**Nikolina Brnjac,** *President-in-Office of the Council***.** – Mr President, seventy years after the Schuman Declaration is a good moment to reflect about Europe, the challenges that face us and how we can continue to make sure the Union is effective in addressing them and delivering solutions.

As I said, in these challenging circumstances, the Presidency will do its utmost to steer our work in preparing and reaching the decision needed to address the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the impact on so many aspects of our lives. Active and effective cooperation between our institutions will be crucial in that regard.

In all these very difficult circumstances, as you know, my capital city, Zagreb, was hit by a strong earthquake on 22 March, leaving many of our citizens homeless and further traumatised on top of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I thank everyone warmly for all the help and support we received. I hope that we will all learn from the experience of this crisis and work towards making Europe more resilient to similar or any other potential future crises, especially in protecting our supply chains, diversifying and bringing back to Europe end production of essential strategic goods and food in order to ensure Europe’s self-sustainability.

Regarding the Conference of the Future of Europe that indeed we planned launching on 9 May. As you will understand, in the last period, our work in the Council had focussed on the immediate priority of the response to the pandemic.

However, we are determined to come back to it – first to reach a consensus on a Council position and then by negotiating among our institutions. A new target date for a launch of the conference should be agreed, and recent developments certainly need to be taken into consideration.

To that effect, the Presidency had the first exchange with Member States already this week.