



European Council

The President

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**REMARKS**

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## **Remarks by President Herman Van Rompuy following the special meeting of the European Council**

Tonight we continued our discussion on the most pressing international matters. It has been a dramatic summer, on too many fronts.

We first had an intense discussion on the situation in Ukraine and on how to respond to the latest events. The past three days, the situation has dramatically escalated, as President Poroshenko informed us in detail. All efforts must now be directed at stopping the bloodshed and avoiding the worst.

The European Council is extremely concerned by the intense fighting, the flows of fighters and weapons coming from Russia into Eastern Ukraine, and the presence and actions of Russian armed forces on Ukrainian soil.

End of July we already adopted important sanctions, the so called "stage three" sanctions which are having a visible impact on the Russia's economy.

The European Council says that it stands ready to take further significant steps in the light of the evolution of the situation on the ground and it requests the Commission to urgently undertake preparatory work together with the Action Service and present proposals for consideration within a week.

We also discussed the situation in the Middle East, this situation has also taken a turn for the worst. In Libya, in Syria, in Gaza – all points that we discussed today. But let me focus in particular on Iraq, and the atrocities committed by the so-called Islamic State.

The instability, the violence could rip apart the region, and spread beyond. In the international effort to counter this threat, the Union will do its part. We are committed to providing humanitarian support. Certain Member States are providing military material to Iraq, and the European Union supports that decision.

Today, we request foreign ministers to look into stronger sanctions against ISIL, in particular to deprive it of the benefits of illegal oil revenue.

In our countries, also, combatting radicalisation must be a top priority. We have agreed to accelerate measures to stop the flow of foreign fighters, including an EU passenger name record system. We will review this in December.

Last point: we also discussed the economy. The situation raises significant concerns.

In recent weeks economic data have confirmed that the recovery, particularly in the euro area, is weak, inflation exceptionally low and unemployment unacceptably high. The European Council recalls its conclusions of 27 June 2014 on the European Semester as well as its agreement on a Strategic Agenda with a strong focus on jobs, growth and competitiveness. The European Council calls for rapid progress on implementing these orientations.

To this end, it asks the Council of Ministers of Finance to assess the socio-economic situation and to start working on these issues without delay. The European Council also welcomes the intention of the Italian government to hold a conference in October at the level of Heads of State or Government on employment, especially on youth unemployment, following those conferences held in Berlin and Paris. In the autumn, the European Council will also address the economic situation and a dedicated Euro Summit will be convened.

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