

Remarks by President Donald Tusk at the press conference after the EU-LAS summit in Egypt

Today, we have concluded the first summit ever between the leaders of the European Union and the League of Arab States. I truly believe that it can be the beginning of a new chapter of cooperation between us.

It is time to get real about partnership between the Arab world and Europe. We are confronted by many of the same challenges, in a geo-political context that has become even more dangerous and unstable. Challenges such as dealing with international security crises and terrorism, fighting climate change and mass population displacement or ensuring sustainable growth and investment in an uncertain global economy. As close neighbours, we have no alternative but to work together on these and other issues.

The global rules-based order is clearly under threat. We have agreed here in Sharm El-Sheikh that both sides will work together to defend it. Multilateral solutions remain the best way to address threats to international peace and security. This is true whether we talk about the situations in Syria, Libya, Yemen, or the Middle East Peace process. And I am happy to say that, as we have written in our Summit declaration, we renewed our commitment to the upholding of all aspects of international human rights law.

Today leaders committed to developing a positive cooperation agenda that goes beyond managing crises and conflict. We want to develop common projects - from energy security to technology, to tourism and trade - that will encourage the investment and sustainable growth that our peoples need. And we will also work together to speedily implement the Paris Agreement.

Leaders also agreed to cooperate and coordinate on a number of security and border control issues. We will work to address the root causes of terrorism and deepen our efforts to combat the movement of foreign terrorist fighters across our borders. Violent extremists must be cut off from all forms of support. On border control and the fight against irregular migration: we will scale up our joint efforts to prevent people smuggling, eradicate trafficking in human beings and combat those who exploit vulnerable people.

This summit is only the beginning, but a very good beginning. The beginning of a frank and substantive conversation between our parts of the world. Let me conclude by thanking our League of Arab States partners for the excellent cooperation in making this Summit possible. And of course, to President Al Sisi and the Egyptian people: thank you so much for all your efforts and warm hospitality here in Sharm El-Sheikh.

In many ways, today is your success, Mr President. Thank you.

Answering to questions from journalists, President Tusk said:

On Brexit:

In order to put an end to speculations, I can first of all say that Prime Minister May and I discussed yesterday a lot of issues, including the legal and procedural context of a potential extension. For me it's absolutely clear that if there is no majority in the House of Commons to approve a deal. We will face an alternative: chaotic Brexit or extension. The less time there is until the 29th of March, the greater the likelihood of an extension and this is an objective fact, not our intention, not our plan, but an objective fact. I believe that in this situation we are in, an extension would be a rational solution, but Prime Minister May still believes that she is able to avoid this scenario. I can assure you, and I did it also yesterday in my meeting with Prime Minister May, that no matter in which scenario we will be, the 27 will show maximum understanding and goodwill.

On human right:

Never, under no circumstances, will I give up on freedom and democracy and that is why I insisted, that our summit declaration should include our common commitment from both sides to the upholding of all aspects of international human rights law. And I am absolutely convinced, my whole life experience tells me, that in this very context, dialogue is always much better than confrontation and if you want to improve our standards - and we have to talk also about Europe today, not only about our neighbourhood - we have to find the best way for open, frank, but dialogue, not confrontation. And this is why I really appreciate this approach also from our host.

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