



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT**



Kyiv, 19 December 2011  
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### **Remarks of President Herman Van Rompuy, following the 15th EU-Ukraine Summit**

Mr President, thank you for an excellent organization of today's summit.

The summit allowed us to take stock of the bilateral relations and agree on priorities for the future. It was also an opportunity to assess in more general terms the implementation of commitments and respect to declared values.

Let me start by reiterating that Ukraine is a partner of strategic importance for the EU. Our commitment to developing the relationship between the EU and Ukraine is firm. Since the last summit there has been developments in the EU-Ukraine relations - both positive and some that have given us reason for strong concern.

Today, we can publically announce that negotiations on the Association Agreement have been finalised. It was difficult work, but your government's declared European choice and dedication has made it possible to conclude the talks with success. This is a giant step for our relations.

What is encouraging is the broad support this Agreement - and Ukraine's European choice - enjoys in Ukrainian society.

It is also of decisive importance for Ukraine's progress towards modernisation, prosperity, and the realisation of Ukraine's European ambition. I pay tribute to the work that has been done.

We want to take steps to sign and ratify the Association Agreement as soon as we can, but this will depend on political circumstances. In this regard, a number of recent domestic developments in Ukraine have led to a difficult atmosphere between the European Union and Ukraine.

# **P R E S S**

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The support of European public opinion to Ukraine's political association and economic integration to the EU is an important asset, closely related to this field. The perceived deterioration of the quality of democracy and rule of law in Ukraine has a direct impact in our Member-States, in our public at large, and in the European Parliament.

Our strong concern is primarily related to the risks of politically-motivated justice in Ukraine. The Timoshenko trial is the most striking example. But just as important, a comprehensive justice reform in line with international standards is absolutely key. Media freedom and freedom of assembly are also key for a full fledged democracy. Shortcomings have to be corrected.

Mr President, the respect for these principles, enshrined in the Eastern Partnership and at the core of the Association Agreement, is decisive for the pace and depth of rapprochement with the EU and of the signing and ratification of the Association Agreement . But it is also fundamental to Ukraine's future development as a competitive, dynamic and innovative society.

In this context, the parliamentary elections to be held next year, will be a litmus test. The conduct of these elections will have to meet the commitments of the OSCE, including the ensuring of a level playing field for all possible candidates. And it is of outmost importance that they can exercise their political rights.

We do, however, take note of the cross-party adoption by the Ukrainian Parliament of a new Law on Election of the People's Deputies. We encourage you to continue close cooperation with the Venice Commission.

In summary, we share not only the common interest but also the common ambition of a closer EU-Ukraine relationship. This summit is proof of our commitment. We will work toward the realisation of this ambition. But this will require a major effort from Ukraine.

Finally, we will have an exchange on a couple of regional issues during lunch.

First on Belarus. Today it is one year since the violations of electoral standards at the 19 December Presidential elections in Belarus, which triggered a crackdown on civil society and political opposition. The developments during the last 12 months are worrying - the atmosphere of repression remains unabated.

The EU's policy is principled. We stick to our policies of restrictive measures and outreach towards Belarusian civil society and public at large. We will not change this until all political prisoners are released and rehabilitated.

We are happy for the dramatic improvement in Ukraine – Moldova relations since our last Summit. The European Union and Ukraine have a common interest in the territorial integrity of Moldova. We have high hopes for the resumption of the formal talks.

Once again, Mr President, this is an important day in our relations. Hopefully it is the beginning of the important period in which we can fully share common values and common interests.