

Remarks by President Charles Michel after the meeting with President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Brussels

We had tonight a meeting with President Erdoğan. A few days after my visit in Ankara, it was important to have this occasion to exchange our views on different topics related to the relationship between Turkey and the European Union. And of course, the first topic we discussed is the implementation of the deal between the European Union and Turkey on migration. We had the occasion to share our different opinions about the implementation of this deal a few years after this agreement.

We had the opportunity to discuss a number of issues with President Erdoğan. The first issue we discussed was, of course, migration. The meeting was an opportunity for us to attempt to clarify a number of positions, interpretations and comments relating to the implementation of the agreement between the European Union and Turkey. In particular, we had the chance to show how the European Union has implemented financial commitments - the promise to mobilise a total of EUR 6 billion to support the refugees who are in Turkey. It was also an opportunity to acknowledge the responsibility that Turkey has taken on in attending to migrants present on Turkish soil.

We also had the chance to explain the difference, for the European Union, between the amounts which have been paid and disbursed, since the procedures have been completed and the projects carried out, and the amounts committed, i.e. set aside as part of the EUR 6 billion envelope mobilised under this agreement. That is the first point.

Second point: we had an opportunity to discuss security in the region, particularly in Syria, and to highlight our mobilisation in support of any political solution leading to more stability, and in particular to highlight our very great concern regarding the humanitarian situation in Idlib and at the border between Turkey and Syria. We also noted the possible mobilisation of the European Union to attempt to provide support in that area.

We had also the occasion to discuss other topics related to the relationship between Turkey and the European Union and to try to exchange our views, our opinions in order to make progress and to have the occasion with this meeting in Brussels to consider that it's a first step in order to have a stronger political dialogue in the short term, in the mid-term and in the longer term with Turkey.

Finally, we decided and it is very concrete and very important for the next days and for the next weeks, we decided to task Josep Borrell, the High Representative, with his counterpart in Turkey, the minister of foreign affairs, each of them with a team, to work in the next days in order to clarify the implementation of the deal between Turkey and the European Union. This is to be certain that we are on the same page, that we have the same interpretation about what we do in Turkey at the level of the European Union in order to implement the deal. We will keep the political dialogue with Erdoğan in the next days.

It is also very important to share with you that we will debrief the member states. We consulted a lot the member states the last days. It was, of course, necessary in order to inform them, in order to listen to the member states and to their concern regarding the different topics we have to discuss with Turkey. We will debrief the member states and it will also be the occasion later with the member states, after this process, this High-Level Political and technical process, between Turkey and the European Union through Josep Borrell and his counterpart in Turkey. It will also be the occasion to have, again, a political dialogue at the level of president Erdoğan in the next days and in the next weeks in order to continue this process of information and consultation of the different member states.

In short, the meeting was an important step, and I think it was a step in the right direction. But work remains to be done, on both the Turkish side and the European side, to try – together, in good faith and with goodwill – to monitor this agreement between the European Union and Turkey in terms of migration, and to examine how we can continue to advance in the future and ensure that there is a de-escalation, that there is moderation in the way we cooperate together on different issues.

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