

Speech by incoming European Council President Charles Michel at the handover ceremony with the outgoing President Donald Tusk

Thank you very much for this summit bell, Donald. I will use it wisely, and loudly if necessary!

Je souhaite remercier Sophie Wilmes pour sa présence et pour assumer cette fonction tellement simple, tellement facile, de nouvelle Première ministre belge.

C'est avec humilité que je deviens président du Conseil européen. C'est une grande responsabilité, c'est un grand honneur. I am humbled to be the next President of the European Council, it is a great responsibility and a great honour.

Donald, you have had a long and impressive career. And it's not finished. From your time as a young activist in the Solidarity movement to Prime Minister of Poland to European Council President. You have always lived your convictions taken the hard decisions and shown strong leadership. This is especially true of your time at the Council. You faced a lot of challenges, I won't list them all, I was asked to be brief

For 5 years, you did not lose sight of the target protecting our unity. I would like to thank you, on behalf of all Europeans, for being a true fighter for Europe. Your passion for Europe has been a driving force. And your fitness skills are impressive too. I remember seeing you on the podium of the Brussels 20K race: you launched it and then started running, congratulations. I imagine leading the Council sometimes feels like a long race too, we always need to stay focused on the finish line.

As Council President, I will use all my energy to reduce bureaucracy let's work together on this. By the way, let me congratulate you on your new Presidency. Good luck at the EPP. I'm sure it will be an easier job, without any bureaucracy.

It will be a privilege to serve the European citizens. I will take a common-sense approach to problem-solving with innovation and efficiency. I will have my own style. Open for dialogue and committed to building bridges and perhaps more cautious with my tweets, at least at the beginning. But I will certainly speak out when needed.

For the past month, I have been traveling across Europe speaking to people. This has been truly inspiring. I heard so many positive ideas about how we can work together and create an unbreakable unity. My overwhelming impression is energy and optimism about Europe's future.

Today our Union should be proud of how far we have come. Two World Wars, a Cold War, the Berlin Wall, dictatorships destroyed lives. All of that is behind us. Today we live in peace. But we must remain vigilant, very vigilant. I want to do everything to promote respect and mutual understanding between the European leaders and our countries.

I have seen the first-class team working at the Council. Your talents will be extremely important for our success. I am impatient to work with all of you.

I want Europe to become global leader of the Green Economy with jobs, innovation and a high quality of life. We have to find a way forward that works for all Member States. And their people.

To achieve this, we have to mobilise all our tools, talents, and intelligence. Young people have made an appeal to our conscience, we must rise to the occasion.

Europe can also stand taller in the world more self-confident speaking up for our beliefs and values. 500 million citizens, strong democracies, robust economies and universities filled with great minds. We have so many reasons to be confident, self-assured and assertive. We cannot sit on our hands in the most critical debates of our time. The European Union must be at the table for these hard discussions to influence global events and protect our interests. We need to do more to ensure our common defense and security. And guarantee our rights and freedoms.

We all know the challenges we face. We read the headlines every day. But let's not follow the headlines. Let's make the headlines. Positive stories, a clear vision, the result of hard work, ambition, and a forward-looking plan.

Today we turn a new page. You can count on me to give it my best for the good of all Europeans. Aujourd'hui, une nouvelle page s'ouvre. Vous pouvez compter sur moi, je suis très mobilisé pour être au service de tous les citoyens européens.

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