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Opening remarks by President Herman Van Rompuy at the European Council

Today we must decide on our Union's budget from 2014 to 2020. Maybe this meeting will be long and complicated. Fortunately this issue only comes up every seven years!

The decision before us is simple: making sure the Union has the money to do what we want it to do, for all of us, knowing the budgetary constraints in each of our countries.

Over these past weeks and in the course of the day, I already met all of you individually, and I listened carefully. All the views around this table are well known: red lines, requests for spending, requests for savings, and much more.

The proposal which I put on the table is a moderation budget. The times call for it. Doing more with less money involves political choices. This is painful, even when cuts are evenly spread. So we must be sensible and realistic.

But we must not forget this is budget for the rest of the decade. It must be future-oriented. My proposal focuses on jobs and growth in all regions and in different economic sectors, on research and investments, for instance in connecting Europe, while ensuring our Union can also continue to deliver the actions our citizens have come to expect.

I am working now for a deal with all of you. We have to work with the European interest in mind, alongside the national interests. Together we will find a balanced solution. It's necessary and I'm convinced it's within our reach. So, dear colleagues, let's get down to business.

P R E S S
