



European Council
The President

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**Remarks by President of the European Council
Donald Tusk
at the handover ceremony with the outgoing President
Herman Van Rompuy**

Today is my first day in office as President of the European Council. As you can imagine it is a very important day for me. And I hope that it is for you as well. If you are a little nervous about this replacement, the change of boss, don't worry, I'm a little nervous, too.

In fact it is a great honour for me to start working here. And of course a great challenge. First and foremost because Herman Van Rompuy, our first permanent President, will be a tough act to follow. And it is not a compliment, dear Herman, it is a fact. I am perhaps your greatest admirer in Europe. Not because you supported my election as your successor... or at least not only. It is no exaggeration when I say that you helped to steer us, to steer Europe out of the storm.

For five years – as one of the Prime Ministers around the table – I witnessed your skills: creating compromises; finding solutions; establishing trust, among often tough characters (I was no angel myself). Yes: Herman Van Rompuy in fact personifies traditional European political principles, which are also important to me: trust, common sense, moderation and decency. We all thank you for the excellent work you have done, Herman.

Dear colleagues, mes chers collègues, I also thank you for the great job you have done. I am aware of the importance of your work of protocol, of press, of interpretation, of translation, of security, of political advice, and all the other tasks and roles of this house. You were all an important part of Herman Van Rompuy's success. And I deeply believe that you will all be an important part of our future success.

I come here with a strong sense of purpose. In these difficult times Europe needs success. And success for Europe, in the coming years, means in my opinion four things:

First, protecting our fundamental values: solidarity, freedom, unity against the threats to the Union and its unity coming from both inside and outside. Today, not only are eurosceptics questioning the EU's value, the Union even has enemies. Politics has returned to Europe, history is back, and such times need leadership and political unity.

Second, we need ruthless determination to end the economic crisis. It is our responsibility to complete the genuine Economic Monetary Union. I take this task very seriously. And we must remember that our common currency, the Euro, is our advantage, not our disadvantage.

Third, the European Union must be strong internationally. Europe has to secure its borders and support those in the neighbourhood who share our values.

And fourth, the relations between Europe and the United States are the backbone of the community of democracies. Both we and the Americans are responsible for the future of our relations. The year ahead will be crucial. For all of these things, I will need your help at every step of the way.

I already know a lot about your dedication, your determination, your expertise. That gives me great confidence. Confidence that we will work as a team. Je me réjouis à l'idée de travailler avec vous. (That was French.)

Merci. Dank u wel, Herman. Thank you. Dziękuję bardzo, Polsko.
