



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Press remarks by President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy,
following the 22nd EU-Japan summit**

It is a pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Abe to Brussels for the 22nd EU-Japan Summit. Today's meeting is the culmination of a nine-day visit the Prime Minister has made to six EU Member States. This demonstrates how much value Japan attaches to its relations with the European Union. We appreciate this, given the importance of our relations with Japan - a close and like-minded partner, with whom we share common values and common interests.

Although our previous Summit with Japan only dates back to November last, today we succeeded in giving yet another boost to our strategic partnership, strengthening bilateral relations and coordinating positions on important regional and global issues.

A little over a year ago the EU and Japan took the major step of launching negotiations on two important agreements. A Strategic Partnership Agreement aims at enhancing our political and sectoral cooperation and a Free Trade Agreement will help us further open up trade and enhance investments.

We agreed with the Prime Minister that together these agreements form a crucial foundation for taking our strategic partnership forward over the next decade. Negotiations have now reached a critical phase. If the one-year review of the Free Trade Agreement so allows, we must raise the level of ambition and bring these negotiations to a speedy and successful conclusion. Further opening of our markets will benefit trade and economic growth world wide.

P R E S S

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While trade and investment relations remain very important, our strategic partnership is moving into new areas of cooperation. The EU welcomes Japan's readiness to build up an enhanced security partnership with the EU as part of Japan's overall policy to contribute more actively to global peace and security.

Today, we identified some very concrete areas where Japan will cooperate with EU civilian crisis management missions. We will jointly support our African partners to improve their security and law enforcement capacity against the threats of terrorism and organised crime. We also agreed to carry out a joint counter piracy exercise between Japanese naval assets and EUNAVFOR Atalanta in the Western Indian Ocean. These are very promising steps, which, I hope, will eventually lead to full-fledged Japanese participation in EU crisis management missions and operations in the future.

The EU and Japan have a shared interest to promote regional stability and security - in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, in East Asia, in the wider Middle East and in Africa. Our discussions today centred around the question: how to strengthen the rules-based international system and make sure that all countries respect these rules.

While discussing the situation in Europe, we both reiterated our support for the Ukrainian people and their right to choose their own future, as well as our rejection of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. We equally expressed deep concern about the situation in eastern Ukraine and Odessa. We call on Russia to refrain from any steps to further destabilise Ukraine and instead to engage in a diplomatic resolution of the crisis.

The EU is grateful for Japan's solidarity and its political and financial support to Ukraine. We will continue to coordinate our positions, including as regards sanctions, within the Group of 7. Further steps in destabilising Ukraine will call for additional sanctions. The EU is ready to take decisions, if needed.

Prime Minister Abe also informed us about the security situation in East Asia. Here as elsewhere, any disputes must be resolved peacefully and in accordance with international law, not by force or other means of coercion. The EU will continue to call on all sides to refrain from raising tensions and to build a relationship based on trust, mutual respect and reconciliation. I also reaffirmed the EU's willingness to contribute more substantially to promote peace and security in the region and to be more closely involved in the regional architecture.

Finally, we discussed the situation in the Korean peninsula. I expressed to Prime Minister Abe the EU's grave concern about further development of the DPRK's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes, as well as its appalling human rights situation. The EU and Japan are cooperating closely here as well and have taken the lead in drawing the attention of the United Nations to widespread, severe and systematic human rights abuses in the DPRK.

Before handing over to President Barroso to review other areas of cooperation, I should once again like to thank Prime Minister Abe for the fruitful summit and reconfirm the EU's strong resolve to take our strategic partnership forward. We will see each other again in Brussels for the G7 meeting on 4-5 June. Thank you.