

Press remarks by President Donald Tusk after the informal meeting of EU heads of state or government

The purpose of our informal meeting, which took place right after the summit with our African partners, was to speed up the implementation of the decisions taken so far by the European Council.

Let there be no doubt: the future of Schengen is at stake and time is running out. Every week decisions are taken in Europe, which testify to how grave the situation is: reintroduction of border controls, or “technical barriers” at the borders. This is a clear demonstration that we need to regain the control of our external border. Clearly not as the only action but as the first and most important action; as a precondition for a European migration policy.

In this connection, I welcome the declaration made by Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary today of committing 225 officials to reinforce FRONTEX and EASO. This is good news. It is indeed urgent to fill this gap in implementation.

Securing our borders also requires that our rules and laws are applied. The European Union will stick to its international obligations in terms of asylum rights, but it must be clear that without registration there will be no rights. If a migrant does not cooperate, there must be consequences. It is also clear that asylum seekers cannot decide where they will be granted asylum within the European Union. These are issues for the Commission and our Interior Ministers. They will need to turn these principles into operational reality now. Again, if we do not progress this Schengen will be at stake.

Our main point of discussion however was on Turkey. President Juncker and Vice-President Timmermans, who was just back from his meeting with the Turkish Prime Minister, gave us a detailed update on where negotiations with this important partner stand. We feel confident that a mutually beneficial relationship can be established that will help us confront the present crisis.

We all agreed that the EU side will do what it takes to achieve this while expecting the Turkish side to play its part. Together with President Juncker, I will meet President Erdogan and Prime Minister Davutoglu next Monday in the margins of the G20 Summit.

We are ready to hold a special summit of the 28 Member States with Turkey as soon as possible. I do not have a date yet but it could still be this year, after a new government has been formed. It is very likely that it will be at the end of November.

To conclude let me repeat: The clock is ticking. We are under pressure. We need to act fast. As a Union. And in cooperation with our partners including Turkey that also will have to move fast. But Turkey cannot be our only partner. We must not lose sight of Jordan and Lebanon, nor of the countries of the Western Balkans. They are also our allies. Thank you.