

Remarks by President Donald Tusk after his meeting with President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan

Let me start by thanking you, President Rahmon, my dear friend, for the absolutely wonderful hospitality and welcome to your beautiful country, and for our good discussion today.

My visit comes shortly after the launch of the European Union's new Central Asia Strategy. I am the first President of the European Council to visit Tajikistan, which is another sign of our commitment to building stronger partnerships with you and the entire region.

Your strategic location at the crossroads between Europe and Asia and the recent positive developments in your region have opened opportunities for a stronger, modern partnership. We value our partnership and would like to see it deepen.

The EU is proposing to share high standards, quality investment, education and trade opportunities and to promote transport, energy and digital connections, in full respect of your sovereignty and interests.

One reason I came here, is that I know how important you are for the security of the entire region. I am grateful for the opportunity to have seen the border with Afghanistan today. And I was really impressed by how much you are doing to protect it. I am happy to say that we will seriously increase our support of the Border Management Project in Central Asia.

The EU remains strongly committed to cooperating with all of the Central Asian countries on fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and violent extremism.

Today I also visited the Pamir Glaciers. I was impressed by the beauty but also by the visible impact of climate change. This is not only a major concern for your country, but for the region and the whole world. The EU remains committed to fighting climate change. And I am sure Tajikistan will be the best partner in this.

In this context, let me also say that the efforts your country puts into regional water management are valued.

President Rahmon and I also discussed the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and the EU. I confirmed that the EU is ready to improve Tajikistan's access to Europe's markets, as soon as the necessary conditions are met. And you know, Mr President, what I am talking about. We also discussed the prospect of negotiating a new bilateral agreement. That would be a positive development in our relations.

Mr President, there are many commonalities in Poland's and Tajikistan's

histories, and our fights for the freedom of our nations. Human rights are an essential part of this history. The highest goal of every politician is to ensure security but also human rights and freedoms. To achieve that, strength, courage and good will are needed. You have it all, Mr President. I would also like to underline the importance of your personal role and the role of your country in the political stabilisation not only in Tajikistan but in the whole region. Because of geography, your efforts are much more important than only in this local, regional context. In fact today your efforts, your activities, your impact also in a global context. And in these efforts for stabilisation and security, you can always count on Europe, and me personally.

Dear President, let me conclude by once again thanking you for your hospitality and welcome.