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STATEMENTS AND REMARKS

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Opening remarks by President Donald Tusk opening the 5th African Union-European Union summit in Abidjan

Excellencies, thank you for being here today. And a special thank you to President Ouattara and the Ivorian people for their warm hospitality and great efforts to host us. It is an honour to be in Abidjan.

The attendance of so many leaders demonstrates the importance of this Summit and our shared commitment to strengthen our relationship.

I would also especially like to welcome the African and European youth who are with us today. You represent a group that has worked hard in the last months. You rightly expect that we listen to you as we discuss priorities and actions for the next years, and that we include you in their implementation, because it is you who will take them forward in the future. Our task as leaders is to take decisions that will make the future safer and more prosperous for all of our youth, both African and European.

Both of our continents are undergoing great change. The global order is contested and fundamental principles are being challenged. But when we work together, we make a real difference. The Paris agreement on climate change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would not exist if we had not worked hand-in-hand. Together we can shape the global agenda, strengthen the rules-based order and support effective multilateralism, based on our shared values and interests.

I want to highlight two areas in particular.

First, peace and security. Despite progress, Africa continues to face conflict and crises. So does Europe, for example on our eastern frontiers. And we both face the threat of terrorism and radicalisation, which targets our youth in particular.

The EU strongly supports the objective of 'African solutions to African problems' in the area of peace and security. Since 2004 the EU has provided over 2.5 billion euros through the African Peace Facility alone. But more strategic cooperation on security is needed: to prevent conflicts, to fight terrorism and organised crime, to support the global non-proliferation regime, to bring our development and security work closer, and to improve security capacity. So I welcome the strengthening of our strategic, political and operational cooperation to address insecurity in a more comprehensive way.

Second, it is clear that migration is a joint responsibility. It is in all our interests to have orderly migration that is more controlled, more humane and sustainable.

The recent reports about the treatment of Africans - especially young people - by smugglers and traffickers are horrifying. Over 5,000 people drowned in the Mediterranean last year. We cannot accept this. We also cannot accept the narrative that pits Africa and Europe against each other. The worst we can do is to start the blame game. What we need now are common solutions and stronger cooperation to save lives, protect people and allow them to live in dignity. Our common duty is to step up the fight against these unscrupulous criminals and bring them to justice. The above remarks apply also to the current situation in Libya, which needs from our side, both European and African, our help, not our condemnation.

Migration is a long-term issue for us both - internally within Africa, which is hugely significant, and from Africa to Europe. I do not need to explain here the political context in Europe today. Migration will inevitably be an important part of our relationship for the years to come. We must identify common ground that will enable us to cooperate more concretely and more effectively.

Our initiatives to create jobs, opportunities and perspectives for youth are part of this. The EU is ready to do more, and I suggest that we seek a common understanding to do something positive for our youth. The European External Investment Plan will be a great opportunity for this. The EU also launched the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa in 2015, which we will top up in time for 2018.

Alongside our bilateral and regional cooperation, our continental dialogue on migration and mobility should allow us to be more effective. Together we could also coordinate our work on the UN Compacts on migration and on refugees, in order to have a much greater impact globally.

In the ten years since the Joint Africa-EU Strategy we have learned a lot. The main lesson is that political leadership makes a difference. Today, I call for a true alliance between our two continents to face our challenges and seize our opportunities together. This spirit should also inform our talks on the post-Cotonou framework.

We have a very broad agenda ahead of us. I look forward to our open and honest discussions so that we can show our people that our cooperation is comprehensive, strong, and has a concrete impact on their daily life, especially for our youth.

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