

Remarks by President Donald Tusk before the G7 summit in Charlevoix, Canada

Good morning. Bonjour.

When we met on the eve of our Taormina summit last year, I said that it would be the most challenging G7 in years. Unfortunately, this is even more true today. Despite the excellent preparation by our Canadian friends, including the personal engagement of Prime Minister Trudeau, our discussions here in Charlevoix will be far from easy. It is evident that the American president and the rest of the Group continue to disagree on trade, climate change and the Iran nuclear deal. What worries me most, however, is the fact that the rules-based international order is being challenged. Quite surprisingly, not by the usual suspects, but by its main architect and guarantor: the US.

Naturally, we cannot force the US to change their minds. At the same time, we will not stop trying to convince our American friends and President Trump that undermining this order makes no sense at all. Because it would only play into the hands of those who seek a new, post-West order, where liberal democracy and fundamental freedoms would cease to exist. This is in the interest of neither the US, nor Europe.

I want to be very clear today. Our common values and the rules-based order are worth fighting for, and we will always stand in their defence. Because they are the foundation of our liberal democracies and they define our way of life. There is no way we are giving up on them. But of course we are open to reasonable arguments, whenever something doesn't function well. There is always room for debate. It is also one of the reasons we are here today.

Even in difficult times like these, and despite all the differences, there is still much more that unites us, than divides us. It is far too early for our adversaries and enemies to celebrate. On most fronts, the G7 continues to push in the same direction: when it comes to achieving the complete denuclearisation on the Korean peninsula, countering the aggressive stance of Russia and searching for a political solution to the conflict in Syria. We must also demonstrate unity regarding the ongoing land reclamation and militarisation in the South China Sea, as the international law must apply to all countries, big and small, on land and at sea. As the G7, we also want to defend our democracies from threats by foreign actors. To this end, we will discuss stepping up cooperation to prevent and respond to unacceptable foreign interference in our democratic processes. We want to strengthen G7 coordination in this field. Our unity in these areas is crucial for Europe and for the whole world. And I still believe that the overall unity of our Group will prevail. Despite seasonal turbulences, we will persevere. I have no doubt about it.

Last but not least, I want to make an important appeal in the case of Oleg Sentsov, the Ukrainian film maker, who was involved in the Euro Maidan protests in Kiev, and who opposed the annexation of Crimea by Russia. He is currently serving a twenty-year sentence in a high-security prison camp in Siberia, after a political trial in Russia, as a result of which he was accused of terrorism. Today is the 24th day of his indefinite hunger strike which he is planning to follow through, if his demand, that is the release of 64 Ukrainian political prisoners, is not met. This is why I ask the G7 leaders to show their support for Oleg Sentsov. Our solidarity can save his life.

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