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The President

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## **Opening remarks by the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy at the EU-ASEAN leaders meeting**

I am very pleased that we have an opportunity to see each other before the ASEM Summit starts. Although our foreign ministers have met regularly, this is the first EU-ASEAN meeting at Leaders' level since 2007. Let me also welcome Minister Federica Mogherini, the European Union's incoming High Representative.

The European Union attaches great importance to its relations with ASEAN. We are ready to enhance cooperation with you and are aware of the key role that ASEAN plays in your region and beyond.

We strongly support your Community building and ASEAN centrality. The EU and ASEAN are 'Partners in Integration' - in fact, we represent the two most successful integration processes among sovereign countries in the world.

A strong and united ASEAN is good for regional stability, security and economic development. Similarly, the European Union is promoting peace and prosperity, uniting our continent. Reconciliation, good neighbourly relations, bringing together different interests, countries, cultures and languages – we know about it. Of course, ASEAN will determine its own path, but clearly we can learn from each other's experiences of how to make regional integration work.

EU-ASEAN relations have deepened and broadened significantly over the past two years. Many high level visits have taken place - I recently had the pleasure welcoming in Brussels Prime Minister Dung from Vietnam and President Aquino from the Philippines. We are moving to new areas of concrete cooperation: improving aviation connectivity, crisis response and disaster management, preventing transnational crime and improving maritime cooperation.

Let me underline that the EU welcomes a more ambitious, more political and more substantial partnership with ASEAN. We agree with the objective of establishing a Strategic Partnership and the work is ongoing towards this goal. The EU will soon nominate its first Ambassador accredited exclusively to ASEAN. We would like to engage even more, also in the context of the East Asia Summit.

In addition to discussing the future of EU-ASEAN relations, I am interested in your views as regards the situation in Ukraine, the Middle East and South East Asia. Both the EU and ASEAN attach importance to the peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with international law. In a world of interdependence, we are all affected by insecurity and instability. The principles at stake are indeed principles underpinning global security. Thank you very much and give now the floor to President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso.

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