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## Prime Minister Alexander De Croo meets British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

Prime Minister Alexander De Croo had a bilateral meeting with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at Downing Street. Read below the press release.

On 23 January, Prime Minister Alexander De Croo had a bilateral meeting with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at Downing Street. Belgium and the United Kingdom have had strong ties for centuries as loyal allies. On trade, investment, defense cooperation, tackling organized crime, the fight against irregular migration, our collaboration is closer than ever.

In their conversation, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen this partnership and discussed a series of initiatives:

- A first-of-its-kind Belgian-UK Law Enforcement Cooperation Agreement covering all forms of cross-border crime. The agreement, that is in the final stage of discussion will improve cross-border surveillance, enhanced data collection and sharing, and promote UK and Belgian teams working side by side on serious and organized threats. This will be the first law enforcement agreement between the UK and an EU member state since Brexit.
- In the fight against irregular migration, Belgium and the UK reaffirmed their commitment to take actions to increase bilateral exchange of expertise and intelligence. This includes the deployment of new advanced technology funded by the UK, to identify and disrupt people smuggling, regular exchanges of subject matter experts, closer cooperation in the fight against the use of social media to promote criminal smuggling activities and senior dialogue to share information and ideas for future cooperation. The leaders also discussed the Eight Point Plan, agreed in October 2023 at the European Political Community, and which Belgium supports.
- Building further on last year's North Sea Summit in Oostende and the shared ambition to turn the North Sea into the "Green Power Plant of Europe", both leaders reemphasized the importance of expanding UK Belgium interconnection in order to support the transition to an integrated North Seas offshore energy grid, which will contribute to the transition towards a cleaner, more stable and secure energy system in both countries.

The leaders also discussed the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the importance of continued long term support to Ukraine and the way in which seized Russian assets can be used to help rebuild Ukraine.

Both leaders discussed the urgent need for improve aid flow into Gaza and the importance of a political plan that would contribute to long term security and stability for both Israel and Palestine.

Both leaders agreed that the attacks that the Houthis have launched on commercial vessels since mid-November constitute a threat to international maritime shipping. Both Prime ministers condemned these attacks and agreed that international action to protect shipping lanes in the Red Sea is called for.

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