



## **Statement by Benoît Potier, Chairman of the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT) at the meeting with Chancellor Merkel, President Hollande and President Juncker**

**Berlin, 28 September 2016**

As Chairman of the European Round Table of Industrialists, let me start by **thanking** Chancellor Merkel for inviting us today, with President Hollande and President Juncker.

Europe is facing **challenging times**. As leaders of major European industries, we believe that we should **continue building** on Europe's strengths to reinforce the European Union.

The EU should aim to become the **most attractive proposition** for a peaceful society, social cooperation and economic wellbeing.

To do this, the EU needs to deliver on **growth, jobs and security**. This requires the **strengthening – not the weakening** – of the internal market, **adjusting** rules where necessary and **completing** the free movement of goods, services, people and capital.

The construction of the **Digital Single Market** – which we will mainly discuss tonight – is a key example showing how European co-operation can bring benefits to all.

Europe should strive to achieve a **global leadership role** in the **digital revolution** by swiftly implementing an EU-wide harmonised **framework**, and by setting up **standards** for the digital single market. This will **boost** the European economy, make it more **competitive** and create **new jobs** across all sectors.

**Digitisation** brings new opportunities for innovation and for the deployment of new technologies. Europe – as an innovation-driven economy – should **grasp** these **opportunities** and turn them into a real competitive advantage for its companies.

Let me emphasise the particular **role** of **entrepreneurs, start-ups** and **small** companies, along with **large companies**, in the digital transformation. They are a **vital part** of Europe's industrial fabric. They contribute to innovation in industry and are essential for creating the **next generation** of industrial champions in Europe.

Europe must **increase its efforts** to create more start-ups, facilitate their ability to grow and – importantly – to keep them in Europe.

With respect to the **UK leaving the European Union**, ERT Members believe that it is crucial to keep the UK **as close as possible** to the EU Single Market given its geographical location and the UK's importance as part of an **integrated value chain**. It will also be discussed this evening.

Europe **cannot afford a standstill** for its economy and its citizens. Other economies are progressing and will challenge us. We want Europe to remain an **attractive place** to **invest, study, work** and **innovate**, as well as to **manufacture** and **market** its products.

As business leaders we believe Europe **priorities**, beside **security**, are to complete the **internal market**, to make our **education** system ready for the future, and to release **investments** in new technologies, in particular in cleantech, medtech, as well as in telecommunication, energy and digital infrastructure.

To achieve it, building credible **long-term relations** with our main **trading partners** is critical, together with a modern **competition policy**, which takes into account the **global** dimension of the economy.

The European Round Table of Industrialists is ready to work with governments and policy-makers to make it **become a reality now**.

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#### **Note to Editors:**

The [European Round Table of Industrialists \(ERT\)](#) is a forum bringing together around 50 Chief Executives and Chairmen of major multinational companies of European parentage covering a wide range of industrial and technological sectors. Companies of ERT Members are widely situated across Europe, with a combined revenue exceeding € 2,135 billion, sustaining around 6.8 million jobs in the region. They invest more than € 55 billion annually in R&D, largely in Europe.

ERT advocates policies at both national and European levels, with the goal of improving European competitiveness, growth and employment.

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