

## Remarks by President Donald Tusk after his meeting with President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Let me welcome you to Brussels today. You are here to open the Europalia Arts Festival, which will focus on Turkey this year. It is another sign that our relations are not only about governments but also about people. More than 5 million Turks live and work in the European Union, our companies cooperate closely benefiting from the Customs Union. It all confirms that Europe has always been open and we hope to strengthen these ties even further via our accession talks.

In view of the refugee crisis I decided several weeks ago to intensify our contacts. It is already our second meeting in a month after we met in Ankara in September. I also met Prime Minister Davutoğlu in New York last week. And our staffs have been very engaged in talks the last days and weeks. We have a shared challenge at hand, which is the many refugees and migrants in and crossing through Turkey to EU countries.

It is indisputable that Europe has to manage its borders better. We expect Turkey to do the same.

In order to solve this crisis we discussed financial assistance, border management, fight against smugglers, integration policies and visa liberalisation. The European Union is ready to take up all issues with Turkey so we also discussed a possible buffer zone in Syria.

However, Turkey needs to be equally ready to act. The situation where hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing to the EU via Turkey must be stopped. And we cannot do it on our own, we need the Turkish side. Strengthened cooperation will benefit both sides. Europe wants a real solution to this very real crisis.

I have also stressed the need to respect rules and agreements, including the readmission and border agreements with EU countries.

We also discussed the urgent need to find a solution to the conflict in Syria. We agree that the solution cannot happen through having Russia, allied with President Assad, bombing legitimate opposition forces. We agree on the need to fight Daesh. In this context, President Erdogan also updated me on the worrying news also for us of Russian warplanes violating Turkish territory.

Finally, on the Cyprus settlement process we reiterated our support and readiness to assist it, in whatever way possible.

Our discussions will go on. In fact already this evening, when we are joined by Presidents Juncker and Schulz. Thank you.