



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**STATEMENT**

Brussels, 30 August 2014

## **Statement by President Barroso following his meeting with President Poroshenko of Ukraine**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start by warmly welcoming President Poroshenko to Brussels. We met this morning to exchange views about the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. We have discussed the latest developments in the security and humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine, which have further increased our concern. And this afternoon the European Council will also address these developments.

President Poroshenko's visit today in Brussels is an important symbol of the European Union's continuing support for Ukraine and our commitment to achieving a political, negotiated solution to the conflict which respects Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and unity.

This is our primary objective.

I have personally been engaging intensively with both sides over the past weeks – as I have done throughout this crisis. At my initiative, the EU was represented at the Minsk meeting earlier this week. I have been in continuous contact with Presidents Putin and Poroshenko, calling for a political solution to the crisis, based on a ceasefire that also has clear guarantees regarding border security and control.

And the Commission as a whole is doing its utmost to help solve the conflict. We are doing it of course, namely, in areas of our competence. Thanks to our efforts we will resume trilateral talks on energy in the beginning of September, to facilitate a solution to the gas dispute. We are also intensifying our contacts on the implementation of the association agreement with Ukraine (including the free trade agreement). And there will be a ministerial meeting on this matter possible on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September.

But, at the same time, the European Union has been very clear that all this needs to go hand in hand with a solution to the political and security problem. Unfortunately, this is not what we have witnessed in the past few days. In fact, the situation has worsened considerably. The opening of new fronts and the use of Russian regular forces is not acceptable and represents a grave transgression.

Just yesterday, I had a very long and frank talk with President Putin over the phone. I had the opportunity to convey these messages to President Putin. I urged him to change course. No one's interest is served by new wars on our continent. No one's interest is

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served by confrontation. This is simply not the way that responsible, proud nations should behave in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Nobody is underestimating Russia's concerns. We are ready to listen to Russia's concerns. But political differences need to be resolved through political means. Russia should not underestimate the European Union's will and resolve to stand by its principles and values.

As the conflict moves into urban areas, we need to avoid more civilian casualties. The humanitarian situation needs to be addressed urgently. International assistance is needed, but it must be done in coordination with the Ukrainian authorities, in full respect of international humanitarian principles but also in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty.

Just this month, the Commission pledged a further €2.5 million to assist the most vulnerable people affected by the fighting, and we are ready to increase our support for the Ukrainian-led and international humanitarian response efforts. Just now, in a meeting with President Poroshenko, we have discussed some of these issues and where and how we are going to deal with them in the future.

We are also helping Ukraine to cope with the economic effects of the crisis. In March, the European Union agreed on an extraordinary assistance package which the European Commission proposed for Ukraine.

More than half a billion euros in loans and 250 million euros in grants have already been mobilised by the European Commission as part of this package. Over one billion more (in loans) could be released in the coming months and we are ready to consider further financial assistance should additional needs be identified by the IMF during its next review mission.

And unilateral trade measures proposed by the European Commission in April have resulted in a 14% increase in Ukrainian exports to the European Union in recent months. This is an unprecedented boost of exports of Ukraine to the European Union. This is also a way to compensate for some losses the Ukrainian economy has already been feeling because of the conflict with Russia.

The Commission has also set up a support group to ensure that the Ukrainian authorities have all the assistance they need to carry out the political and economic reforms necessary to stabilise the country.

This is of paramount importance. While the security situation is the primary concern of the Ukrainian authorities, the reform process, encompassing a broad national dialogue, constitutional review and decentralisation is part and parcel of an overall political solution. We expect the upcoming elections to help accelerate such reforms.

Only a politically stable, economically viable Ukraine can ensure and consolidate its own independence.

Finally, we are ready to host a donors' conference at the end of the year that includes reconstruction of the eastern regions particularly affected.

The situation in Ukraine touches both Europe and the wider international community. This is a matter of grave and global concern.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I said just now to President Poroshenko – and I said it also yesterday to President Putin – we are in a very serious, I would say, dramatic situation. We may see a situation where we reach the point of no return. If the escalation of the conflict continues, this point of no return can come. I believe it's still not yet too late to find a political solution. I believe we should do everything we have in our capacity to avoid an escalation. That would certainly be detrimental to the interests, first of all, of Ukraine but certainly also of Russia and of

Europe as a whole. We are working based on the principles and we respect those principles at the same time it is our duty to call the attention of all those involved to the risks of further escalation.

President Poroshenko,

Two months ago, you said the signature of the association agreement was "one of the most important days since the independence of Ukraine". We have not forgotten this, and we thank you for your clear and principled position.

The European Union stands for peace and democracy and I want to encourage you to do everything in your power to bring peace back to the region.

I want to conclude now by saying that it was a very good occasion to discuss, in depth, these issues with President Poroshenko. And of course that we are going to keep in contact over the next days and weeks, and I am very happy that today, he has also the opportunity to address the European Council.

President Poroshenko, you have the floor.