



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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Remarks by President Herman Van Rompuy following the European Council

This morning, prior to the European Council, we signed the political provisions of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine. It is a sign of our solidarity with the people of Ukraine, of our support for their aspirations and their thirst for change.

Before the ceremony, The President of the European Commission and I had a meeting with Prime Minister Yatseniuk of Ukraine, who assured us that his government was focussing on answering the people's call for a more open and a modern Ukraine. To achieve this, economic and democratic reform, and above all inclusiveness, are most needed and most essential; and I am confident that the Ukrainian government and people will succeed on this path. Europe is by their side. Today's signature was but the opening act: we expect to be signing soon the remaining parts of the Agreement, which forms a single instrument.

Meanwhile, we will also continue to strengthen our ties with Georgia and Moldova, and as we decided last night, the signature of their full Association Agreements has been brought forward to no later than June. The determination is there on their side, and it is also there on ours.

The sanctions against Russia that we decided yesterday are taking legal effect this afternoon. But already, as I said last night, even the shadow of sanctions is already showing its impact on Russia's investment climate. And once again, they are not a goal in themselves, but a means to an end, towards a negotiated solution in respect of international law.

P R E S S

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During our European Council meeting this morning, we had discussions on two main themes: energy and climate. Our energy discussion focused primarily on how to reduce our high energy dependency, particularly relevant of course in the context of the situation with Ukraine.

Energy dependency matters for energy prices, it matters for industrial competitiveness. And it matters for our foreign policy. If we don't take action now, by 2035 we'll be dependent on foreign exports for up to 80% of our oil and gas. By far the best tool we have to improve this outlook is our single market for energy. We must use it to the full.

Today we sent a clear signal that Europe is stepping up a gear to reduce energy dependency, especially with Russia: by reducing our energy demand, with more energy efficiency; by diversifying our supply routes to and within Europe, and expanding energy sources, in particular renewables; by energy security on our border and security of supply for our neighbours.

Concretely, we are taking several measures, notably in the field of interconnections. This is detailed in our conclusions: interconnections should include the Iberian peninsula and the Mediterranean area. Where relevant, interconnections should also be developed with third countries.

Member States will show solidarity in case of sudden disruptions of energy supply in one or several Member States. In addition, further action should be taken to support the development of the Southern Corridor, including further spur routes through Eastern Europe, to examine ways to facilitate natural gas exports from North America to the EU and consider how this may best be reflected in the TTIP negotiations with the United States, and increase the transparency of Intergovernmental Agreements in the field of energy. So reducing our energy dependency, especially with Russia, was a key topic in our deliberations.

That is not all. Around the table there was a strong sense that we need a new way to do energy business. We should work more as a team when we negotiate contracts. Sharing more information, bringing more transparency on contract conditions – all that to increase our joint bargaining power.

Leaders are ready to maximise their collective hand. They have asked the Commission to come up with a concrete action plan in time for our June summit, as a basis for a comprehensive energy security framework. So we are serious about reducing our energy dependency. We discussed it at the highest level last May and today; and will do so again in June and in October. Europe was first built as a community for coal and steel. Sixty-four years later, and in new circumstances, it is clear we need to be moving towards an energy union.

This morning, we also discussed climate change. This was the kick-off discussion for our 2030 climate goals. We are starting already now, for the sake of predictability for businesses and investors. In climate terms, 2020 is already around the corner. This was a first discussion ahead of the Paris 2015 climate conference.

As Europe, we need to continue to play our role. Our Union is not giving up our ambitions on climate change. This will have a huge impact on our economies, so we were never going to decide everything in one go. But this morning we mapped out a solid roadmap for the new EU target on greenhouse gas emissions.

There are still some elements we need to flesh out before we make the final decision, but – I can assure you – it will be an early decision, well in time for the Paris conference; in fact, no later than October 2014. In any case, our specific 2030 targets will be fully in line with our ambitious long-term objective for 2050. This is a positive message Europe will actively bring to the September UN Climate Summit.

A word to conclude, on Africa. We are ten days away from the EU-Africa summit, which will bring to Brussels over 65 leaders from both continents. The full scope of the EU-Africa relationship will be on the menu for this huge encounter, but today – as you will see in our conclusions – we singled out the vital issues of peace and security. Also on the topic of peace, let me say the European Council welcomes the new talks in Cyprus.

Finally, this was our last regular European Council meeting before the European Parliament elections of May. Thank you and *rendez-vous aux urnes!*
