

# ***2015 European Council Summit Meeting University of Pittsburgh***

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I. Preliminary Address:

The Presidency would like to express its sincere gratitude to all member states for their participation in this critical meeting. Our stewardship of the rotating Presidency of this Union is an incredible privilege that affords us the opportunity to prominently display the innumerable benefits that inclusion in this Union provides our citizens. European Council meetings have always been productive settings for member states to cement fruitful partnerships on issues of tremendous concern to all of Europe in order to create consensus in forging new and effective policy directions.

Our continent has historically been challenged by a myriad of crises, ranging in scope and severity. Notwithstanding these obstacles, the European Union (EU) has demonstrated resilience to hardship that embodies the fortitude of the people it represents. Despite differences in language, culture, and history, Europe is tied together in its commitment to integration and the promotion of democratic values. It is our sincere hope that this Council meeting serves as a constructive venue that advances social progress and improves the collective safety and well-being of our citizens.

In recent years, rising instability across North Africa and the Middle East has led to a surge in the number of migrant persons journeying to Europe. While this Union welcomes its role as a vanguard of humanitarianism and as a refuge for endangered persons, we are also dedicated to addressing the escalating crisis of illegal border crossings, especially in the Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, the rise of Daesh in establishing a safe haven for Islamic extremists and Russia's aggression in Ukraine each present complicated challenges to global security. This summit's participants must seriously consider the adoption of measures that mitigate the threats posed by these aforementioned dual pressures and strengthen the capabilities of member states to counter their dangers. Therefore, we expect this Council to rally around the need to confront these significant challenges such that we make a material impact reducing their negative effect in Europe.

## II. Migration Crisis

### A) Background

The intensifying rate of migrant and asylum seekers fleeing turmoil in North Africa and the Middle East stands as one of the most complex policy obstacles that Europe has witnessed in recent years. A 2014 International Organization for Migration report posited that Europe was the world's most dangerous destination for irregular migration in the world and identified the Mediterranean Sea as the world's most dangerous border crossing. According to The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 137,000 refugees and migrants made the journey across the Mediterranean to European soil during the first half of 2015—an 83 percent increase compared with the same period last year. Of those making the journey to Europe, over 2,000 persons have been killed or remain missing, highlighted by the tragic death of more than 800 migrants in mid-April when an overcrowded boat capsized off the Libyan coast.

In light of the urgency of the situation, it is imperative that member states establish a more coherent set of strategies to counter this present paradigm. The migration crisis' heartbreaking human toll demands that swift action be taken in the near-term to minimize border crossing deaths. No person, irrespective of race, religion, or national origin, deserves to live in an environment that prompts the undertaking of such a dangerous journey. The shocking loss of life related to the migration crisis is an affront to human dignity. Thus, we call on all member states to formulate a broader strategy that not only contends with reducing crossings, but also ultimately addresses the root reasons driving so many people to flee their homes in the first place.

### B) Prevailing Conditions

All member states have been substantially affected by the scope of the migration problem and each retain a degree of responsibility in alleviating its impact. However, many of the member states most affected by the recent global economic crisis—Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain—have also served as the main points of entry for migrants and refugees due to their proximity to Mediterranean crossing points. According to the Spanish Interior Ministry, the number of migrants trying to enter Spain illegally in 2014 rose by almost 70 percent from the previous year to 12,549. The most serious challenge related to migrant trafficking to Europe is passage from Libya to Italy. Unrest, lack of stability, and threats from violence across Libya from competing militias has fueled waves of migration to Italy, which has borne the brunt of heavily trafficked Mediterranean migration passages.

Frontex, the EU border agency, reports that there were approximately 280,000 illegal border crossings across this Union's external borders in 2014, twice as many as the previous record of 140,000 detections in 2011, the year of the Arab Spring. The Central Mediterranean route was the main area for illegal border-crossing into the EU, representing 60% of all detections in 2014. In 2014, 50,800 detections were reported in the Eastern Mediterranean area, representing 18% of the EU total. This totaled twice the number as compared to 2013. Approximately 3,400 people died or went missing at sea in 2014 while making the journey to Europe. Finally, Eurostat—the EU statistics agency—reports that

the number of first-time asylum seekers in the EU in the first quarter of 2015 almost doubled from the same time period in 2014. These statistics demonstrate the acute urgency of the migration crisis that needs EU-wide attention to fashion forward-thinking mitigation policies.

In late 2014, Frontex implemented a new border control and surveillance program to help Italy cope with the rising number of crossings across the Mediterranean Sea from Africa. While this multi-national European initiative sought to institute a shared-cost and responsibility approach to the migration crisis, it has proved insufficient in subduing the tide of crossings. In addition, policies need to be amended not only for managing these challenges at sea, but also on land for those migrants moving to Europe or rescued by Frontex or member state personnel. Most notably, the Dublin Regulation, which calls for entry-point states to bear ultimate responsibility for migrants and asylum-seekers, merits reevaluation. Since many member states along Europe's southern border have been burdened with a disproportionate number of migrants, the law's stipulation that asylum-seekers remain in the first European country entered and the requirement that the entered country bears ultimate responsibility for examining asylum applications may be an inequitable manner to manage the crisis. While we are mindful that northern member states have also been affected by a rise of asylum applications, we ask consideration by this Council of a more thoughtful and holistic approach to distribute asylum review requests.

### C) Proposed Solutions

This Union has a responsibility to our citizens to be forthright regarding the capabilities and limitations that we may bring to bear in responding to the migration crisis. The challenges we face are nuanced and complex; we cannot prevent all illicit border crossings and we cannot deport or refuse entry to all asylum-seekers. While we have an obligation to protect the territorial integrity of our borders, we also have a humanitarian duty to help those fleeing violence and persecution or those with aspirations for a better life for their loved ones. As a result, the following strategies to consider are varied in scope and purpose, but fall into several broad categories. It is important to note that these offered recommendations exclude any references to improving the economic conditions in migrants' countries of origin and instead focus on more immediate options.

Border Protection: While it is essential to craft policies pertaining to those already within Europe, member states must initially contain illegal migration and prioritize resources to keep illegal migrants outside of European borders. While legitimate asylum seekers deserve a chance to stay in Europe depending on the totality of circumstances associated with both their travel to Europe and the context in which they departed their home nations, illegal entrants must be turned back. In order to ensure improved deterrence, we call for the establishment of "structured border zones" or "hotspots" in high-traffic areas (i.e. southern Italy) to quarantine those arriving, fingerprint and register them, and expedite the deportation of those deemed to have entered illegally. To accomplish this more effectively, European police and border agencies need to obtain expanded law enforcement powers that have thus far been traditionally solely in the jurisdiction of national authorities. As a result, we urge the adoption of a more robust border protection approach that entails both surveillance and search and rescue capabilities. It should utilize our collective arsenal of resources, including submarines, warships, drones,

and helicopters to carry out this mission. In addition, intelligence gathered by these forces should be employed to disrupt traffickers' business and interdict vessels transporting migrants across the sea.

Resettlement of Migrants: While contentious amongst some in our Union, this Presidency calls on all EU states to consider a plan that establishes a mandatory quota of migrants for each member state to absorb as a short-term policy choice in the spirit of European solidarity. This approach would apply a more equitable manner of managing the financial and social responsibilities associated with those already in Europe across the EU and relieve an unfair burden of responsibility on nations like Italy and Greece. In order to accomplish this, we reiterate our request that those member states not part of the Schengen zone and that have the option to opt out of EU asylum policy, such as Great Britain and Denmark, reconsider their stance and partake in the refugee-sharing proposals. As a goodwill first step, we encourage member states to consider an initial intake of 60,000 Syrian and Eritrean asylum seekers currently in Italy and Greece and resettle them across the Union over the following two years. Nevertheless, given that more than 600,000 people sought asylum in the EU last year and the figures for new arrivals this year are much higher, a lasting long-term solution must be forged lest such ad hoc actions become the norm in Europe's immigration policy.

Flexible and Scalable Legal Frameworks: A wide array of legal and diplomatic tools—conventional and unconventional alike—ought to be mobilized to contain the burgeoning migratory crisis. In addition to bolstering border check points across key entry points in southern Europe, member states must develop a common set of measures in order to quicken asylum processing and deporting those whose claims are rejected. In addition, EU development funds, trade agreements, economic incentives, and diplomatic pressure should be deployed as leverage on migrants' countries of origin to encourage them to sign readmission agreements with the EU.

Humanitarian Requirements: We must always be mindful that it cannot be the policy of this Union to simply close our borders and decline legitimate asylum requests by those in need. For example, many Syrian and Eritrean nationals arriving in the EU in high numbers can seldom be repatriated because of the risk to their lives at home. As a result, we applaud member states that have voluntarily increased their acceptance of refugees from war zones to meet the needs of such needy populations. We also underscore the need for all EU migrant policies—to include migrant detention centers—to operate consistent with Article III of the European Convention on Human Rights. Reports of overcrowded facilities that are devoid of clean water, sanitation, and proper ventilation, as well alleged mistreatment of migrants, are extremely troubling. Each of these allegations demands thorough investigation and, if validated, criminal prosecution to hold those accountable for permitting any abuses. Basic human rights must always be upheld by all member state governments—we will not stand for any violation of such norms.

### III. Salient Foreign Policy Challenges

#### A) Rise of Daesh and Foreign Fighters

The rise of Daesh, otherwise known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), presents an existential threat to western civilization and our very moral fabric. Its unparalleled brutality, sheer

disregard for human life, and inhumane subjugation of thousands has shocked the world. This Union stands with its allies in NATO and the Arab League in categorically condemning Daesh's callous and vicious violence. We urge all member states to provision material support to both the Iraqi National Army and Kurdish forces fighting to reclaim large swaths of land from Daesh's hold. All member states are committed to ensuring the security of their citizens, preventing the spread of radicalization, and cooperating with international organizations and allied nations to quash the proliferation of ISIL support and propaganda. We welcome efforts to draft a new European Agenda on Security to improve cooperation between member states in not only the fight against terrorism, but also organized and cyber-crime. These threats are by their nature transnational and require EU-wide engagement. A future European Agenda on Security will cement common behavior against these perilous forces while upholding our values and respect for human rights.

We are especially concerned about Daesh's call for its supporters to conduct attacks overseas and by the continued flow of European fighters to bolster its ranks following losses from coalition airstrikes. The EU will continue to work with partner governments to stem the flow of fighters to Iraq and Syria. While thousands of Europeans have already traveled to the region, we must do a better job of stopping prospective recruits from joining Daesh. In order to accomplish this, we call on all member states to engage in a candid discussion to formulate new policies that strengthen external border controls. The existing Schengen framework must be applied vigorously to enforce all national checkpoints. In addition, this Union should swiftly institutionalize a process of executing systematic and coordinated checks on individuals enjoying the right of free movement against databases relevant to the fight against terrorism based on common risk indicators. It is critical that border checkpoint security measures are able to adapt to the heightened risks of those traveling to and from conflict zones in the Middle East in order to detain these persons and alert law enforcement officials both inside and outside of the EU of their presence.

#### B) Russia-Ukraine Crisis

This Council advocates for an extension of economic sanctions against the Russian government to ensure that Russia realizes that there is an incurred cost to its unacceptable and unrecognized annexation of Crimea and its continued delivery of lethal arms to separatist forces in eastern Ukraine. Sanctions are not intended to harm the Russian people, but instead are targeting Russia's energy, financial, and military sectors. We also support the current prohibition against investing or importing goods from Crimea by EU-based companies as well as maintaining asset freezes and visa bans of at least 150 individuals and 37 entities that have played a substantial role in the destabilization of eastern Ukraine. We ask Russia to abide by the terms of the Minsk Agreement, which called for an immediate and full ceasefire in particular districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts in Ukraine and the removal of all heavy weapons by both sides to establish a secure buffer zone. The accord also called for the release of all hostages and illegally detained persons, and stipulated that the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe should monitor regionally contentious areas to verify that the Agreement was being upheld. The Union's restrictive economic measures against Russia are linked to the complete implementation of this cease-fire. Should the situation in eastern Ukraine worsen and Russia be found

responsible for inciting additional instability, this Union will consider expanding the scope of the sanctions beyond its current form.

We are collectively disappointed by the lack of political progress to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine and find Russia's recent rhetoric and actions both provocative and destabilizing. Moscow's recent admissions pronouncing its plan to expand its nuclear arsenal, including the installation of new nuclear missiles in the Kaliningrad enclave, is unhelpful in deescalating the current crisis. In addition, it is critical that Russia cease supplying separatist forces with sophisticated new weaponry, including artillery and anti-aircraft systems. Russia's assertive use of reconnaissance aircraft throughout Europe in recent months has also threatened numerous commercial airlines and has called into question Russia's willingness to maintain peaceful and beneficial relationships in Europe.

Finally, we applaud the European Commission for its service as a mediator in trilateral talks between Europe, Ukraine, and Russia in order to assist all parties in agreeing on the principles needed to ensure stable gas deliveries to Ukraine and to transit to EU nations. The objective of drafting a final framework that will serve as a follow-up agreement to the temporary winter package accord that recently expired is essential in ensuring that millions of people have access to sufficient heating in cold winter months. This Council asserts that the Commission should continue to act as a conduit for the promulgation of new ideas and arrange meetings at the expert level to help realize an equitable compromise between all parties. That being said, we believe the Russian government's insistence on the flexibility to change gas delivery prices quarterly and its refusal to allow Ukraine to buy shortfall gas supplies via "reverse flows" from Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia is misguided. It should also be noted that Russia's proposed Turkish Stream, a related Greek Stream, and an additional leg of the Nord Stream are unviable economic ploys in response to sanctions since existing transit capacity is 40 percent under-utilized and EU gas consumption is in decline.

#### IV. Conclusion

The Presidency would like to thank all member states for their avid participation in this most auspicious of settings. The policies proposed and adopted during this summit will enable us to competently address matters of extreme importance to our citizens. The relationships that we have cultivated throughout this summit will cement the realization of meaningful policies and improved cooperation by stakeholders from both the political and expert-level communities. These partnerships supply us with the technical expertise, political acumen, and necessary will to carry out new strategies intended to bring Europe closer together and apply common values to resolve our many challenges.

At this Council, member states have expressed a willingness to approach the migration crisis in Europe with both empathy and resolve. While we must ensure that territorial integrity is respected and those seeking to willfully abuse the system are not rewarded, we must also have compassion for those fleeing the chaos and violence that has erupted near our borders. Finally, all member states are firmly committed to bolstering coalition-led efforts to derail Daesh's aspirations for Middle East hegemony. Europe will spare no effort to ensure the safety of our citizens, including by stemming the flow of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria, as well as alleviating sources of radicalization for vulnerable

populations in Europe. We continue to call on Russia to halt its material support of separatists in eastern Ukraine and pledge to maintain economic sanctions against key sectors of the Russian economy until it fully honors the spirit of the Minsk Agreement. Accordingly, this summit has drawn attention to issues that underpin the very fabric of democratic society and highlighted Europe's vow to always cooperatively strive to enact policies that advance our values globally, protect the welfare of our citizens at home, and improve the well-being of mankind as a whole.