



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT**

**Brussels, 17 December 2010  
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**Remarks by  
Herman VAN ROMPUY  
President of the European Council  
at the press conference following the meeting of Heads of State or Government**

As you know, yesterday we added a crucial piece to this year's work on making Europe's economies more crisis-proof.

We agreed on the limited Treaty amendment which will allow the establishment of a permanent crisis mechanism for the stability of the Eurozone, and we endorsed the general features of that mechanism.

Euro area leaders also underlined that we have a joint economic strategy and the political will to do whatever is required to ensure the Eurozone's stability.

Our joint economic strategy is part of the Conclusions.

Fiscal consolidation, structural growth and firm crisis management are the three pillars.

Elements of this strategy will be further developed in the coming months as a comprehensive response to any challenges, as part of the Eurozone's new economic governance.

This morning we focused on our relations with strategic partners. At our September meeting, all Heads of State or Government agreed to be more involved with the European Union's external relations. In September, we also decided to act more in terms of reciprocity and mutual benefits in our dealings with global partners.

The new approach has allowed the Commission President and myself to put a stronger EU message at bilateral summits with third countries. I briefed colleagues about the positive outcome of our three recent meetings.

At the summit with President Obama we opened new avenues for transatlantic cooperation on growth, jobs and security, such as green growth and cyber security.

**P R E S S**

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At the summit with President Medvedev we reached bilateral agreement on Russia's WTO accession: a major achievement.

The summit with Prime Minister Singh of India showed good progress on an ambitious and balanced free trade agreement with India and a joint declaration on international terrorism.

These meetings all showed that for our partners the European Union is not only an economic union and a trade bloc, but also an important geopolitical partner.

As I said in September, it is the beginning of a process, but we are clearly moving in the right direction.

As a further follow-up to our discussion in September, Lady Ashton presented progress reports on how to deal with strategic partners. They allowed us to have a good exchange of views.

We also decided to give Montenegro the status of candidate country for accession. It underlines the conviction within the European Council that the countries of the Western Balkans have a European vocation.

We also agreed on the position on Côte d'Ivoire in line with what the ministers for Foreign Affairs decided a few days ago.

*I congratulate Prime Minister Leterme on the Presidency of the Council of Ministers over the past six months, in very difficult political circumstances. Belgium is deemed by everybody here, both yesterday and today, to have conducted a very successful Presidency. All our colleagues are grateful to Prime Minister Leterme and his government for the work they have done and we look forward to the incoming Hungarian Presidency.*

After the first year of the Lisbon Treaty, the new institutional system is in place. Both the Spanish and the Belgian Presidencies have helped to ensure a smooth transition, moreover, both have advanced a truly European agenda. I am looking forward, from 1 January, to working with Prime Minister Orban of Hungary to further build on this experience.

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