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Welcome address

It sounds like I have been in politics too long. Dear colleagues and dear friends, firstly I would like to warmly welcome you to sunny Finland. Why are you laughing? Maybe someday you will be able to see it. You can still laugh. In the modern world interdependence is high. This is especially true for a small, open economy like Finland. When the global economy sneezes, we often get the flu.

For sustainable growth, economists need a positive feedback loop between a stable operating environment, trust in a better outlook, productive investment, new jobs, etc. Now that positive feedback loop seems to be broken. Financial markets play a crucial role in all of this. They are connecting those with ideas but no money with those with money but no ideas. Financial markets are also used to dealing with risk and uncertainty. However, the road ahead is especially foggy.

One quote actually says that only uncertainty is certain. The list of investors' concerns is long. Everybody knows about the trade war, Brexit, possible bubbles in asset prices, climate change, and political polarisation. These are all mentioned and are fuelling uncertainty. All of these topics have been discussed during this Eurofi meeting in these past two days.

Our job as policymakers is to try to address these concerns with the tools that we have. Central banks have monetary policy tools and supervise this, and we as governments are responsible for legislation and fiscal policy. Tomorrow and Saturday I will host an informal ECOFIN meeting here in sunny Helsinki. We will obviously not be able to deal with everything but we shall have very interesting discussions on rebooting the Capital Markets Union (CMU), the role of the financial sector in countering hybrid threats, the role of finance ministers in tackling climate change, including energy taxation, and the review of the EU fiscal rules. For Eurofi members, the two financial market topics are especially timely. On the

CMU, the Finnish Presidency wants to shift the focus to retail clients that are the main drivers of the European economy.

Regulatory and other barriers still prevent smooth movement of investments and financial services across borders in Europe and we need to take a critical look at such barriers. The resilience of the finance sector infrastructure against hybrid threats is another timely issue. The financial system is critical for the function of our societies and we should step up our efforts to protect it. Cyber security is a topic that maybe could be discussed more here at Eurofi too.

However, dear friends, it is time to let you enjoy. I hope that you will enjoy your stay here in Helsinki, in Finland, and most of all I hope that you will spend a lot of euros here in Finland because, actually, we need our GDP to increase. A warm welcome to you. ■