

Remarks by President Donald Tusk after his meeting in Ankara with Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu

Thank you Prime Minister for your hospitality and for the good and productive meeting. Thank you for your engagement. Without your dedication we would have had no chance to prepare and develop our EU-Turkey cooperation.

My visit today in Ankara is part of my mission to prepare the European Union's next steps in responding to the migration crisis. We need to continue building consensus in this crisis, between Member States as well as with our key partners, like your country.

On 7 March I have invited the Prime Minister Davutoglu to again meet with the EU leaders, when we will take stock of where our cooperation stands and set common priorities for the coming weeks and months.

We discussed today the state of implementation of our Joint Action Plan. I welcomed Turkey's recent decision to open its labour market for refugees and I believe we will be able to announce good progress on readmission arrangements and strengthened liaison arrangements. We agreed on the need to swiftly implement priority actions under the EU Trust Fund for Syria and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey based on a shared needs assessment.

The European Union appreciates our good and growing cooperation with Turkey to prevent irregular migration. We welcome stepped up efforts of the Turkish coastguard, intensified police controls to combat human trafficking and the tightening of visa requirements. We also welcome the recent decision to begin NATO support activities in the Aegean Sea.

At the same time, we agree that the refugee flows still remain far too high and that further action is needed. It is for Turkey to decide how best to achieve such a reduction. To many in Europe the most promising method seems to be a fast and large-scale mechanism to ship back irregular migrants arriving in Greece. It would effectively break the business model of the smugglers.

Beyond our cooperation on the migration crisis, we took good note of the general momentum created in EU-Turkey relations since our last summit, including on the accession and visa liberalisation processes, the recent successful high-level energy dialogue and the upcoming high-level economic dialogue.

On Syria we discussed common efforts to help create the conditions for intra-Syrian talks to resume as soon as possible under the auspices of the United Nations and for the need to keep humanitarian aid flowing to Syria. All parties must use their influence to give the ceasefire a chance to succeed.

We also underlined the importance of reaching a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus problem, which will be beneficial to the wider security and stability of the region and in particular to the strategic relationship between Turkey and the EU. Thank you.