



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Remarks by President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy
following the EU-US summit**

It has been a great pleasure to welcome President Obama to this EU-US summit in Brussels. We meet at a hugely important moment – certainly for peace and security on the European continent.

Events in Ukraine and elsewhere go to show that there are many unsettling uncertainties. That is why the solid certainty of the transatlantic relationship is so crucial. It is the bedrock to face these challenges: a bond of friendship, tested by history. And that bond is shock-proof.

Cooperation among our countries is unrivalled. So in our meeting today we focussed on the issues where together we can provide a political steer at the highest level.

We obviously spoke about Ukraine – today's most pressing matter. It was a follow-up to our excellent exchange at the G7 meeting in The Hague two days ago. Europe and the United States have a strong and coordinated position; for the EU side, I refer you to the bold statements of last week's European Council. We support Ukraine and its people in their pursuit of a better life as a nation. Crimea's illegal annexation is a disgrace in the 21st century and we will not recognise it.

The first priority is to de-escalate the situation. Russia's support for an OSCE mission in Ukraine is a positive step. The fact that Russia and Ukraine's foreign ministers finally met in The Hague is another sign of more openness.

P R E S S

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However if there is further escalation, we Europeans and Americans are ready to intensify sanctions. With the understanding that sanctions are a means to an end. The goal is a negotiated solution, in respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and international law.

We also stand by Georgia and Moldova, and the European Union has brought forward to June the signing of Association Agreements with them.

Apart from Ukraine, we talked about negotiations with Iran, about working to end the terrible war in Syria, and to stop violence and anarchy in the Central African Republic. Both are humanitarian tragedies. The US and Europe will continue their work to fight terrorism in the Sahel. And appalled by Egypt's mass death-sentence of over 500 Muslim Brothers, we urge Egyptian authorities to restore the rule of law.

Our second major focus was the economy. We spoke about the recovery in Europe, which is taking hold. We should have 2% of growth next year.

Thanks to much hard work, Europe and the eurozone have really moved on. The focus now is on reinforcing economic fundamentals and on jobs. Last week saw the finishing touch on the Banking Union, the centrepiece of a stronger eurozone.

We also spent some time discussing energy – especially energy security and what we can do together to reduce Europe's dependency on Russian gas. Our G7 energy ministers will meet on this soon. We also spoke about climate change, and our ambitions for the upcoming global negotiations.

And today, together with President Obama, we reconfirmed our shared commitment to an ambitious transatlantic trade deal. President Barroso will say more about it in a minute.

Let me just say that, in days like these, forging even stronger *economic* ties across the Atlantic is also a powerful political sign. A way to show our public opinions and the world who we are at heart, in Europe and America – economies based on rules, societies based on values, and proud of being so.

Finally, today, we spoke about data flows; and President Barroso and I conveyed to the President European concerns after last year's revelations on surveillance programmes. These concerns are shared widely by citizens in EU member states. We welcome the recent initiatives announced by President Obama. The United States and the European Union are taking further steps to address these worries and restore trust.

On the governmental track, we'll have an umbrella agreement on data protection by this summer, based on equal treatment of EU and US citizens.

On the commercial data track, the US have agreed to a review of the so-called Safe Harbour framework. Transparency and legal certainty are essential to transatlantic trade – we all agree on that.

So, all in all, a focussed and productive meeting, and timely too. Mr President, we are looking forward to receiving you again, in this building, in less than three months: for the G7 summit in Brussels.