

PRESS RELEASE

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

When my and also your, dear Charles, predecessor, Herman Van Rompuy handed over to me the chairmanship of the Council five years ago, I didn't even suspect that the scenario of my term would be written by Alfred Hitchcock himself. You may remember his short recipe for a good thriller. He said: 'I want a film that begins with an earthquake and works up to a climax.' From the early months of 2015 Europe has been struggling with crises: Greek, migration, Ukrainian, ISIS and its terrorist attacks inside our borders, and a moment later came Brexit. Some observers included in these crises the rule of two Donalds, in Washington and Brussels, but personally I think that this opinion is only half-true.

As you may have noticed, the question of leading the Council is an internal Belgian-Polish matter. I don't see a reason to change it. Our common brand and objective is and should be the unity of the European Union. And I think that the specific Polish and Belgian experience can be very helpful. I am sure that you, dear Charles, will use all your talents and virtues to maintain our unity.

I am very proud that for the last five years I have had the privilege to serve Europe. Not to serve an abstract idea, but people, nations and their common interests. Europe is the best place on Earth, at least as long as it remains a continent of freedom and rule of law, which is inhabited by a community aware of its history and culture.

Today I am leaving the European Council, but what is the best part of it is staying with you, dear Charles. It is them. The Union and its Council have survived thanks to their work, mutual loyalty and professionalism. You are really unique. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart. Without you, I wouldn't have survived even for a week. Thank you very much. I give this holy sceptre into your hands, President.

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