

Remarks by President Donald Tusk before the EU-Japan Leaders' meeting

Prime Minister Abe, it is a pleasure to welcome you here in Brussels.

Before I go further, let me express our heartfelt condolences to the people of Japan on the devastating earthquakes that have struck Kyushu. Our thoughts are with those who have lost loved ones in this catastrophe. We can only look with admiration upon Japan's resilience when faced with natural disasters of this magnitude.

Dear Prime Minister, your visit to Brussels ahead of the G7 summit marks a fruitful cooperation between Japan and the EU. Our relations are based on common values: liberal democracy, the rule of law and the freedom of expression. These are the foundations of our political systems. They unite us and also make us stronger internationally, especially during difficult times we live in. From the East and South China Seas to the conflicts in Syria and the wider Middle East to Ukraine, the G7 will need to keep unity. I am pleased that the G7 summit will begin with leaders' debating these very fundamental values, which make us who we are.

I wish to thank the Prime Minister for putting at our request the migration and refugee crisis on top of the G7 agenda. This is a global crisis and we need to realise that no single country - or no group of countries for that matter - holds a golden key to solving it. Therefore we need to build a global awareness and encourage others to step up their efforts. The international community needs to acknowledge that countries like Lebanon or Jordan are providing a global public good in assisting refugees. This public good has to be financed by the global community.

During these challenging times, both in terms of geopolitics and economics, we need to make sure that Europe contributes to stability rather than global instability. We should do all in our power to dispel uncertainties. There is no doubt that a successful completion of the ongoing review of Greece's programme would strengthen confidence. I urge Finance Ministers to reach an agreement very soon and I hope that by the end of May, when we meet at the G7 summit, the implementation of Greece's programme is positively assessed. I want to encourage all the ministers and institutions to re-double their efforts in finalising the review.

Finally we will review progress in our bilateral relations and provide a clear political steer to our negotiators on a Free Trade Agreement. I hope we can conclude the negotiations for both agreements in the near future. Let me however recall that the EU is interested in a strategic partnership with Japan that will be underpinned by an ambitious trade deal. For this to happen both sides need to demonstrate political will.

Prime Minister, once again a warm welcome to Brussels. Thank you.

Press office - General Secretariat of the Council

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319

press@consilium.europa.eu - www.consilium.europa.eu/press