

Remarks by President Donald Tusk at the press conference of the Brdo-Brijuni summit

Press contacts

Preben Aamann

European Council President Spokesperson

+32 2 281 51 50

+32 476 85 05 43

Good evening. Let me first of all thank you President Ivanov for hosting us. It is a true pleasure and honour to be involved in the Brdo-Brijuni process.

Let me also acknowledge the relentless efforts of Presidents Grabar-Kitarović and Pahor and their personal engagement in this process. Reconciliation in this part of Europe is important for the whole continent, for our stability, peace and prosperity.

I will limit myself to only a few remarks.

This week I have been travelling through the entire region. I came to the Western Balkans with a clear message from the leaders of all European Union Member States: we remain steadfast in our offer of a European perspective to the region. You can count on us.

And these are not empty words. These are hard facts. Just an example: if we look at the Western Balkan countries' total trade, 73% is with the EU. Twelve times bigger than China. 15 times more than Russia.

But of course the EU is not only about trade, investment and money. It is first and foremost about what kind of societies we want to be. Having lived the first part of my life under a communist regime, I have no doubt whatsoever about the best direction for citizens. But this is a choice, a decision, and work that only you in the region can undertake. Of course with the full support of your friends in the European Union.

Today, we discussed the importance of going further and enhancing connectivity within the region and with the European Union. We will continue these discussions next month in Sofia.

To conclude: positive developments are also possible in the Western Balkans. We have seen that recently with the border demarcation agreement between Pristina and Podgorica, as well as the Treaty on Friendship between Skopje and Sofia. We need more such positive developments.

During my roundtrip in the region, capital by capital, I have again become a

cautious optimist. It is possible that the history of the Balkans, a kind of a never ending horror movie can turn into an Oscar winning production with “a happy end”.

What I heard today from Korea and what I have experienced here in the Balkans in the last days should be a positive memento to all: that the impossible can become possible, and that it depends entirely on the good will and courage of individual people. Thank you.

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