

Update: Report and concluding remarks by President Donald Tusk to the European Parliament on October European Council meetings

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Introductory remarks

I will start my report from the European Council with Brexit.

Last Wednesday evening, leaders listened to Prime Minister May's views on the negotiations. Afterwards, the EU27 met in the Article 50 format, with our chief negotiator Michel Barnier, to discuss the state of play. It was made clear by the UK that more time is needed to find a precise solution. Therefore, there is no other way but to continue the talks. Leaders expressed their full trust and support for Michel Barnier.

Since Prime Minister May mentioned the idea of extending the transition period, let me repeat that if the UK decided that such an extension would be helpful to reach a deal, I am sure that the leaders would be ready to consider it positively.

President Juncker also touched upon preparations for a no-deal scenario, an outcome which we hope never to see. And, of course, I stand ready to convene a European Council, if and when the Union negotiator reports that decisive progress has been made. The Brexit talks continue with the aim of reaching a deal.

Turning to migration. In the course of our regular discussions, on Thursday morning we had an exchange on our migration policy in all its aspects. The EU leaders want to strengthen external border control and deepen cooperation with third countries to stop illegal arrivals. The focus last week was also on increasing cooperation with countries in North Africa, and a tougher approach to people-smuggling networks. Leaders noted the Union's achievement in stemming mass arrivals of irregular migrants over the past three years, even if more remains to be done. We thanked the Austrian presidency for its efforts to reform the Common European Asylum System, and agreed that work should continue with a view to finding an agreement as soon as possible.

The European Council also adopted a number of decisions on internal security. Some of them should be seen in the context of increased concerns and risks of hybrid, cyber, as well as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats. One element of particular interest, was the leaders' call to create a capacity to respond to, and deter, cyber-attacks through EU sanctions. Of course, this is especially important in light of the European elections next year, and the active threat posed by malicious, outside interference in our democracies.

During the Euro Summit, the Eurogroup chair Mario Centeno gave an update on the finance ministers' work on the ESM reform and the Banking Union while the European Central Bank President Mario Draghi informed leaders on the economic outlook. The objective of the meeting was to keep up the pressure for concrete results in December. EU finance ministers should speed up their work, if we are to achieve our goal, which is strengthening the ESM and the banking union further.

Leaders also held a short debate on external relations, including on the fight against climate change ahead of COP 24 in Katowice. We adopted conclusions on taking our relations with Africa to a new level – an issue of great importance – and in this context agreed to organize a summit with the League of Arab States on the 24-25 February next year.

For many of the issues discussed at the European Council – from migration to security – as well as the need to scale up the Union's presence as a global actor in many fields, the EU's budget is key. At technical level, there have been detailed discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework. But, in general terms, we are far from reaching any sort of consensus. That is why I will propose a political discussion at the December European Council. I welcome the intention that the consolidated position of the European Parliament is to be known by then.

Let me close with a word on the shocking killing of Saudi journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, in Turkey earlier this month. This was such a horrible crime, that even the slightest trace of hypocrisy would bring shame on us. It is not my role to state who wants to protect whose interests here. But I know one thing: the only European interest is to reveal all the details of this case, regardless of who is behind it. Knowing your sensitivity and determination, I believe that you will not allow for Europe, the Member States or the institutions, to become involved in any ambiguous game. Thank you.

Closing remarks

On migration:

Almost all of you have expressed your disappointment with the lack of decisions on migration policy that you are expecting from the European Council. I understand your dissatisfaction because I know that the will of the majority in this house was to establish mandatory quotas. In spite of what you are saying the European Council is building the common European solution for migration policy but in the centre of this approach is the strengthening of cooperation with third countries, a fight against human

smugglers, external border protection and not mandatory quotas. The real progress in the European Council is that today almost everybody understands that our priority should be stopping the inflow of irregular migrants and not their distribution.

On Brexit:

We want to avoid a hard border in Ireland but there is no guarantee that we can do it. And do you know why Mr Farage? Because Brexit is de facto a political decision to re-establish the border between the Union and the UK. Brexit is a project to separate the UK from the EU. I don't know what is going to be the result of the negotiations but I know that it is the Brexiteers who are one hundred per cent responsible for bringing back the problem of the Irish border.

Finally, I would like to share with you one remark. Listening to the debate here I get the impression that some of you would like to see a Europe where there are no member states and no governments. Please do not be surprised that I am not on the same line.

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