

Remarks by President Donald Tusk at the opening ceremony of the Austrian Presidency

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First of all, I would like to thank the Chancellor for his hospitality, and wish him all the best with Austria's EU presidency. There is a huge amount of work to be done and limited time. But I feel, we could not be in better hands.

Given its location, Austria has always been at the heart of Europe – a meeting point between east and west, south and north. Thanks to this central role, Austria has become an essential bridge builder in the EU, not just economically and culturally, but also politically. And I know that you, Sebastian, given your own experience and past, will have a great sense, in your heart as well as mind, of how to make this bridge building Presidency a success for all of Europe.

Austria's motto for its EU presidency is 'A Europe that protects'. You could not have chosen a better motto, in my opinion. The need for security, as old as humanity, manifested itself with all its force during the migration crisis. The people of Europe expect us – and they have done for a long time – to show determination in our actions to restore their sense of security and order. People want this, not because they have, all of a sudden, become xenophobic and want to put up walls against the rest of the world, but because it is the job of every political authority to enforce the law, to protect its territory and the border. As our summit in the past days has shown, we are all working hard to ensure that the very words 'European Union' are associated with stability, not instability; security, not a lack of security. Above all, we must be united in this effort. And here I am, of course, counting on you, Sebastian.

As a faithful reader of the works of your great compatriots such as Karl Popper and Friedrich August von Hayek. I would like to warn all those who look for order and security in the public life, not to do it at the cost of freedom. In the history of Europe and Austria, of Poland and Bulgaria, the road to security has all too often become the road to serfdom.

Finally, I am also pleased that the Presidency will focus on securing stability in Europe's neighbourhood. As the saying goes, a good neighbour is

better than a distant friend. Especially today, when we do not have that many distant friends. Thanks to the efforts of Boyko, we have made good progress in strengthening the European perspective of the Western Balkans. I have no doubt that Austria will build on this legacy. Alles Gute!

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