



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Remarks by President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy
after his meeting with Prime Minister of Poland Donald Tusk**

First of all, I am always glad to be back in Warsaw. And again I had good talks with Prime Minister Donald Tusk. Likewise, I appreciate the meeting I had earlier today with President Komorowski. And this evening, I look forward to attending the Grand Gala of Polish Business Leaders.

Our meeting today gave us the opportunity to discuss a number of current and upcoming issues. Of those, the situation in Ukraine is of particular concern and importance. It is only two months since I was last in Warsaw. I was on my way to the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius. It was a positive summit because we initialled the Association Agreements including Free Trade Areas with Georgia and Moldova. Those agreements now need to be signed as soon as possible.

But it was also a deeply disappointing summit. Our European hopes, wishes and efforts for closer association with Ukraine did not materialise. And the disappointment has only worsened as the situation in Ukraine has continued to deteriorate.

The European Union continues to be ready to sign and implement our agreement - initialled by the Ukrainian government more than a year ago - provided the authorities confirm their adherence to a free, united and democratic Ukraine and to the values on which the Association Agreement is based. The European Union believes in close political ties and in the power of shared prosperity because we know the benefits they bring to both sides. In 1990 the prosperity levels were the same in Poland and Ukraine. Today, only 24 years later, Poland is three times more prosperous than Ukraine.

P R E S S

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In light of the tragic and fatal recent escalation of violence in Kiev, I strongly deplore and condemn the unjustified use of force and brutality by the Ukrainian authorities against demonstrators - with the vast majority still being peaceful demonstrators. And I wish to express my deepest condolences to the families of those who died. Those responsible must be held to account. I wish for a quick recovery for the hundreds who got wounded as well as the immediate release of all those imprisoned for their participation in the peaceful demonstrations.

I call on all sides to refrain from violence. Recent restrictions on fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press will not solve the crisis, it will only further destabilise the country. This is the responsibility of the Ukrainian authorities. Genuine dialogue with civil society and the political opposition is the only way out - and it is the right democratic way out of this crisis. Commissioner Füle delivered the same message in Kiev. This dialogue can only succeed if there is the political will to overcome the crisis, especially within the government. The people needs further tangible steps and perspectives of change towards a democratic and open Ukraine.

Nobody can prevent the people of Ukraine from seeing their dreams fulfilled one day. Our door remains open. And I remain convinced that Ukraine and its people have a rendez-vous with history. Dziękuję. Thank you.
