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Ska Keller for President of the European Parliament

Dear Members of the European Parliament, dear colleagues, dear friends,

Five weeks ago citizens all over the EU participated in the European Elections, in order to decide on the Future of European Union. They trusted us with their votes and gave us a mandate to shape the future of our common continent. It is now our democratic responsibility to deliver policies for the future and to decide on the future course of action of this Parliament.

STRENGTHEN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Elections proved that European voters want change in the EU. With the high turnout in the European elections, the Parliament has a special role and responsibility as the only directly elected EU institution to make the voters' voice heard. Its role vis-a-vis the Council and the Commission needs to be strengthened.

The European Elections demonstrated that citizens have high expectations about the EU and follow it with great interest: But we as an institution do not always succeed in communicating its importance, nor do we convince all citizens that the European Parliament is the place where the issues that are the most crucial to them are being discussed. I want to make sure the European Parliament becomes the place for debate on Europe's future - where we hold EU institutions accountable and give direction to our common future. After we have discussed with Prime Ministers and Presidents in the past years, I want to open the Parliament up, for discussions with citizens and personalities from civil society.

With the committees on Dieselgate, Luxleaks and Pesticides, the European Parliament has established itself as a crucial actor in scrutinizing the executive on these major Europe-wide scandals. I want to see this role strengthened further: In the future, the decision to set up special, inquiry committees should be taken by the plenary itself.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AS THE CHAMPION FOR THE RULE OF LAW, DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

As EP-President I want to be an ambassador for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and a partner for those in the world that fight for these principles in Europe. The European Parliament must clearly and unequivocally defend democracy, human rights, freedom of the press, freedom for citizens to demonstrate and the independence of the judiciary. I would therefore encourage the implementation of a permanent structure within the Committee on Civil Liberties and Fundamental Rights, as already demanded by a majority of this house, to monitor breaches of democracy and the rule of law no matter where they occur.

In order for us to be fully credible, we as an institution must act upon the principles that we publicly defend: we need to establish a new understanding of transparency and openness – be it when it comes to the publication of key documents linked to legislation, the influence of lobbyists on the legislative process, or when it comes to sanctions on Members of our House who breach our common principles. The new President will have to ensure that our recent rule changes, on opening up the law-making process, lobbyists and MEP interests are properly implemented.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ECOLOGICAL REFORMS

Like far too many institutions, the EP has been a place where women and men have been the victim of harassment. As President I want to ensure a zero tolerance policy towards all forms of harassment and discrimination. I want to finally make sure that the EP implements the demands that we as a plenary adopted in the MeToo Resolution.

The social norms we want to see implemented in the EU, need to guide us as an institution. I want to make the European Parliament more socially responsible. It should ensure the rights and well-being of its workers, not least by improving the working conditions of those on precarious contracts. We cannot accept the fact that still today women are systematically discriminated against in the work place. That is why, I would implement a Gender Action Plan for the European Parliament, which ensures complete gender parity in all key EP posts and equal representation in EP hearings. I want to make the EP a model for gender balance and inclusion, which leads the way for other institutions. Finally, I want to make sure that the European Parliament, as an institution, reflects the urgency of the climate question and becomes the model for an environmentally friendly organisation. We can cut our use of plastic, promote energy efficiency, reduce our carbon footprint and set standards for a more sustainable and ecological future.

Dear colleagues, the European Union is the biggest historic achievement of our continent and is today as important as ever. It has ensured peace and friendship in a continent dominated by war and hatred. As elected members of the European Parliament, we have a shared responsibility to honour and defend this historic achievement that we can be grateful to have inherited. Having been born in a country divided by the iron curtain and having lived next to a border between Germany and Poland, I feel the responsibility to do my share to defend a free and integrated Europe and to make sure that we will never again see division between the people of Europe. In order to defend what Europe is today, we need to show the courage to change it for the better. The European Parliament will have a key role to play in this leap forward. I am ready to take on my part of the responsibility, as President of the European Parliament.

Ska KELLER

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