

Remarks by President Juncker at the joint press briefing with European Council President Tusk ahead of the G7 Summit

Mr President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Buongiorno,

As you are, I am happy to be here in Taormina for this 43rd G7 Summit, the sixth in fact taking place in Italy. And I would like to thank Prime Minister Gentiloni for his hospitality and wish him all possible luck to have a successful Italian Presidency of the G7.

We will meet in a few moments from now – and there are four new leaders around the table. So Donald and myself, we are the only stable elements on the international landscape. We are veterans, but we are not old. And so it will be very interesting to know these new colleagues in a better way, although we have seen some of them yesterday and the days before.

We will stand up here – as we are always doing – for our shared values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. We do believe as Europeans in open societies and we are always seeking multilateral solutions. We want to build bridges, not walls.

But we have to understand those – in Europe and elsewhere – who do not see how globalisation works for them. I mean those 45% of Europeans who do think that globalisation is a threat and not an opportunity. We do think that it is an opportunity if dealt with in a proper way. We have to put fairness at the heart of everything the G7 and our partners do.

That is mainly related to trade and to all trade-issues. Around a third of our national income comes from trade with the rest of the world. It supports 1 in 7 jobs in the European Union and for every EUR 1 billion we get in exports, we create 14,000 extra jobs.

The EU's GDP is expected to grow by 1.9% this year and next year. All our Member States – the 28, 27 plus 1 – are expected to grow. With 233 million people having a job in Europe, more people are working than ever before. And public finances are improving. We had an average deficit level of 6.1% in 2010/2011; we are down now to between 1.2% and 1.6%. So the overall situation is improving.

During the first G7 we had in Bavaria and the next one last year in Japan – this time we do not have to discuss Greece in the same way we had to discuss

Greece previously. Greece is on track. Greece is doing well and I want to pay tribute to the courage and the dignity of the Greek people. Greece is a great nation and we have to respect that nation in the way I am saying.

Mr Tusk and myself, we will have a meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister later today in order to advance our common trade agenda.

Thanks. Grazie. Mille grazie.

Questions and Answers

Q1 Two questions for the two Presidents. On migration, what are the proposals going to be from the EU institutions and what can we expect from tomorrow's declaration? And on America, how optimistic are you that you can bridge the huge differences between the U.S. and the EU on climate change and trade, which are looking like very, very difficult dossiers?

President Juncker: As far as climate is concerned, we will discuss with our American and other partners and friends the issues. We will compare the way we do see things and the way the Paris Agreement has to be implemented and the way they possibly could see these problems. We do think that the Paris Agreement has to be implemented entirely, and that is the way we will discuss this issue later today.

Q2 I wanted to ask you whether it is true that in your conversations yesterday with President Trump he told you that Germans are "bad, very bad" because they sell too many cars in the U.S. If this is true, did you chastise him? What did you reply on this?

President Juncker: I do not want to comment but I have to comment on this, because we had a meeting with President Trump, which was a very friendly, constructive meeting. It is not true that the President took an aggressive approach when it came to the German trade surplus. I do really think – and for once it is true – that this is a real translation issue. If someone is saying: "the Germans are bad"; that does not mean that this can be translated literally.

Er hat nicht gesagt: die Deutschen benehmen sich schlecht. Er hat gesagt: wir haben ein Problem, wie andere auch, mit dem deutschen Überschuss. So he was not aggressive at all. And anyway, without taking the defence of the Germans, I was making clear that the U.S. cannot compare their trade situation with individual Member States of the European Union. They have to compare their performance with the global performances of the European Union. And I made it clear that the Commission is in charge of dealing with trade issues, and not the Member States.

Aber man muss das richtig stellen, es wird übertrieben – "bad". Also ich bin kein Spezialist im Englischen wie man weiß, aber "bad" heißt nicht böse. "Schlecht" reicht ja.

Q3 A question on Russia and the possible lifting of sanctions or considering. Can you tell us whether sanctions have been discussed and if the U.S. President gave any hint that he would be considering lifting them? Was there

*any consensus on keeping the sanctions according to the Minsk Agreement?
Could you also maybe comment on whether Brexit has come up with the President of the United States and whether he said that would cost him jobs when the UK is to leave the EU?*

President Juncker: On Brexit I have to say that we did not mention at length the Brexit-issue, but we were mentioning it *en passant*. We made it clear that this in our eyes is a real tragedy, that it is not in the interest neither of the British nor of the continental and the Irish Europeans. I described why we do not want other Member States to leave the European Union and I do not know any Member State having the intention to leave. We were explaining not in detail but roughly what this is about.