

Speech by President Donald Tusk at the gala dinner of the ASEM summit

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It is an honour and great pleasure for me to welcome you at the Brussels Art and History Museum. Thank you all for being here, and allow me, Your Majesty, to express my gratitude to you, and to the Belgian authorities, for the excellent support and cooperation in the organisation of this summit. Thank you very much.

The location of our gala dinner is not only impressive, it is also symbolic. This Museum offers us a journey through art and history, from pre-historic times to the 20th century, and the *art nouveau* era, from Europe to Asia, to America and Oceania.

Through this journey, it tells a story of connections, diversity, change, dialogue between our two continents – which are so far away, and yet so close.

And this story, if we were to carry it further, into our times, would be even more interesting. A modern-day Marco Polo could well repeat the words of the great explorer: “I did not write half of what I saw, for I knew I would not be believed.”

I deeply hope that our shared heritage and historical connections will help us to find common ground, and strengthen cooperation between our continents, so that we can create a better future for generations to come.

Our youth is present here tonight, with some short musical intermezzos. The talented Korean pianist Dong Hyek Lim, and a quartet from the European Union Youth Orchestra will perform Chopin and Mozart for us.

I will not hide the fact that I had a particular interest in hearing Chopin’s music tonight. Not only because he was a Polish composer. (And I know that President Macron will remind us that Chopin mainly worked in France.) But also because Chopin is so loved in Asia.

Let this evening have his words as a motto: “Simplicity is the highest goal, achievable when you have overcome all difficulties. After one has played a vast quantity of notes and more notes, it is simplicity that emerges as the crowning reward of art.”

Indeed, also in politics everything is simple – or at least it should be. And one doesn’t have to be a political virtuoso to tell the difference between

good and evil, between the truth and lies. Only sometimes, some like to pretend that it doesn't matter. But it does matter.

Your Majesties, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, please allow me to raise a toast – not only to what we have accomplished so far, but to what lies ahead of us: to our common future!

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