

Remarks by President Donald Tusk after the informal meeting of heads of state or government, 23/09/2015

Good evening,

My objectives for this summit were to end the public finger pointing by having an honest discussion among leaders on the nature of the problem and possible solutions. Secondly to agree on short-term measures that need to be put in place before our regular European Council on migration in three weeks.

Tonight our discussion was based on facts, not emotions. There are eight million displaced people in Syria, while about four million have fled to Syria's neighbours. We should be talking about millions of potential refugees trying to reach Europe from Syria alone. Not to mention Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea and other places. Recently I visited refugee camps in Turkey and Jordan and I heard only one message: we are determined to get to Europe. It is clear that the greatest tide of refugees and migrants is yet to come. Therefore we need to correct the policy of open doors and windows. Now the focus should be on the proper protection of our external borders and on external assistance to refugees and the countries in our neighbourhood.

In light of this, leaders have agreed on increased help to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and other countries in the region. More assistance will be offered in exchange for reinforced cooperation. At least additional 1bn euro will be mobilized for help to the refugees in the region via the UNHCR and the World Food Programme. Here, let me thank those leaders who replied to my request of last Friday and have already offered fresh money to the World Food Programme.

Leaders also agreed that the current chaos at our external borders must end. Proper management and control of our external borders is our common responsibility. It would be unfair to put all the burden on Italy or Greece or other countries. Therefore, we all agreed to offer help in every possible way, including cooperation on hotspots. Actually this is quite an important achievement because only a few days ago the topic of hotspots seemed very controversial. Today we had a good discussion and in the spirit of good cooperation all leaders agreed that hotspots will be set up by the end of November.

The measures we have agreed today will not end the crisis. But they are all necessary steps in the right direction. We expect much work will already be done before we meet again at the October European Council. Tonight we have a common understanding that we cannot continue like we did before. Without changing the current paradigm the Schengen area will only exist in theory.

Jean-Claude will now go into a bit more detail on the various measures to be carried out. But I would like to thank him and his team specifically for their great efforts over the past few weeks. Your help was very visible today.

Thank you.

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