



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Member of the Commission

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Your Excellencies,

Honourable Members,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first thank President Mapou for hosting us in this beautiful location.

My sincere thanks, also, for his Chairmanship of the Overseas Countries and Territories Association.

And may I congratulate your successor, Prime Minister Egede, represented today by Minister Lund, on his appointment as new Chair.

It's a real pleasure to be here in New Caledonia, and to meet you all *in person*.

A lot has happened since our last Forum. Nearly nine months to this day, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine endures.

Loss of life and human suffering continues to unfold on European soil.

But the fall-out of the war can be felt *everywhere*.

People are worried about not being able to pay their bills, feed their children, or heat their homes. A wave of global hunger is spreading across the most vulnerable parts of the world. And on top of that, we continue to face long-term challenges linked to climate change, the digital divide or inequality.

In such a difficult environment, special, strong, partnerships, like the one between the EU and OCTs, are what we need.

We are part of the same European family. We share objectives, principles and values.

And together, we can continue to deepen this mutually beneficial partnership, and become more resilient in this competitive and fractured world.

With all this in mind, I will make three points today on how we move forward together.

First, despite the focus on Ukraine, the EU has not turned its back on partners.

We have stepped up for partners on climate, health, food, and energy. And we will continue to step up too for the OCT family.

Our new instrument worth 500 million euros gives us the means to deepen the EU-OCT partnership until 2027.

Within that, 15 million euros will help to ensure we make the most of intra-regional cooperation and connectivity. Whether it's between regions or with your neighbours, like the Outermost Regions and ACP countries. But this is just the beginning.

What has become clear is that the EU must help partners build resilience and strategic autonomy, in the same way we are building ours.

We are strategically adjusting to a new reality. And our relations with OCTs are vital to this, as highlighted in our strategies for the Arctic and Indo-Pacific. And this brings me to my second point.

In this competitive geopolitical environment, the EU is eager to make a genuine alternative positive offer to our partners.

Our new Global Gateway Strategy does exactly this. It is a 300 billion euros global investment strategy rooted in sustainability and rule of law. It's our offer to boost high-standard investments according to partners' needs and interests.

We focus on sectors such as energy, digital, transport, health, education and research. Sectors holding huge promise to solve global challenges and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our aim is to create links, not dependencies;

To invest in infrastructure, but also people;

And to collaborate with a whole range of stakeholders to achieve real scale and impact, including:

Member States and European financial institutions as "Team Europe";

Partner governments;

National development finance institutions;

And European businesses and private sector in partner countries.

Over the past few months, we have begun to roll out Global Gateway across all regions. Including in the Overseas Countries and Territories.

One standout example is Europe's navigation system, Galileo, which connects people and goods.

There are 6 Galileo Sensor Stations in the French OCTs.

And in the Caribbean, Bonaire has just been selected for a new Station.

Later today, we will be launching 14 different long-term programmes to deepen our partnership on joint political priorities like the green transition, digitalisation, jobs and growth, and human development.

These are already translating into concrete action and will make a real difference to people living in OCTs. Some examples include:

Education in Greenland;

Sustainable water management in French Polynesia;

Energy transition in New Caledonia;

Sustainable agriculture in St Eustatius;

And disaster management in St Barth.

We will also continue to invest in people through EU programmes such as Erasmus + and Horizon Europe. And we're starting to see promising sectors of joint interest emerge, such as raw materials and hydrogen. So watch this space!

Third and final point.

One of the best investments we can make today is in young people. They are the largest generation of young people in history. And they should claim their own future.

Through our new Youth Action Plan, the EU seeks to build a partnership with youth around the world along three pillars: engage, empower, and connect.

Engage – because young people in partner countries, especially young women, need to have their say in politics and policy-making.

Empower – because young people need to have the education and skills to lead the green and digital transitions.

And connect – because young people can thrive when they have opportunities to network and exchange with their peers.

And on that, I was delighted to welcome the OCT Youth Network to Brussels a few weeks ago, and I look forward to officially launching it later today.

The network is a unique opportunity to bridge links between OCTs and EU. Because those young people I met will grow up to be tomorrow's leaders.

So it means a lot to have them come to Brussels, meet youth from other OCTs and learn more about the EU-OCT partnership. And I hope they will be just as invested as we are, in the future of this special EU-OCT partnership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Time for me to conclude and open the floor.

As the world around us becomes more complex and challenging, the EU-OCT partnership remains an immense asset.

We share values, standards and interests, and we can support each other as we seek to build more resilience and autonomy.

I look forward to the debate and to hearing your political reflection and guidance on the future of this very special partnership.