



European Council

The President

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**REMARKS**

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**Remarks by President Herman Van Rompuy  
following the decision of the European Council  
to elect a new European Council President  
and to appoint a new EU High Representative**

The suspense is up; the new European leadership team is complete. It is my great pleasure to introduce to you, in their new roles: the future President of the European Council, Prime Minister of Poland and my good friend, Donald Tusk. And Federica Mogherini, our new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and current Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Congratulations to both of you!

You have the full endorsement of the European Council and this full endorsement was very important to me. We had several rounds over the summer, I spoke a number of times to every colleague to make sure that we made the right decision and with the support of all.

The new President of the European Council will start on 1 December, for two and a half years. He will also serve as President of the Euro Summit, for the same term of office.

The new High Representative will also serve as vice-president in the new Commission. So the decision was taken in agreement with incoming President Jean-Claude Juncker. Along with the other Commissioners, Federica Mogherini will participate in the hearings in the Parliament and will take up her role on 1 November when the new Commission starts.

A word of introduction, before I give the floor to both.

Donald Tusk is one of the veterans of the European Council. Prime Minister of Poland since 2007, he is also the only one in over half a century to have been re-elected.

He has impressed his colleagues and the outside world with the determined and confident way he has led his country and steered Poland through the economic crisis, managing to maintain steady economic growth and never fall into recession.

As a young man, he took part in the 1980 Solidarnosc movement in his home city of Gdansk. For Poland, it was *"the first step on the path to Europe"*, as he himself said upon receiving the Charlemagne Prize. — I was there when Donald gave that speech, and was personally very moved.

This journey has brought the country to the very heart of Europe, where today, ten years after joining the Union, Poland proudly stands.

In the European Council, Donald Tusk was deeply involved in all the difficult decision-making of the last years and months – on the euro front, but also weighing on international crises like Ukraine. He and I worked closely together during the Polish Presidency. In short: Donald Tusk, a statesman for Europe.

We will need all these qualities for the challenges the European Union will be facing in the years ahead. I see three:

- the stagnating economy;
- Ukraine and Russia – the gravest threat to continental security since the Cold War;
- and, thirdly too: Britain's place in the Union.

Three issues that will require firm leadership from the European Council.

As Foreign Minister of Italy, Federica Mogherini, has been at the frontlines in this difficult and intense period on the international scene, travelling across the globe.

The European Council is convinced that she will prove a skilful and steadfast mediator, negotiator and defender of Europe's place in the world. And we know that she will stand in the long Italian tradition of strong commitment to the European Union. Federica Mogherini will be the new face of the Union in our day-to-day dealings with international partners.

In all this, she will be able to benefit from the work of Catherine Ashton, especially from the now first-class diplomatic service that Cathy built from scratch.

And I know that on all international issues, Donald Tusk and Federica Mogherini will work closely together to defend Europe's interests and values. In my experience this is very important.

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