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Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to this session on critical raw materials. Before I introduce the speakers and the subject, let me just mention one incredible experience I had this morning.

I used the time very early in the morning to go to a place 10 minutes from here, the Abrahamic Family House. I was not aware that this existed, but a friend of mine had told me about it. It is a church, a synagogue and a mosque, all on one compound.

It is a strong sign of tolerance that the United Arab Emirates send with this wonderful architecture, which is not just a museum, but where people pray, people sing, people have masses, services. It was deeply moving and, especially in these times, I can only encourage you to use the time to go there and see it. One can only wish that this message that the Emiratis send with this wonderful institution will be heard in all major Abrahamic religions.

Well, we have a very important subject, and that is critical raw materials. Last year, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we woke up – and I say it as a German – and immediately recognized how dependent we were on, in this case, Russian gas.

At that time, at the last World Policy Conference, the 15th Edition, we already had a panel on critical raw materials, with a representative from the EU Commission, and we all stated, ‘Well, the dependency on China, for instance, for some critical raw materials is even higher than those dependencies that we had on Russian gas’.

We urged the Commission and urged the policymakers, ‘Do something to diversify. Do something to start mining again in Europe. Look for other places’.

The question that we ask today and which is the lead question here for the panel is, ‘What has changed during last year?’. Was this strong demand heard by policymakers in Brussels, Washington, the Gulf and elsewhere in the world not to rely on one or two countries alone, but to diversify?

That is the main question and I introduce the first speaker. I ask all speakers to be brief. We said 10 minutes, so that we have time to discuss within the panel, but also with you.