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Summary of the General Assembly of the Common Front on 7 November 2012

First of all, the Common Front of the Parliament wishes to give warm thanks to the 800 colleagues who attended the General Assembly, which was convened in order to take stock of the state of play regarding the negotiations on the Staff Regulations reform proposal and the financial perspectives, with Ms Roth-Behrendt.

With a view to providing feedback also to the colleagues who could not attend the General Assembly, you will find attached a brief account of the points that have been raised.

Ms Roth-Behrendt thanked the Common Front for its invitation and expressed her appreciation for the strong participation of the staff. She recalled the underlying principles of her role as rapporteur and confirmed her commitment, as well as that of President Schulz, to defend our Staff Regulations and the European civil service in the face of the Council's attacks.

She pointed out that in its report, the Legal Affairs Committee (JURI) had amended the Commission's proposal so as to improve several aspects of it. She noted that the amended proposal however still contained some aspects very much open to criticism and that have unfortunately not been able to be corrected, such as the future career of secretaries, which nonetheless remains a reasonable compromise bearing in mind the difficulty of the current political context.

Ms Roth-Behrendt said that, while the JURI Committee was producing its report under tight time constraints, the trilogue with the Council had still not started and the Council had for the time being refused any discussion, even on an informal basis, submitting the "reform" dossier to the decisions to be taken on the financial perspectives.

In this regard, she noted with satisfaction that the Parliament's report on the financial perspectives had taken into account her proposals about the need to ensure an economic framework within Chapter V, compatible with the obligation to guarantee the highest quality personnel for our institutions as well as the efficiency of their operation, which are vital to the EU and its citizens.

With regard to the interaction between the negotiations on the reform proposal and those on the financial perspectives, Ms Roth-Behrendt stressed the risk of 'paying twice'. It is therefore necessary when discussing the ceiling of Chapter V, which must be fixed at a level that does not endanger the workings of the institutions nor the rights and expectations of staff, that the Council accepts at the same time the basic approach endorsed in the Commission's reform proposal which is at the very centre of the compromise to be found.

Ms Roth-Behrendt mentioned the quality of cooperation and the similarity in vision with the Commission, especially with President Barroso and Vice-President Šefčovič, whose commitment to the defence of our civil service was well appreciated by her, and emphasized that the more than close collaboration between the two institutions is absolutely essential in the context of the codecision.

In this respect, while emphasizing again the scope of the difficulties of the negotiations, Ms Roth-Behrendt confirmed the two institutions are determined not to accept any denaturing of the proposal likely to cause a deterioration of wages, careers or pensions of staff, and that in such a case the withdrawal of the Commission's proposal would be the only option.

Ms Roth-Behrendt also reaffirmed the need to provide the greatest possible unity of action of staff's representatives of all institutions to support the action of the Parliament and the Commission in the negotiations with the Council.

On this subject, she deeply regretted that some unions had decided to call a strike as a sign of support for the action decided upon in the Council, which in her view would weaken the action of the Parliament and the Commission, as it could provoke extremely harmful media attacks and strengthen the enemies of our civil service.

Last, she expressed her willingness to continue her frank and constructive dialogue with the Common Front of the Parliament and with the staff, and declared her availability to participate in future meetings that would be

organised by the Common Front, in order to keep staff informed about the evolution of the negotiations.

Mr Winkler, Head of the President's Office, similarly welcomed the positive dialogue and collaboration with the Common Front of the Parliament and confirmed the President's full commitment for this dossier, as expressed in late July's letter to the Danish Presidency.

Mr Welle, Secretary-General, Ms F. Ratti, Deputy Secretary-General, and Mr Quitin, Director-General of Personnel, assured in turn that the administration of the Parliament made every effort to provide the necessary support for the Parliament's political action in the context of the current negotiations.

In response to concerns raised by the participants of the Assembly, Ms Roth-Behrendt confirmed the acquired rights of the staff may not be brought into question, particularly with regard to pension rights.

Regarding the fact that wage levels offered to new colleagues after the 2004 reform are inadequate and fail to attract the best possible candidates, Ms Roth-Behrendt confirmed these difficulties were now finally being recognized by some Member States. She recalled that the institutions must make use of all possibilities afforded by the Staff Regulations in order to raise the level of recruitment grades and thus alleviate these difficulties, even though only partially.

In conclusion, the representatives of Parliament's Common Front expressed their deep thanks to Ms Roth-Behrendt and the other speakers for their availability and commitment. They confirmed their commitment to supply a constant flow of information for the staff, as was already the case with the dossier made available in this General Assembly (see Annex).

To end with, they also reaffirmed their commitment to the unity of action of all staff's representatives by pointing out that the agreement of the Common Front shall remain open for accession by all the other forces that have so far not decided to join.