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## Remarks by Executive Vice-President Šefčovič at the press point on the negotiations for an Association Agreement between the EU and Andorra and San Marino

Brussels, 12 December 2023

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

Today is a **very good day**, for the European Union and for the people of Andorra and San Marino.

Head of Government of Andorra, **Xavier Espot** and San Marino Foreign Minister **Luca Beccari**, it is a pleasure to welcome you here and to have this press conference with you.

Today we are welcoming Andorra and San Marino as **even closer members of the European Union family** than you were before.

Indeed, this morning I presented to our Member States in the General Affairs Council the state of play of our negotiations for an Association Agreement.

And as I informed the ministers earlier today, I am delighted to inform you as well that we have **reached an agreement at negotiators' level**.

Since January 2022, when the Commission took the lead in these negotiations, significant progress has been made through no less than **49** negotiating sessions, leading to the **finalisation of the negotiations** last week.

This responds to the impetus given by our Member States last year, when they called on the Commission to finalise the negotiations by the end of 2023.

So today, I am pleased to say that **we have delivered**.

I would like here to give due credit to the very professional, rigorous and committed negotiating teams, notably Landry Riba and Ambassadors Esther Rabasa and Antonella Benedettini.

Because we spent a lot of time with them, and as you see, it was time well spent.

Xavier, Luca, your teams approached these negotiations with a professional and constructive mindset and a willingness to solve issues as needed.

Our mandate was for a comprehensive Association Agreement.

I am well aware that sectoral arrangements may have been preferred by some.

And I want to **thank Andorra and San Marino** for having understood that a comprehensive approach was the only way forward for the EU, and for having worked tirelessly together with us to make sure that this would **work**.

This agreement is a **significant milestone**.

It will respond directly, on the one hand, to the EU's objective to **develop a special and solid relationship**, based on its own values, with **all neighbouring countries**, as set out in Article 8 of the Treaty on European Union.

And, on the other hand, to **the two countries' stated interest in building closer ties with the EU**, as I am sure Xavier and Luca, will expand upon in a minute.

Our agreement is similar to the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA), that we have with Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.

In fact, I think **we even went beyond that**, making the Association Agreement with Andorra and San Marino the most comprehensive agreement the EU will have with any third country.

So a sort of EEA plus.

I want to mention a **few aspects** of our agreement.

The Association Agreement will provide for the **participation of these two countries to a homogenous extended internal market** under equal conditions of competition and respect of the same rules.

As part of this, it will also **cover financial services**. Access to the internal market in this area will be progressive and will depend on a successful audit of the robustness of the associated States' regulatory and supervisory frameworks.

At the same time, it will establish **a framework to develop and promote dialogue and cooperation** in other areas of common interest, such as research and development, education, social policy, the environment, consumer protection, culture or regional cooperation.

The alignment with the EU's internal market acquis will **benefit both sides**. EU economic operators and citizens, in particular from neighbouring EU regions, are expected to benefit through the facilitation of trade in goods and services, and greater and improved employment opportunities.

Tens of thousands of our citizens work and live in these countries. The Association Agreement will guarantee that the EU principle of **non-discrimination** on grounds of nationality is extended to Andorra and San Marino. The same principles will benefit citizens and businesses from Andorra and San Marino who will have access to an internal market of 450 million citizens.

Importantly, the Association Agreement will take into account the particular situation of Andorra and San Marino, as well as the specificities arising from their relations of proximity with neighbouring EU Member States, their **geography**, their **size**, and their **relatively small populations**.

This will be reflected in a number of adaptations and several transitional periods for the implementation and application of parts of the EU acquis.

To conclude, this Association Agreement will **enshrine a privileged relationship** between the EU and Andorra and San Marino, which are both located **in the heart of Europe**.

The Commission will now finalise the legal texts and transmit them to the Council, for signature and conclusion. **I stand ready** to help get it across the line over the coming weeks.

As a last point, I have already mentioned the incredible work put up by the negotiating teams of Andorra and San Marino. So let me end by also thanking the **negotiating team of the European Commission**, led by Clara Martinez Alberola, without whom this agreement would not have been possible.

So thank you very much to all the teams for their great work. I would also like to thank the Head of Government and the Foreign Minister for their great cooperation, and their positive *esprit* of looking for the best solutions for Andorra, San Marino and the EU.

With that, I pass the floor to Xavier Espot, Head of Government of Andorra.

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