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EU's Tusk warns illegal economic migrants: Do not come here

European Council President Donald Tusk has warned illegal economic migrants against coming to Europe, during a new push to solve the EU migrant crisis. He said illegal economic migrants were risking "lives and money" for nothing. Mr Tusk visited Greece and Turkey on Thursday to discuss ways to reduce the flow of migrants travelling west. More than 25,000 migrants have been left stranded in Greece by a tightening of border controls to the north, raising fears of a humanitarian crisis. On Thursday, a group of migrants blocked a railway line on the Greek side of the border with Macedonia to protest at the restrictions.

They were imposed after several Balkan countries decided only to allow Syrian and Iraqi migrants across their frontiers. Austria also decided to limit numbers. The move effectively barred passage to thousands of people seeking to reach western Europe, including Afghans as well as some more likely to be regarded as economic migrants.

After meeting Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in Athens on Thursday, Mr Tusk said he was appealing to "all potential illegal economic migrants", wherever they may be from. "Do not come to Europe," he said. "Do not believe the smugglers. Do not risk your lives and your money. It is all for nothing." He also said EU member states must avoid taking unilateral action to deal with the migrant crisis.

Separately, UK Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Francois Hollande discussed security and migration issues in the French city of Amiens, including conditions at the French port of Calais, where thousands of migrants hoping to enter the UK have been living rough. After the talks Mr Hollande warned of "consequences" for management of migrants heading to Britain if the UK voted to leave the European Union in a June referendum.

Earlier, French Economy Minister Emmanuel Macron said his country could allow migrants to travel unchecked to the UK in the event of a so-called "Brexit".

He told the Financial Times newspaper that an exit vote could end a bilateral deal allowing the UK to vet new arrivals on French territory. Authorities in Calais have been clearing part of a sprawling camp known as the Jungle, from where many migrants are trying to enter the UK illegally.

Ahead of an EU-Turkey summit on the issue on Monday, Mr

Tusk travelled to Turkey later on Thursday for talks with Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. Mr Davutoglu said that the flow of Syrian refugees would lessen if the cessation of hostilities in the conflict held, adding that violations by Syrian government and Russian forces had left it vulnerable.

"But at the same time we expect a more intensive engagement from our partners as an absolute precondition to avoid a humanitarian disaster," he said.

Turkey has expressed frustration at the lack of a common position from the EU on the crisis. BBC Europe Correspondent Chris Morris, who is on the Greek island of Lesbos where 75,000 migrants have already arrived so far this year, says the EU wants to see arrivals in Greece drop below 1,000 a day. New figures suggest last year's total of one million seaborne migrants arriving in Europe could be matched well before the end of the year.

Gender Equality and HDR 2015

The global record on gender equality remains mixed with progress on many fronts, but gaps remaining in others. The 2015 Human Development Report 'Work for Human Development', twenty years after the issue was first addressed in 1995 Human Development Report, testifies to this fact. Progress has been made on many important counts (e.g. on primary education, political participation), as well as inertia and stagnation on others (e.g. employment, health). In the public domain, women are now represented in far greater numbers today than before – whether in elected office, or in the executive or judiciary. They have entered streams of work that were traditionally considered male bastions – breaking many stereotypes and expectations.

When we look at global experience, education and employment emerge as two critical drivers for women's empowerment in the public and the private domains. Efforts towards those twin objectives – improving educational attainments and workforce participation through a mix of female-friendly policies, quotas, and affirmative interventions – while leading to better performance on several counts, have not fully yielded the desired social transformation towards gender equality.

Yet, these changes have not shifted some persistent gender inequalities and gaps. Even though women carry out the major share of global work, they face disadvantages, both in paid and unpaid work. In the waged work place: their

workforce participation levels have stagnated at 50 percent compared to male employment at 77 percent. Women's engagement in the labour force is one such domain with very limited transformation. Women are overrepresented in segregated sectors (like agriculture), in roles and tasks that build on gender stereotypes (e.g. paid domestic work and care work) and in the more informal forms of employment. Analyses of total hours worked in time-use surveys shows that women contribute 52 percent of global work to men's 48 percent

Women also earn 24 percent less than men globally. The professional 'glass ceiling' means that women still hold only 22 percent of senior leadership jobs in businesses, and 25 percent and less of senior political and judicial positions. Women encounter greater barriers when accessing finance as entrepreneurs; legal restrictions and discriminatory practices regarding property rights and assets; and have unequal access to and use of technology. A pregnancy, on average, costs a female employee two years in terms of career progress, and breaks in earnings impact their financial future through lost pension contributions

Theme of 2016 WTO Public Forum to be “Inclusive Trade”

The Forum will be an opportunity for participants to discuss how a wider range of individuals and businesses can participate in the trading system and how WTO rules can help to ensure everyone benefits from trade. At a time when the business environment is changing and world growth is slowing, it is important to ensure that trade is truly inclusive, allowing small enterprises, women and innovative businesses to take an active role in the global trading system.

This year's Forum will examine in particular how the WTO can foster the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the global market, how the trading system can support innovation and how women can participate more fully in international trade. The Forum will also see the launch of the WTO's flagship publication, the World Trade Report, which will focus on SMEs. A number of other books will also be launched during this year's Forum. Stands organized by both internal and external partners will display information concretely showcasing how to make trade more inclusive.

DG Azevêdo praises work of standards committee on reaching 500th trade concern

WTO members raised the 500th specific trade concern at a meeting of the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade on 8-10 March 2016, marking a milestone in their discussions about product regulations and standards. Director-General Roberto Azevêdo qualified this work as “essential to avoid concerns escalating into disputes and to keep trade flowing.”

DG Azevêdo said: “Today WTO Members discussed the 500th specific trade concern. It sounds technical but actually this is about dealing with all sorts of real-life issues that we all care about — from the use of chemicals in toys to the sugar, salt and fat content of our food. The WTO provides a forum for members to raise and resolve these concerns thereby avoiding them escalating into disputes. This is the unseen but essential daily work that keeps trade flowing — and it can only be done through the WTO.”

The Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee gives WTO members an opportunity to discuss each other's product regulations and standards and the impact these have on companies and consumers. These discussions are called “specific trade concerns” — STCs for short. According to WTO rules, members can regulate their products to protect consumer safety and health, but they need to do it in a way that does not make trade in these products unnecessarily burdensome. This preliminary discussion may contribute to avoid trade frictions from reaching the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body (DSB). Since 1995, less than 2 per cent of STCs discussed in the TBT Committee have become trade disputes.

DG Azevêdo welcomes Brazil's ratification of WTO trade facilitation deal

Director-General Roberto Azevêdo is visiting Brazil this week to discuss the implementation of recent WTO agreements and the future work of the organization. During his visit to the Brazilian capital, President Dilma Rousseff presented DG Azevêdo with Brazil's formal instrument of acceptance of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

In Brasília, the Director-General met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mauro Vieira, the Minister of Development, Industry, and Foreign Trade Armando Monteiro, the Minister of Finance Nelson Barbosa, and Senator Aloysio Nunes, President of the Senate's Foreign Affairs Committee.

“I was very pleased to receive Brazil's ratification of the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement. Trade facilitation reforms can help to cut trade costs, thereby improving trading conditions and supporting economic growth. Brazil has been undertaking important initiatives on this front, such as the implementation of a 'single window' system. Ratifying the WTO agreement is a major step forward. Full implementation could help to boost exports and help Brazil's integration into global value chains, helping the country reap more gains from trade.

“WTO members are now working to capitalize on the agreements reached at recent Ministerial Conferences in Bali and Nairobi, by delivering further reforms to the global trading system. This debate will help determine the future of global trade negotiations — and so this is a critical moment. Brazil must keep making its voice heard and ensure that the

WTO keeps delivering the deals that benefit Brazil and support economic growth and development globally.”

Canada files complaint against US over countervailing duties on printing paper

Canada notified the WTO Secretariat on 30 March that it has initiated WTO dispute proceedings against the United States regarding a countervailing duty imposed on imports of super calendared paper (i.e. glossy printing paper). The request for consultations formally initiates a dispute in the WTO. Consultations give the parties an opportunity to discuss the matter and to find a satisfactory solution without proceeding further with litigation. After 60 days, if consultations have failed to resolve the dispute, the complainant may request adjudication by a panel.

DG Azevêdo calls for action to provide trade finance for small businesses

Director-General Roberto Azevêdo has issued a call for action to help close the gaps in the availability of trade finance that affect the trade prospects of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in Africa and Asia. In a new WTO publication, “Trade Finance and SMEs: bridging the gaps in provision”, which examines the problem and looks into possible solutions, DG Azevêdo says that easing the supply of credit could have a big impact in helping small businesses grow and in supporting the development of the poorest countries.

The availability of trade finance is essential for a healthy trading system as up to 80 per cent of trade is financed by

credit or credit insurance. But trade finance is not always available. A lack of trade finance is a significant barrier to trade. SMEs have particular challenges in accessing affordable financing. Globally, over half of trade finance requests by SMEs are rejected, against just 7 per cent for multinational companies.

SMEs in developing countries face the greatest challenges in accessing trade finance and there are some very large gaps in provision. The estimated value of unmet demand for trade finance in Africa is US\$ 120 billion (one-third of the continent's trade finance market) and US\$ 700 billion in developing Asia. Bridging these gaps would unlock the trading potential of many thousands of individuals and small businesses around the world.

“Without adequate trade finance, opportunities for growth and development are missed and companies are deprived of the fuel they need to trade and expand,” said DG Azevêdo. “By working together with our partners, I believe we can further close the gaps in provision and ensure that trade finance is no longer a barrier to trade, but a springboard to growth and development.”

Various steps are already being taken to tackle this issue on a number of fronts: encouraging global financial institutions to remain engaged; encouraging regulators to emphasise the trade and development dimension; increasing the capacity of local financial institutions; and providing support measures to increase the availability of trade finance via multilateral development banks.