**Guy Verhofstadt,** *on behalf of the ALDE Group***.** – Mr President, you and Mr Orbán can be reassured that I will not go so far as the late John McCain, who on the floor of the American Senate called Mr Orbán ‘a neo‑fascist in bed with Putin’. Those are not my words; they have been said before. Also, I will not come back to all the violations that have been put in this report. Let’s be honest between each other, the inconvenient truth is that, under these circumstances, it would be impossible today, Mr Orbán, for Hungary to join the European Union. That is the reality of today.

*(Applause)*

What I would really ask you to do – because I like Hungary and I certainly like Hungarian literature and culture – is anyway to stop saying ‘Oh, that’s an action against Hungary, an action against the Hungarian people’. You are not Hungary, you’re the government of Hungary and the leader of a political party and Hungary is far more and far more eternal than you are.

*(Applause)*

My intervention is not to you, it is especially to our EPP colleagues, and I have one plea, which is that hopefully this evening they will follow their conscience when they decide on this. I know that’s not always easy to do. We are talking about somebody of the family, and I can tell you that I had the same problem at a certain moment. That was the moment when we had the dilemma to push out of our family Jörg Haider of the FPÖ. We did it in the end, also based on counsel, because we thought that more important than size and power are in fact principles and values.

The second reason is for European reasons, Manfred. What we are living today is the survival and existential battle over the survival of the European project. If Mr Orbán is publicly siding with Salvini, openly discussing the disruption of this European project, well, we need that not to happen in the coming years.

My last argument and reason is mainly because, and I will recognise it – that doesn’t happen often – that the European Union has been based on Christian democratic principles, beliefs and energy for decades. We all know them: Adenauer, Schuman, Monnet, De Gasperi. I want to use the words of one of these giants, of Robert Schuman, and I will quote him: ‘Christianity teaches us equality of all men without distinction between race, colour, class or profession [...] the dignity of each human person in protection of his individual liberty and with respect for his individual rights by practicing brotherly love to all’.

So I want to plead to you, my Christian Democratic colleagues, to recognise that the way Schuman looked at Christianity is in many ways exactly the opposite to the divisive, narrow and destructive actions and opinions of Mr Orbán. Dear colleagues, please for once see that he is the seed of discord that will ultimately destroy our beautiful European project and please, together with us, stop this nightmare this evening in your Group.