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From:	Presidency
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Subject:	Letter to Mr David Sassoli as reply to the letter addressed to Mr Antti Rinne

Delegations will find attached a letter addressed to Mr David Maria Sassoli, President of the European Parliament, in reply to his letter addressed to Mr Antti Rinne, President of the Council of the European Union.

Encl.: Letter to Mr Sassoli



Prime Minister
Finland

29 October 2019

Mr David Sassoli
President of the European Parliament

Dear Mr Sassoli,

I refer to your letter of 13 September 2019 addressed to me in my capacity as Presidency of the Council of the European Union, requesting that the Council invite the European Parliament to the meeting of the General Affairs Council of 16 September where the Article 7(1) TEU procedure concerning Hungary was discussed.

Rule of law is one of the top priorities of Finland's Presidency. We are committed to developing the Union's rule of law instruments and enhancing cooperation between all relevant actors. As regards the pending procedure under Article 7(1) concerning Hungary, the first hearing was indeed held on 16 September. We considered it important to organise this hearing, as the European Parliament adopted its Reasoned Proposal in September 2018 and several Member States had requested that such a hearing take place.

On 17 July 2019, the Council adopted a document containing standard modalities for hearings referred to in Article 7(1) TEU. The question of how to involve the European Parliament was discussed during the preparation of the aforementioned standard modalities, including the possibility of inviting the European Parliament to present its proposal to the Council. Although delegations felt it was important to cooperate with the European Parliament, it was stressed that neither Article 7(1) TEU nor the Council's Rules of Procedure grant the European Parliament a role in the Council's hearing process. Hence, the Council decided to opt for the solution included in paragraph 11 of the modalities, according to which the Presidency shall, at the first hearing, report to the Council about its contacts with the European Parliament on its Reasoned Proposal.

In this vein, on 4 September 2019, the Finnish Minister for European Affairs, Ms Tytti Tuppurainen, met in person with the chair of the LIBE Committee, Mr Juan Fernando López Aguilar, and the rapporteur for this file, Ms Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, in Brussels. In order to ensure continuity and strengthen the representation of the Council, representatives of the incoming Croatian and German Presidencies were also invited to the meeting. The meeting was held in a good spirit. On the basis of this discussion, Ms Tuppurainen gave delegations a briefing on the positions of the European Parliament at the beginning of the hearing of Hungary on 16 September.

Finland's Presidency concurs with the European Parliament that the Council must be well informed on the views of the Parliament and is ready to continue to cooperate closely with the Parliament during this process.

Yours sincerely,

Antti Rinne