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**Statement by President Barroso
following his meeting with Viktor
Yanukovych, President of Ukraine**

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Joint press point

Brussels, 13 September 2010

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a pleasure to welcome President Viktor Yanukovich back to Brussels. Our regular meetings reflect the importance and dynamism of the EU-Ukraine partnership – which has only gained in importance in these testing times.

We just had a very productive, open, wide-ranging discussion: We spoke about Ukraine's reform agenda, the next steps to deepen our relationship and also the reforms in Ukraine concerning democracy and fundamental rights.

I congratulated President Yanukovich on the achievements of his first months in office. We discussed the next priorities of Ukraine, for instance efforts to improve economic governance and other important aspects of Ukrainian reforms.

We are both committed to deepening our relationship. We want to achieve that together through the new, ambitious Association Agreement currently under negotiation. It will cement our political ties and lead to a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), offering Ukraine access to the world's largest market – EU - and giving it the perspective of doubling its exports to the EU.

A more dynamic Ukrainian economy is in our mutual interest. We agree to speed up negotiations and conclude the Agreement rapidly. Nonetheless there are still some major issues to be tackled here, in particular trade aspects such as tariffs.

We have also discussed the reform of the Ukrainian energy sector. I am pleased to note that since we last met there has been real progress, particularly with the adoption of a new gas law. We now expect Ukraine to move forward on the implementation of the gas sector reforms.

In this respect I would like to congratulate President Yanukovich for the decision to sign the Accession Protocol to the Energy Community already in the next ministerial meeting which will be held in Skopje.

As regards the modernisation of the Ukrainian Gas Transit Network, we also made progress. I am happy to mention that we are financing two feasibility studies starting in the coming weeks. Ukraine will remain a key transit country provided long-term and stable transit conditions can be found, which reflect the interest of all parties: Ukraine, EU and also Russia. The EU also stands ready to promote a trilateral dialogue with Ukraine and Russia on energy issues.

Finally, we also spoke of the importance of up-holding common values: respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law. Ukraine has a strong record of democratic development. President Yanukovich has publicly stressed the importance of human rights.

We therefore look to the Ukrainian authorities to ensure full respect of these values, in particular the freedom of the media, the independence of the judiciary and regarding the forthcoming local elections. I trust that, under President Yanukovich's leadership, these values will be further consolidated.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The EU and Ukraine share a very substantive agenda. We stand by Ukraine's side to help promote reforms. And there is a great deal of work ahead of us, in the run-up to our Summit on 22 November. I am confident we will be able to welcome further progress by then.

As you know we have also adopted a Joint Statement (MEMO/10/405) that reflects the very important substantive agenda that we are developing. I would like to thank President Yanukovich again for the spirit with which he came to Brussels, which enabled us to discuss these issues in such a deep way.

Thank you.