



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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José Manuel Durão Barroso

President of the European Commission

Statement by President Barroso following his meeting with Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine

Press point

Kiev, 12 September 2014

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

This visit to Kiev means a lot to me. I think we can say it is a clear symbol of Europe's support to Ukraine's sovereignty and unity. This is the first message I conveyed once again to President Poroshenko, but also through the media here to all the Ukrainian people. We are with you. We support you in these very challenging times.

The meeting I had just now with President Poroshenko was as usual very friendly, very substantive, very productive, and we have discussed many issues related of course to the situation in Ukraine and the relationship between Ukraine and the European Union.

The situation in Ukraine remains very fragile. The cease fire agreed last week, in Minsk within the Framework of the Contact Group is certainly a positive step which needs to be upheld and respected. However it is still insufficient to guarantee sustainable peace.

Today we have discussed how to best achieve progress for a sustainable political solution to the conflict, based on the respect for Ukraine's sovereignty. This is our primary goal - a political solution for this conflict based on the principle of Ukraine's sovereignty.

We need a solution that has clear guarantees regarding border security and control, as well as a disarmament of all illegal groups and a withdrawal of any foreign troops.

We have full confidence in President's Poroshenko efforts and we commend his initiatives to bring about such a solution. We support President Poroshenko's peace plan. We call on the Russian side to show the same commitment to peace and act in line with international norms and principles.

The European Union and the European Commission are not sparing any efforts to bring peace to this country and to support Ukraine overcoming this challenging period.

As I speak, a trilateral ministerial meeting on the impact of the free trade part of our agreement is taking place in Brussels, a meeting between Ukraine and Russia, mediated by the European Commission.

We hope that a sustainable solution will be found to address the economic needs of Ukraine which just now President Poroshenko explained to me in detail; and also hopefully to manage some Russian concerns, at the same time that it allows the Ukrainian Parliament and the European Parliament to go ahead with the ratification of the Association Agreement.

We are also engaged in mediating a solution for the energy problem that guarantees a fair market price, the settlement of past debts and secure a stable supply to Ukraine. We hope that trilateral meetings on energy can resume in the coming days.

It is urgent to find an interim agreement between the parties so that the gas can flow again and so that Ukraine does not have to face the additional risk of gas shortages in the coming winter. In this context, I would like to highlight the positive response of the EU Member States in supporting diversification efforts of Ukraine and activating the reverse flows to Ukraine, notably from Poland, Hungary and (most recently) Slovakia.

And while we are committed to reach out and seek negotiated solutions, we also do not hesitate in responding decisively to Russia's unacceptable behaviour.

As you know the European Union has already adopted restrictive measures in several sectors of the economy and we have recently stepped up the pressure by deepening these measures as well as by listing additional individuals to our visa ban and asset freeze list. These measures aim at bringing Russia to the conclusion that it is better to have a positive, constructive relation both with Ukraine and the European Union. And they mean also that the European Union and its Member States stand by Ukraine.

We all know that a country under threat has many challenges to deal with. But I had the opportunity to say to President Poroshenko that political reforms and national dialogue are essential and indispensable part of the lasting, political solution for the crisis. The decisive path for change that Ukraine has set-out to undertake must continue. That is why I very much welcome the announcement made by President Poroshenko that he is going to send the law against corruption for ratification. I believe this is a very important part of the modernisation efforts of Ukraine for a complete rule of law system in the country.

We also believe that the next legislative elections should be held according to all international standards and represent a further effort to unite all Ukrainians. We know in democracy there are sometimes divisive discussions, sometimes even polarising debates, but I am sure that all the responsible political leaders of Ukraine will understand that this time unity is more important than any form of division, and that it will be possible to express differences while safeguarding the fundamental unity of the country.

I want to say once again to all Ukrainian friends that we see our relationship in a strategic manner. We are discussing these most urgent issues. We are discussing also the economy; but one of our goals is to bring Ukraine closer and closer to the European Union - if this is, and it is, the will of the Ukrainian people. That is why we also address the issues that President Poroshenko mentioned related to visa, the future visa free regime that will certainly be a concrete way of putting the European citizens and the members of the European Union closer to Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens closer to us.

Let me share with you very briefly one point on the humanitarian situation on the ground. According to the UN, the number of displaced people in eastern Ukraine has more than doubled during the past three weeks (260,000 people). And approximately 9% of the overall Ukrainian population is in conflict zones. So, just yesterday the European Commission has decided to mobilise an additional €22 million to meet the most urgent needs of the population, this adding to the efforts already taken.

On top of the short-term humanitarian tasks, Ukraine might well face a huge challenge in reconstructing the Donbas region, once hostilities subside. The European Union will be ready to support Ukraine in this important endeavour.

We have also discussed the economic situation of Ukraine and its assistance needs. In order to alleviate some of Ukraine's external balance pressures and high domestic financing needs, the EU is supporting Ukraine by providing substantial financial assistance.

In the short-term, our efforts are being focused on the provision of MFA in medium-term loans. Two separate programmes, worth combined EUR 1.6 billion euros, are currently available to Ukraine. 600 million euros in loans were already disbursed as well as 250 million in grants for the state building programme. We are ready to look into additional requests, of course assuming that the reform efforts will continue. And we are also ready, as I said, to look at the specific issues regarding the DCFTA that may have economic consequences to Ukraine in the short term and to have flexibility when considering these requests from our Ukrainian friends.

We are also working towards a donor conference which has to be prepared thoroughly by the Ukrainian side in order to bring tangible results. We will later discuss when and how it is better to organise this.

So to conclude, President Poroshenko, dear friends,

Our message is clear. We stand by Ukraine's sovereign choices. And stand by Ukraine's European path. This does not have to be seen as threat to no one. I really believe that in Europe, in the wider Europe, we all stand to benefit for a modern, reformed, prosperous and stable Ukraine. We are therefore ready to continue this journey with the Ukrainian people.

I thank you for your attention.