

Remarks by President Donald Tusk after his meeting with Prime Minister of Finland Juha Sipilä

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Let me first of all thank Prime Minister Sipilä for the very good and productive talks today. Juha, it's great to be back here in Helsinki. As you know it is always a pleasure for me, not only for the effective time, but it is also a personal pleasure. And thank you for your cooperation.

Finland's engagement in Europe is truly respected by everyone. Today, I would like to especially underline your engagement in security and defence. You actively participate in PESCO, the newly-established EU defence cooperation. And the Helsinki Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats strengthens both European and transatlantic capabilities in this important field. I greatly appreciate your commitment to European security.

Today we discussed the preparations for the European Council next week, also in view of President Trump's recent announcements.

His proposal to impose tariffs on European steel and aluminium is a bad sign for transatlantic relations. Let me be clear: instead of risking a trade war, which he seems eager to wage, we should be aiming for greater cooperation. When the President says he is unhappy about too many barriers and tariffs between the EU and the US, I can understand him. We are not happy either. That is the reason why, a few years ago, we started trade negotiations with the US. We should go back to these talks now. Make trade, not war, Mr President.

In this context, Mr Trump has also said that real friends will be excluded from the proposed measures. I would like to stress today that the free world has survived the most difficult decades only thanks to the fact that Europeans and Americans have been real friends. So let us cherish this friendship, not challenge it.

How important this message is, is demonstrated by the recent events in the UK. Irrespective of Brexit and the tough negotiations, I would like to express my full solidarity with Prime Minister Theresa May in the face of the brutal attack, which was inspired, most likely, by Moscow. I am ready to put this issue on the agenda of next week's EU summit. And thank you for your

support in this context.

Here in Finland, at the heart of Europe's fight against hybrid threats, there is no need to explain the significance of close cooperation between Europeans and Americans. At a time when someone on the outside spreads fake news, meddles in our elections, and attacks people on our soil with the use of a nerve agent, the response must not be transatlantic bickering, but transatlantic unity. For real friends, this should be obvious.

Let me conclude by mentioning Finland's Presidency of the Council in the autumn of next year. It will be a critical period for the EU, and we will be relying on your steady leadership. Yours will be the first full Presidency following the UK's exit from the EU. It will also be the Presidency to oversee the institutional transition, with a new European Parliament, European Commission and a new President of the European Council. Everything you have achieved over the past years suggests that it will be a brilliant Presidency. I have no doubt about it. It will for sure not be an easy task, but here we count on the famous Finnish *sisu*. Thank you. *Kiitos!*

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