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Thank you. Our next speaker is Justin Vaïsse, Director of Policy Planning Staff in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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I'm going to make some rather brief remarks that will come from a European vision rather than from a French or an official one. What is the European vision of Eurasia? I think the first thing to keep in mind is that "Eurasia" is not part of Europe's vocabulary. The idea actually covers two realities. It refers to Central Asia or to Mackinder's "heartland" grouping Europe and Asia together. With regard to the former, the concept is simply that of Central Asia; the latter does not exist in the European mindset. This is quite different from the reality covered by the term in Russian minds, in the various meanings Eurasia has had over the course of time, and that obviously reflects their dual orientation, simultaneously Asian and European. Second, geopolitical analysts, including American ones, also use the term. For example, the U.S. State Department has a Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. So the term is in use. But it refers more to Central Asia than to the idea of a landmass stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Moreover, I don't think the Chinese use the term, or that it's useful and useable. That's the first important point: "Eurasia" is not really part of Europe's vocabulary.

Eurasia is not part of our geopolitical practice or grammar, either. Europe does not have a grand geopolitical vision, and I'm not sure that's a bad thing. Coming back to these grammar issues, we use quite a different vocabulary to talk about all these regions. We talk about our neighbourhood. We talk about association. We talk about partnership agreements. We talk about "four areas", which was an initiative towards Russia. We talk about development programmes. We don't talk about a chessboard, the somewhat imaginary idea that puts across the concept of Eurasia according to Mackinder and the geopolitical analysts. That's a different way of looking at things, of showing them. I think we have here a fundamental point, which is reflected rather well in the vocabulary we use about the region, and about many other regions: we use the same vocabulary that the region's countries use themselves. If we talk about Central Asia in particular, what matters in the European vision is to let the countries choose for themselves, without necessarily having integrations, but at least a choice of possible integrations for Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and the rest—the groups they want to join. The OSCE is a good example of regional organisation: these Central Asian countries willingly joined the CSCE process in the early 1990s, and then the OSCE. From one point of view, the OSCE is a Eurasian organisation, even though it includes North America but not China.

The third point involves what the European Union does in Central Asia. The first thing is its support for stability. I need not return to the Afghanistan case and Europe's role there; a deep, expensive commitment that, in its nature, was different from that of the United States, but that clearly contributed to the stability of Afghanistan and the region, the kind of contribution its neighbours could have made. I'm thinking of other examples from 2000 to 2010, in particular the European Union's action in Uzbekistan in 2005, or Kirghizstan in 2010, as various events, upheavals and revolutions rocked Central Asia.

The second thing the European Union does is cooperation, especially trade and cooperation agreements. The European Union sent delegations to all of these Central Asian countries and carries on a continuous political dialogue with them. For example, capital punishment in these countries is rare. In the 1990s, dialogue with the European Union



led them to reconsider the issue. They've either declared an open-ended moratorium or abolished capital punishment altogether.

Returning to the idea of letting the region's countries choose, I think Europe is seen there, where there are two very powerful poles, Russia and China, as a power, or a presence, that doesn't have any strategic designs, that doesn't have any strategic objectives, which makes it easier for them to cooperate with us. How are the various existing organisations, or planned organisations, viewed in the region? The OSCE seems important to us even though it doesn't include China: it's a bridge between the region's different countries, and in particular an organisation Russia belongs to, and in which the region's security issues can be discussed while keeping a certain transatlantic dimension. Moreover, there's the Shanghai cooperation organisation, even though, like the OSCE, it's partly hobbled by the need for unanimity. Lastly, there's the Eurasian Union. The European Union is obviously flattered by being taken as a model for the Eurasian Union, whose very material reality has existed since 2010, when the customs union entered into force. The first thing to realise is that the European Union has suffered from this customs union, losing around €500 million a year due to higher customs duties, especially in Kazakhstan, in order to match with Russia. Furthermore, this customs union's protectionist trend is not necessary conducive to the region's long-term development. But it's up to the region's countries to decide. I think they're clear about what they want and don't want. As many of them have said, a customs union is good for them. They've also made it clear, as Kazakhstan has, that they don't wish to go any further. This is therefore not a re-creation of the USSR, and we certainly don't see it that way. We don't see it as competing with the European Union, either. On the contrary, if it's really an economic reality that will grow stronger, we wish it well, and we even think it can provide a framework for dialogue with the European Union, shifting the current strains with Russia from the political and military terrain to an economic one. If the European Union and the Eurasian Union discussed common economic projects and trade, we'd see that as something very positive, because it would add to South Korea or China's efforts to develop the region. And perhaps economic and geo-economic realities will eventually prevail.