Video message by President of European Council Herman Van Rompuy

"We want to turn this Arab Spring into a true new beginning"

Tomorrow the European Council will discuss the events in Libya and in the Arab world. The situation in Libya remains very worrying.

We will make clear to the Libyan authorities that the use of force against citizens must stop. Those responsible will face grave consequences. The current leadership must give up power without delay.

We will discuss how the European Union can help the Libyan people: In securing a transition to democracy and the rule of law and in building up the economy. A humanitarian crisis is developing in Libya and at its borders. Almost a quarter of a million people have already left the country, out of fear. The European Union can not just stand by when the safety of the people is at stake.

What is happening on Europe's Southern borders is truly momentous. Irreversible change has already taken place in Egypt and in Tunisia. The European Council will discuss how to offer the whole region a positive perspective; how to help to turn this Arab Spring into a true new beginning. It is of strategic importance for Europe as well.

That is not all for tomorrow. I have convened a second meeting later on in the day. The 17 Heads of State or Government of the Euro countries will discuss a new "Pact for the Euro". It will bring the countries of the Eurozone more competitiveness, and more convergence. This Euro Pact is an important piece of our response to the public debt crisis. We will discuss some of the other parts as well.

Everything will come together at the European Council of end March. Tomorrow we will give guidance for the finalisation of the work between now and then. This should allow us to finally turn the corner.

Why do we do all this work for the euro? Not to attack the welfare state, no, on the contrary: to safeguard the welfare state. It is not to obstruct growth, no, it is to make economic growth and employment possible. We want a stronger Europe for the Europeans.

Watch the video message (available soon)
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