Valérie Hayer
Member of the European Parliament
President of the Renew Europe Group

Strasbourg, 18 January 2026

Ms. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
European Commission
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels

Dear Madam President,

The European Union is confronted with a strategic reality it can no longer ignore: under the current administration of President Donald Trump, the United States no longer acts as a reliable ally of the Union. On the contrary, it is openly deploying political, economic, and strategic pressure against the EU and its Member States, including through explicit threats of territorial annexation, punitive trade measures, and interference in European democratic governance. This aggressive posture fundamentally alters the nature of the transatlantic relationship and requires clear political conclusions.

Europe must therefore move from reliance to deterrence. The Union possesses a broad arsenal of political, economic, regulatory, financial, and security instruments. These instruments must no longer be treated as theoretical options, but as credible tools of power. The EU must be politically and institutionally prepared to state clearly that it is ready to use them, should coercive behaviour persist. Only credible deterrence can prevent escalation, protect European sovereignty, and defend the Union's interests, partners, and values.

Against this background, I would like to draw your attention to three interlinked priorities: establishing credible deterrence through military and economic leverage; strengthening the Union's relationship with Greenland; and reinforcing the Union's internal capacity to act decisively as a geopolitical power.

I. Deterrence Through Economic and Military Leverage

Deterrence must be credible, visible, and applicable not only to the situation concerning Greenland, but to all forms of political, economic, or territorial pressure exerted by the United States against the European Union.

As a first step, the European Union should use its economic leverage decisively. The recent threats by President Donald Trump to impose increased customs duties on states refusing to endorse or comply with his plan to annex Greenland are unacceptable. Given the multiple threats, **Renew Europe cannot vote the US-EU Turnberry trade deal**. Proceeding under current political conditions would send the wrong signal, suggesting that trade cooperation can be decoupled from respect for European sovereignty and territorial integrity. It would create political space to reassess the broader transatlantic relationship and to make clear that access to the EU market cannot coexist with pressure tactics against the Union or its Member States and partners.

The EU should also be prepared to deploy further targeted and proportionate countermeasures. The **EU Anti-Coercion Instrument** should be **actively prepared**, as it was designed precisely to respond to situations of economic intimidation of this nature.

In addition, **targeted export restrictions** on strategically sensitive technologies produced in the EU could be envisaged if coercive behaviour persists. As a last resort, the **sale of US sovereign debt** held within EU jurisdictions could also constitute a powerful financial signal.

From a security perspective, the recent deployment of troops to Greenland by EU partners sends a strong and welcome signal of European responsibility and solidarity. This momentum should be consolidated. In addition to boots on the ground, the EU should consider **establishing a European naval presence** capable of monitoring and deterring potential threats in the Arctic region, including increased Russian or Chinese activity should such threats materialise. This would demonstrate that Europe is prepared to assume responsibility for the security of its Arctic neighbourhood.

Once, and if, the threat of a takeover of Greenland is definitively removed, the Union should **seek discussions with the United States on Arctic security within the NATO framework**. At the same time, it should be clearly recalled that the United States already has the legal ability to deploy troops in Greenland if the genuine concern is Arctic security, rendering any territorial ambition both unnecessary and unacceptable.

Regulatory deterrence must be equally clear. The Commission should also **fully enforce the Digital Markets Act and the Digital Services Act** against major online platforms that do not behave fairly on the EU market and/or systematically disseminate disinformation and illegal content within the Union, particularly where such content amplifies narratives portraying the EU as an adversary. The DSA and DMA are instruments of rule enforcement, not censorship, and their application would demonstrate that Europe governs its digital space according to its own laws.

In parallel, caution is required on sensitive data and digital rights. The EU should **oppose, for the time being, the sharing of biometric data** with the United States, given the current political climate and the risks to fundamental rights. In addition, the proposed **Digital Omnibus should be significantly revised** to ensure that it does not undermine the rights of EU citizens for the benefit of US big tech companies that actively support President Trump's political project. Regulatory simplification must not become regulatory surrender.

II. Strengthening the Union's Ties with Greenland

The European Union must significantly reinforce its political, economic, and strategic engagement with Greenland. This is both a matter of solidarity and a clear signal that the EU will not tolerate external pressure on a territory linked to one of its Member States and partners. This engagement must be firmly grounded in the principle that the future of Greenland can only be decided by the Greenlandic people themselves.

To this end, the Union should **substantially increase funding under the existing budgetary line dedicated to Greenland**, with a strong focus on education, healthcare, infrastructure, connectivity, and local economic diversification. Such funding should also support the construction of additional subsea connections. This would represent not only concrete support for Greenlandic society, but also a strategic investment in long-term resilience, stability, and self-determination.

In parallel, the EU should **establish a dedicated budgetary vehicle to support the sustainable development of Greenland's mineral sector** in accordance with the highest environmental, social, and governance standards. Such an initiative would offer a credible European alternative to US-driven extractive projects, ensuring local value creation, democratic oversight, and environmental protection.

In the same spirit, energy and climate policy must also be fully integrated into this strategic approach. The EU should **progressively reduce its reliance on US liquefied natural gas** while accelerating decarbonisation, relying primarily on itself and trusted partners.

In the same spirit, the Union should state clearly that it is **open to the re-accession of Greenland to the European Union**, should the Greenlandic people so decide through a **democratic referendum**. This would reaffirm the EU's respect for self-determination and demonstrate that it remains an attractive political, economic, and social community for Arctic peoples. Equally we need to welcome the renewed interest in Iceland for EU membership.

Finally, the EU should recall unequivocally that Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union applies and that **Greenland, as part of the territory of the Kingdom of Denmark, falls under the Union's mutual assistance clause**. Any attempt to coerce or seize territory in the Arctic would therefore have serious consequences.

III. Internal Reforms to Enable European Strategic Action

However, external credibility also depends on internal capacity. If the European Union is to deter coercion and defend its interests effectively, it must also address its own institutional limitations.

The unprecedented US sanctions imposed on former Commissioner Thierry Breton, as well as on four other individuals, constitute an unacceptable interference in European democratic governance. The Union must respond with unity and clarity.

Therefore, the **decision-making in foreign and security policy must become faster** and more resilient. The systematic use of unanimity constrains the Union's ability to act in crises. The Commission should actively support a move towards qualified majority voting in relevant areas of external action, using existing Treaty provisions.

The role of the High Representative/Vice-President should be strengthened to ensure genuine political leadership and coherence, including clearer authority to coordinate diplomatic, economic, regulatory, and security instruments, as well as stronger backing from the Commission and the Council in moments of confrontation with external powers.

Accordingly, the **completion of the European Defence Union** must become a political priority rather than a long-term aspiration. Strategic autonomy in defence, including a genuine European preference in procurement, is no longer optional if the EU is to be taken seriously as a geopolitical actor.

Finally, Europe's capacity to deter coercion and project power also rests on its economic strength and industrial competitiveness. In this regard, the Union must move rapidly to implement, in their entirety, the **recommendations set out in Mario Draghi's report** on European competitiveness. These recommendations provide a comprehensive roadmap to restore investment capacity, deepen the single market, scale up strategic industries, and mobilise both public and private capital. While regulatory simplification can play a role, the competitiveness agenda cannot be reduced to omnibus packages alone. It requires decisive action on investment, innovation, industrial policy, energy costs, and capital markets integration. Delaying or fragmenting the implementation of these recommendations would weaken Europe's economic base and, by extension, its geopolitical credibility.

Madam President, the European Union stands today as the best place in the world to live, to work, and to enjoy freedom under the rule of law. Europe therefore cannot and should not trade away its regulatory sovereignty, its territorial integrity, or its democratic values. These are not weaknesses to be bargained away, but strengths to be defended.

At the same time, the European Union has no interest in weakening or severing its relationship with the United States. On the contrary, we remain committed to nurturing strong and constructive transatlantic ties and to working closely with those forces in the United States - within public opinion and across party lines - that continue to support NATO and a robust transatlantic partnership.

However, the transatlantic relationship can no longer be treated as an unconditional given. Respect must be mutual, and deterrence must be credible. If the European Union does not react firmly and credibly now to the threats emanating from the administration of President Donald Trump, it risks setting a precedent that could irreversibly weaken its ability to defend its interests and values in the future. A firm, principled, and strategic response is therefore essential - not to dismantle transatlantic ties, but to stabilise them on the basis of respect, responsibility, and shared security, and to ensure that the European Union can protect its citizens, its partners, and its future.

Yours sincerely,