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Deputy Prime Minister Maxime Prévot reacts to the new customs duties announced by the US President

On April 2, the United States announced new import tariffs of 20% on almost all European products, and even higher rates on specific sectors to be determined. This will affect not only Belgian companies, but also our citizens in one way or another, particularly due to a decrease in economic growth. Belgium's growth could be affected, and this at a time when the United States itself is asking us to increase our defense investment spending.

"The United States and the European Union have been strategic trading partners for decades. Our economic cooperation has brought prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic," said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Prévot. "Our economies are closely linked, and it is in everyone's interest to strengthen this cooperation rather than disrupt it. No one wins in a trade war. Instead of building new barriers, we must build bridges. It is regrettable that the United States, after having weakened multilateralism, has now decided to unilaterally attack the global trade order by applying tariffs to everyone and especially to its partners. These tariffs will restrict domestic consumption, slow down the global economic dynamic, increase inflation and ultimately impact the price of citizens' shopping carts."

The Belgian government is carefully analyzing the impact of these measures and will consult closely with the sectors concerned. Belgium supports the European Commission, which is preparing a firm and proportionate response. "We will react quickly and assertively, proportionately and unitedly, with a strategy that protects our economy. It would indeed be inappropriate to take measures that could harm us more than the United States. But by playing with matches, the United States will end up getting burned. The knock-on effect for their own economic dynamics seems to be neglected by Washington," emphasizes Maxime Prévot.

In doing so, Belgium continues to advocate for dialogue. "Everyone loses in trade disputes. It's a *lose-lose* approach. The American economy will also feel the consequences. That is why we support the European Commission's proposal to invite the United States to negotiations to find a solution that brings stability rather than uncertainty. On this new front, the European Union must also show its unity and strength," says Maxime Prévot.

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