

Remarks by President Donald Tusk after his meeting with Prime Minister of Slovenia Miro Cerar

Good afternoon. First of all, let me thank Prime Minister Cerar for the warm welcome, once again, here in Slovenia. This is my fourth visit to your country in my present role and again, as always, I feel very much at home here. Especially that we will visit today the city of Piran, which – like my hometown of Gdańsk – lies on the coast. After my many visits to Slovenia, I understand very well why the words *Ljubljana* and *ljubljenja* ('beloved') sound so similar, at least to the Polish ear.

Thank you Prime Minister for your hospitality but – more importantly – for your enormous engagement in making Slovenia stronger and Europe more united. I admire the way you are able to combine, on the one hand, fighting for the Slovenian interests and, on the other hand, contributing to the unity of the EU. Your efforts show that holding both national and European interests dear does not have to be in contradiction. In my eyes, and not only, you are both a tough Slovenian and a responsible European. Which makes you an extremely demanding, but also a constructive partner. Trust me, in today's politics this is a unique combination indeed. Whether we are discussing the migratory crisis, Brexit or economic matters, I can always count on your wisdom, forward-looking approach and shrewdness. Under your leadership, Slovenia has become a success story as a stable and reliable country.

Our talks today focused on the upcoming EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia – the first such meeting of the EU with the Western Balkan partners in 15 years. We discussed the preparation for the summit and the situation in the region in more detail, also from the perspective of my recent visits to Tirana, Podgorica, Belgrade, Pristina, Sarajevo and Skopje. We agreed that the EU should use the summit in Sofia, in the first place, to reaffirm the European perspective of the Western Balkans. At the same time, we should aim to improve, in concrete terms, human, digital and infrastructure connections with and within the Western Balkan partners. Last but not least, we should strive to boost cooperation in other areas of mutual interest, including migration and security. Because Balkan security is European security.

I really appreciate your engagement in keeping the enlargement agenda alive and your deep knowledge of the region. Slovenia has always been a strong advocate of the 'European perspective' for the Western Balkans. If the EU has remained fully committed to the enlargement policy, as was confirmed by the EU leaders during the last European Council in March, it is thanks also to your support. You have never given up on the idea that the future of the Western Balkans is with the European Union. Your engagement is truly invaluable. I have no doubt that Slovenia, and you yourself, will continue to play an important part in coordinating our action in the region, in order to create more stability and prosperity on our continent.

Hvala lepa. Thank you.

(Delivered in Slovenian)

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