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'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Joint Statement of the second meeting of the EU-Republic of Korea Digital Partnership Council - Approval of a non-binding instrument

1. On 9 December 2021, the Working Party on Telecommunications and Information Society was informed by the European Commission, in a note¹, of its intention to start discussions on individual Digital Partnerships with Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore with a view to establishing cooperation on the digital transformation of the economy and society.
2. The Commission clarified that the Digital Partnerships would take the form of non-binding instruments² addressing the four pillars of the EU Digital Compass³: infrastructures, skills, digital transformation of businesses and digitalisation of public services, and could include other areas facilitating cooperation in digital and trade.

¹ WK 15233/21

² Arrangements on non-binding instruments concluded by the Secretaries General of the Commission, the Council and the EEAS in December 2017 (ST 15367/17).

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0118>

3. Following Coreper's approval on 16 February 2022, the Council authorised the Commission to negotiate the Digital Partnerships with Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore in the form of non-binding instruments on 22 February 2022⁴. The Council authorised the signature of the Digital Partnerships with Japan on 11 May, with the Republic of Korea on 14 November, and with Singapore on 19 December 2022. The three Digital Partnerships were signed separately by early 2023⁵.
4. On 26 February 2024, the Commission informed the Working Party on Telecommunications and Information Society of its intention to start exploratory talks in view of concluding Joint Statements with the Republic of Korea and Japan in the context of the second meetings of the EU-Republic of Korea (hereinafter RoK) and the EU-Japan Digital Partnership Councils, taking place in Brussels on 26 March 2024 and 30 April 2024, respectively⁶.
5. The intention is to use the EU-Japan and EU-RoK Joint Statements to validate the results of the cooperation and the progress achieved so far, as well as the concrete deliverables arising from the implementation of the provisions of each Digital Partnership.
6. At the meeting of the Working Party on Telecommunications and Information Society on 13 March 2024, the Commission provided a thorough presentation of the draft Joint Statement of the second meeting of the EU-RoK Digital Partnership Council⁷. The draft received broad support. Delegations' proposals for amendments were taken into account and the Commission submitted to the Council a revised draft text on 15 March⁸.

⁴ ST 5862/22

⁵ The first Digital Partnership was launched at the Japan-EU Summit on 12 May 2022. The EU and the Republic of Korea signed their Digital Partnership on 28 November 2022, and the Digital Partnership between the EU and Singapore was signed on 1 February 2023.

⁶ WK 3086/24

⁷ WK 3811/24

⁸ WK 3811/1/24 REV 1

7. With a view to signing the Joint Statement at the EU-RoK Digital Partnership Council on 26 March 2024 in Brussels, the Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to recommend that the Council:

- approves the text of the draft Joint Statement of the second meeting of the EU-RoK Digital Partnership Council, as set out in document WK 3811/1/24 REV 1, as an A item during its ENVIRONMENT session on 25 March 2024, and

- agrees that, if further adjustments of the text are required in order to ensure agreement by the EU and RoK sides, the text may be adapted accordingly, provided that the changes do not affect the substance and intent of the EU positions.
