Ukraine came, we are gradually accepting the idea that we have to take charge of our own security.

In 2022, we published our Strategic Compass, which is our first EU strategy on security and defence. We know we have a lot to do, a lot to achieve, but certainly the age or the era of strategic naivete is over. And that is why we are multiplying our partnerships with the region and, more precisely, security and defence partnerships that are currently being negotiated with two key partners, as well as the important memorandum of understanding signed last week with Australia on critical raw materials.

Yes, it has been this morning, your security is also our security. That is fully true. And in regard to all this, we would like to convey three messages from Europe. We are a credible and committed partner in security and defence. Last year, I said – I want to repeat this year – that we are a ‘smart security enabler’. This means that the European Union has a know-how and added value in non-traditional security domains. And we are willing to build close cooperation on these areas: in cyber; in disinformation and foreign interference; in the maritime domain, where we launch several navy operations, *Aspides* in the Red Sea to protect American vessels, *Atalanta* in the Northwest Indian Ocean. And we contribute to maritime-security awareness. We also develop cooperation in economic security on non-proliferation and disarmament, on counter-terrorism and in space.

And second, Europe is a principled entity. We believe in some basic principles, and we try to be consistent with them. We are far from being perfect. And certainly, important questions are being put about what is happening in Ukraine, in Gaza and in the South China Sea. Important thing is not to say that people have to abide to international law and to fulfil humanitarian law when they are at war; the question is what happens if they do not. What is happening when they do not? And in some cases, it is clearly they are not doing. This is the real question that the international community has to be able to answer.

We will look at a better way of doing that, building cooperation and avoiding confrontation. Our member states rarely oppose major resolutions at the United Nations Security Council. And those who have a veto power do not use it.

And third, last one, Europe has to learn from Asia. You know how much this region is innovating and creating value. I am always interested by the views of the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] and, in particular, of the Singapore friends. When they talk about Asia, it is because they have the capacity of carrying an Asian vision of the world, the coming world, while remaining closer to the West, to us, to the Europeans.

So let us work together and learn from each other. Thank you.

Dr Bastian Giegerich, Director-General and Chief Executive, IISS

High Representative, thank you very much. I think it is very useful to hear from you how you describe the importance of this region for the EU, how you describe the interest of the EU in this region, but also how you describe the offer that the EU can make. I think, again, there are lots of themes we might want to discuss.