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### Speech

Good afternoon, everyone.

Many thanks to Eurofi for inviting me to speak to you today. These events gather a very broad audience and allow insightful discussions. I trust we share a common goal – to make our markets more efficient and resilient, and to bring wealth and growth to European citizens and businesses.

In these last few weeks, the Commission has been translating the priorities for our Union, amid complex and challenging circumstances.

We are being ambitious, clear, and we are committed to deliver. First and foremost, to deliver on our Single Market, our main strength, and our anchor and compass for sustainable and sustained growth.

For long we have been complacent, we have been settling for less. We have endured – and even reinforced – persisting barriers that hurt us all, even if some have an immediate gain. Not anymore.

As the current circumstances well show, we cannot afford not to have a true Single Market for financial services. The Savings and Investments Union we presented just a few weeks ago is an instrument, an enabler, for growth and competitiveness. And it reinforces our resilience to shocks such as the one we are observing.

The main goal of this strategy is to boost the European economy as we increase household wealth

among Europeans. That is the end goal – but there is a lot of work to do to actually get there.

Many of you here today will be key enablers of the Savings and Investments Union – it is important that you are aware that this cannot happen without your buy-in.

So, before I go into the details, I urge you to think about the role you can play in driving change across our markets – for the benefit of all Europeans.

We are living through trying times, where the geopolitical context is constantly changing, and we are being confronted with challenges that we had not anticipated.

History shows that during times of stress Europe has come together and moved forward. On that, allow me to emphasise what President von der Leyen said in response to the recent US tariffs:

“Europe has everything it needs to make it through this storm... If you take on one of us, you take on all of us. So we will stand together and stand up for each other. Our unity is our strength”.

It is important that we remember these words of strength, and it is important that we apply them actively to all our European endeavours.

We want a more competitive, green, digital, and fair Europe – where citizens can build wealth and companies can grow, innovate, and create jobs.

We also want a more secure

Europe. We are facing an extraordinary threat to our security. And the EU needs to mobilise Europe's immense resources and productive power to strengthen its defence.

This cannot be achieved with public investment alone; we must ensure that the defence sector has the best possible access to private finance.

But without economic growth, our goals will remain out of reach. And this is what I would like to speak to you about today – our plan for a Savings and Investments Union that fosters citizen's wealth and economic competitiveness.

Europeans are among the world's best savers, yet most of them do not have an effective way of channelling that capital in a productive way. Instead, over 10 trillion euros sit in low-yield deposits while businesses face urgent financing needs.

Recently we've been watching how financial markets have been impacted by the US announcements, and stocks and indices have dipped.

But our strategy is not about quick wins on the capital market, we want EU citizens to see investing as a viable way to grow their wealth in the long term.

Despite Europe's abundance of innovators, obstacles to securing investment within the Union are driving entrepreneurs to look for opportunities in other markets.

The Savings and Investments

Union seeks to bridge this gap, especially in key areas like digital innovation, climate transition, and defence.

To unlock financing, we must expand our investor base, making retail investment, notably, more attractive through adequate protections, fairer access, and better long-term opportunities, including for retirement savings. A competitive and integrated financial sector will lower costs and increase choice, ensuring savings can be turned into productive investments.

Our strategy has four pillars, covering citizens and savings, investment and financing, integration and scale, and efficient supervision.

Under the heading of citizens and savings, we will take action to make investing in the EU easier and more beneficial for our citizens.

To do this, we need to empower Europeans with the right tools so that, voluntarily and independently, they can make the choices that best suit their investment goals. We will present a financial literacy strategy to make sure that our citizens know how to make their money work for them, with a clear understanding of the risks and advantages of their investment. There are some good examples in Europe we can learn from.

We will be drawing on those best practices to create a savings and investments account blueprint for all Europeans to benefit from, also looking at tax incentives.

Pensions are also an important part of our plan and are key to boosting investment in Europe, and to provide quality retirement for citizens. We will present a recommendation to promote auto-enrolment in occupational pension schemes, and we will review our existing pension legislations to make them more attractive and efficient.

We will also incentivise Member States to work on developing their own supplementary pension sectors. There are already good practices in Europe with very

positive outcomes for citizens, but for many Member States that is still not the case.

On investment and financing, we will be working to make it easier for companies to access diversified sources of finance, including cross-border.

For example, we aim to bring institutional investors more into play for our European companies, including through venture capital, private equity, and infrastructure investments.

This means looking at the prudential treatment of insurers' and banks' long-term investments in equity, and how investments in equity of pension funds can be in line with the prudent person principle.

We will also revise the legislation on European Venture Capital Funds label. This will help to facilitate equity financing for our high tech and innovative companies.

And we will review the EU rules on securitisation, including prudential requirements for banks and insurers, as this will free up lending capacity in banks, allowing investors to diversify exposures to new asset classes and, in effect, better support companies with financing needs.

Differences in national taxation procedures can create administrative burden and barriers to crossborder investment, so this is also something that we will also look at.

Looking now at integration and scale: we must ensure that our markets operate efficiently and remain resilient to shocks.

Too often, European firms are unable to enjoy the scale and synergies of the Single Market, and this is a huge competitive disadvantage for the EU.

Some market players are satisfied with the status quo and Europe's fragmented capital markets - whether in trading infrastructure, post-trading and asset management.

But it is important to remember

that the benefits of a single market are larger than the sum of its parts. I see a vast potential for European citizens and companies from deeper market integration, and you can count on me to stand firm against those who seek to block our path.

We will be bringing bold proposals to break down barriers that hold back cross border operations of market infrastructures, asset management, and fund distribution. Barriers exist in various forms: economic, legal, technical, operational, behavioural, and supervisory. We will be leaving no stone unturned.

This will help financial players scale across the EU and lower costs for businesses and citizens alike.

On supervision, while we look for more efficiencies, we will not sacrifice the integrity of our capital markets. Strong supervision ensures our stable base to work from.

What we need is simple on the surface: we need to ensure equal treatment for all financial market actors, wherever they operate in the EU. Of course, when you dig a little deeper, you see that this will need a lot of work, and a lot of buy-in from Member States and national and EU supervisors.

We have a single rulebook, but national authorities often apply rules differently. Again, this can be down to some authorities' legitimate concerns about the financial system's safety. Still, in quite a few others, it is protectionist behaviour.

I truly believe that we don't necessarily need a single supervisor in each sector of finance. In some areas we simply need better supervision - better supervisory convergence and joined-up attitude of all the authorities involved. And we need to get rid of divergent national practices that fragment the market.

In some other cases, typically where regulatory integration is more advanced, EU-level supervision is the right approach. That's why for a few eligible

sectors we will propose legislation to unify oversight and bring key supervisory tasks to the EU level.

The Savings and Investments Union is a sector agnostic tool to boost European competitiveness, though I would like to highlight how it can impact specific strategically important sectors that are key to Europe's immediate needs. I am thinking of the defence sector.

Europe is facing an extraordinary threat to its security. But we have what it takes to address it heads on.

The defence sector is a clear priority, as highlighted in the ReArm Europe plan. That requires a clear pipeline of projects and clear public funding signals. The Commission's White Paper on Defence gives us these signals.

We have to unlock access to private finance for these companies, and banks and institutional investors must also consider investing in the defence sector.

Some are already shifting that way. A number of asset managers have recently reviewed their exclusion policies to allow for the inclusion of conventional weapons and we have the first ETF tracking the European defence sector. Attractive valuations are incentivising Dutch pension funds to invest in defence companies. And some political parties in Norway are considering allowing the national oil sovereign fund to go in that direction.

There is a growing shift in mindset on defence investing. The current reality is that defence is a critical public good – now more than ever. And there is a clear business case for investing in defence, investing in our collective security.

And as we all know, defence and space are at the cutting-edge of innovation, contributing decisively to other European priorities as well.

The Commission clarified that the EU's sustainable finance framework is fully consistent with the EU's efforts to enhance the defence industry's access to

finance and investment.

The Savings and Investments Union will also help ensure that all companies in the defence sector, from established players to innovative newcomers, have greater access to funding opportunities.

Better than anyone else, you, the industry, can understand the advantages of a deep, competitive, efficient, single market for financial services. A single market where you can operate across borders, where portfolios are diversified and where you can see direct impacts of your investments in European growth. A Single Market where your clients are located anywhere in Europe and are confident to invest across the borders.

You can also recognise the benefits of seamless market infrastructures, robust and interconnected, where procedures are simple.

And you can recognise the advantages of a single supervision and of a single legal framework that guarantee a true level playing field.

The Savings and Investments Union aims to achieve on all those fronts. It is up to us in the Commission, to the Member States, to the European Parliament and to you, the industry, to live up to that task. And to ensure our Single Market is indeed single.

Thank you.