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SPEECHES BY THE PRESIDENT, MR PAT COX
PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS



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SPEECHES

Speech
by Pat Cox, President of the European Parliament
at the European Council working session on Terrorism

Brussels,
Thursday 25 March 2004

In the European Parliament, we learned of the Madrid atrocities of 11 March while we were in session in Strasbourg. I immediately expressed our deepest sympathy, condolences and solidarity to the very many families who suffered as a result of this outrageous, unjustified and unjustifiable attack on the people of Spain, democracy, and on Europe. This was also a declaration of war on democracy.

These unqualifiably evil acts marked a new step in the growing threat of terrorism. Our citizens now share the sense of vulnerability about a threat which can strike any of our Member States at any time.

In January of this year, I addressed the first international conference for the victims of terrorism, and said then what I would repeat today: as a matter of duty to the Spanish people, and to the people of Europe, there must be no safe haven for terrorists and terrorism in the European Union.

The Irish Presidency is to be congratulated for addressing the issue of terrorism at meetings of Council last week and this week. In changing the arrangements for the European Council, you underline our focus first and foremost on terrorism.

You will be discussing shortly the specific proposals prepared by Justice and Home Affairs Ministers. My plea to you today would be to take all the steps that are necessary to guarantee the closest possible cooperation of all our security services in this global fight against terrorism. And I would ask you to bear in mind that agreeing on conclusions would be positive; ensuring that the conclusions are effectively applied is indispensable.

We have the instruments at our disposal. We can reach agreement among governments, but we must ensure that governments apply those decisions effectively, and that the indispensable cooperation between governments and security services responds with the urgency which the situation requires. We have not succeeded in meeting all the commitments that we made post-September 11. Meeting those commitments would be the fitting response to the massacre of March 11. This would be the most powerful signal that Europe's democracies and Europe's Institutions are united in their resolve to defeating the greatest threat facing us.

And as we step up our fight against terrorists, let us never forget the tragedy of their victims. I hope and believe that some solace has been given to their relatives by the extraordinary display of solidarity and compassion from the European, indeed the world community. Parliament has called for us to mark March 11 as Europe's memorial day for the victims of terror.

Let the message from this meeting be clear:

En favor de la democracia y de los derechos humanos. No más bombas. No más muertos. Entre todos acabaremos con los terroristas.

Address
by Pat Cox, President of the European Parliament
to the European Council

Brussels,
Friday, 26 March 2004

The emerging theme for this European Council is the need to address the delivery gap. Nowhere is this need more apparent than on the Lisbon agenda, where a gap in delivery is leading us towards a gap in credibility for the whole exercise.

In the Lisbon Summit of Spring 2000, the European Council set ambitious targets for modernising the European economy. At their heart was the prospect of extra annual growth resulting from the measures on the agenda of 0.75%, year in, year out. This could, by 2010, match the US growth rates.

Setting ambitious targets and deadlines is part of the European method. It galvanises public action, it can also enhance public credibility. The single market programme for 1992, and the single currency for 1999, are recent reminders that when we wish to, we can achieve great things together. The Lisbon Agenda, as ambitious in its way as those other objectives, requires sustained action by the Member States, with help, not hindrance from Brussels. This is a European campaign, prosecuted on national battle fronts. Member States' actions now need to match our European ambitions.

We have four years' experience of a 10-year programme, and all analyses point to a central fact: we are not on target.

Important progress has been made. Member States, one after the other, are engaged in national economic reform - labour market deregulation, pension and welfare reform, job creation projects - but the sum total of those efforts is not yet having the desired effect.

Two key indicators, economic growth and growth in jobs, highlight the problem. Our citizens rightly pose questions. How is it that our domestic market, which is nearly one-and-a-half times the size of the US market, and why, with our higher proportion of world trade, do we consistently perform less well than the US? Why, when we have a single market, underpinned by a single currency, do we have to wait for American economic recovery to take us out of stagnation?

Of course, our electors are concerned about the pace of change, and the erosion of traditional job security and other social *acquis*. The Member States, and the European Council itself, should take the lead in explaining that Europe's long-term prosperity requires concentrating on job creation, rather than job preservation, and on promoting the skills and adaptability of people. The imperative on the reform front is to speed up the process, not to slacken the pace.

In the European Institutions, we are contributing to the process of reform. Important steps forward are being made at the end of this legislative term, with a record number of legislative items included in our last two full sessions. Just next week, Parliament will be adopting two major legislative proposals for financial services. We are willing to move forward on a fast-track procedure, not just for securities but also for banking and insurance. We have pushed for the speedy liberalisation of freight and passenger traffic, just as we have in the past for easier access, for both enterprise and consumers, to cheaper energy.

On some familiar issues, the Institutions have not found the will or gained the momentum to deliver. I remember that we congratulated ourselves at the Barcelona European Council because we thought that we had a political agreement on the European Community patent. Now we learn that Council has once again failed to deliver, some 30 years after the first discussions, and this at a time when US companies outstrip their EU counterparts by 4 : 1 in patents registered with the US Patent Office; and even in the Union itself, the American firms have a lead (170 : 161).

Where we have adopted European frameworks, implementation and enforcement at national levels is disappointing. Some 40% of EU directives are still not transposed within the deadlines laid down. Our three Institutions must make a collective effort here: the Commission must enforce; Member States' governments should engage more regularly with their national parliaments on the Lisbon Agenda, and Parliament could use its dialogue with national parliaments to highlight priority issues where transposition is falling behind or where enforcement must be strengthened.

The quality of our legislation is fundamental. We have to regulate at the European level, but we should do it less and we should do it better. We must now apply the Agreement that we made last December on better lawmaking. There should be a joint programme of all three Institutions on the simplification of legislation, with a precise programme for the next six months, for the next year, and for the next five-year period. And we should meet our commitment to measure better the effects of what we are doing here on jobs, competitiveness and the environment through objective, extended impact assessments, again according to a common programme agreed by all three Institutions, and according to common criteria.

In the draft conclusions, the Presidency rightly highlights the importance of R&D, where our record of private sector investment is poor. We fully support the idea of improving conditions for private R&D and targeted public support. For our own European framework programme for R&D - yes, it should be simplified, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, but extra funding is also required, with more money for basic and applied research. This high priority for future funding must be reflected in the next Financial Perspective, which we will begin discussing in the autumn.

Our scientific community, increasingly tempted by opportunities outside the Union, must be motivated and galvanised around certain great European projects, which are potentially economically viable and which can provide a European focus for our efforts.

The work done by the group led by Wim Kok and others has contributed to our understanding as to what is necessary and our ability to learn from past practice in Member States, so that we should encourage more people into the labour market, reward those at work, and provide a friendly environment for new businesses, large, medium and small.

But a sharper analysis of what is going on in the European economy is one thing; the other is again to remedy shortcomings. The brunt of that falls on you, the Leaders of Governments in the Member States, but the European Institutions can and should play their part.

The Irish Presidency has succeeded in streamlining the conclusions of this meeting: for the first time, you will be issuing a text which is clear and understandable. We hope that fewer conclusions lead to greater results.

External Relations

Cyprus

I acknowledge the presence here of the new Prime Minister of Greece, Mr Karamanlis, and thank him for taking time to meet me in Athens earlier this week. I wish him - and the President of Cyprus, Mr Papadopoulos - well, and hope for a successful conclusion in the coming days to the talks for a settlement on the island of Cyprus.

The European Parliament, like you, has followed closely the developing process under the good offices mission of the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan. It is our fervent hope that the leaders of both communities can find the wisdom and political will to make the accession of a reconciled and reconciling Cyprus a possibility and a reality.

It has been said many times before, but this may really be, the 'last chance'.

I believe that, as we progress to the stage of an agreed proposal being put to the electorate of both communities on 20 April, the European Union should not hold back.

We should clearly signal our depth of commitment to a solution:- both in terms of well-timed, positive, political statements in favour of a settlement by all the European institutions and in terms of the size of the European Union's possible budgetary contribution to a Donors' Conference on 15 April. If the European Union can make a substantial pledge which will go some way towards reassuring people on practical issues - relocation, rebuilding and suchlike -that affect their livelihoods, if we can ensure the active support of the EIB, then we can have a positive impact on the outcome that all of us around the table here today hope and wish for.

Kosovo

The outburst of tension in Kosovo in recent days is a cruel reminder of the pent-up tensions, the volatility and the stability risks still evident in the Western Balkans. The events of 17 March are a serious setback, not only because of the more pronounced *de facto* separation of the ethnic groups which it has brought about, but because it has cast new doubts on the future of Kosovo as a peaceful and multi-ethnic entity.

I believe that we must not allow any deviation from the policy approach of insisting on "standards before status". These standards must include the ability to do politics. These standards do not tolerate violence, nor the achievement of political ends by violent means.

At the same time, it is clear that we can no longer put off serious reflection on the longer-term settlement of the issue of Kosovo. Our policy is wearing thin. The situation in Kosovo has a potentiality which could 'pull the plug' on the region, and resurrect ghosts of the recent past. Without undue delay, we must prepare the ground for future action, leading to an equitable, sustainable and fair settlement which can be accepted by, and contain adequate guarantees for, both communities.

Those who declare their commitment to the European perspective must also be ready to talk to their neighbours. There can be no progress towards the European Union without dialogue or without peaceful and constructive engagement.

Middle East

Neither the cause of peace in the Middle-East nor the equally vital cause of combating international terrorism have been facilitated by the extra-judicial killing on 21 March of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, which has been strongly condemned in the European Parliament.

At the same time, we recognise the right of the state of Israel to protect itself and its citizens against terrorist attacks, and condemn unreservedly the terrorist atrocities for which Hamas has been responsible. Both sides in this conflict need now to show restraint and to halt the infernal cycle of violence by choosing at last the difficult but necessary road to dialogue.

While the situation on the ground continues to escalate, the international community must not give the impression of having washed its hands of the crisis. If the Israeli government is allowed to proceed unimpeded both with its unilateral, non-negotiated, disengagement plan for Gaza and with the construction of a security fence, then there is a risk that new realities will be created on the ground which will hinder, and not enhance, a viable long-term solution.

I believe that a much-deeper, constructive engagement by the European Union is called for, to inject a new sense of urgency in our work with the United Nations and the United States to revitalise efforts for a settlement, and build on the progress which the Quartet's Road-Map had achieved.

We need to give the region a perspective and I very much support the Presidency's new, regionally-based approach, raising the level of EU engagement through the development of an EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East .

On Monday last President Mubarak cancelled the visit of a delegation to the Knesset to mark the 25th anniversary of the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty. On the same day, at the launch of the Euro-Med Parliamentary Assembly, we unanimously elected, including with the vote of the Knesset representative, the Egyptian Speaker as the first President of the Assembly. I understand that the

Presidency and the Commission were otherwise engaged in the preparation of today's meeting. I would just say this: do not under-estimate the power of democratic parliamentarianism. The EMPA can be a platform for furthering our common strategic goals for the wider region of the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

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This is the last scheduled European Council meeting before the European elections from 10-13 June, so you would expect me to say a few words on their importance.

Let me say a word first of all on the sheer scale of these elections: 348.824.000 people in the 25 Member States will be entitled to vote on 10 to 13 June. They will be the first-ever continental-scale elections in Europe's history.

Moreover these elections are taking place in a year of redefinition and renewal for our Union, and against a unique background of circumstances: the first European elections held after enlargement, the tantalizing prospect of agreement on Europe's long-awaited Constitutional Treaty, the appointment later this year of a new Commission.

The successful completion of enlargement demonstrates the continued vitality of our Union and its unerring capacity - eventually - to make the right decisions on the fundamentally important issues.

Where we have been less effective so far is in our capacity to sell our collective story, to communicate to our fellow-European citizens our Union's achievements and its relevance to their lives.

Europe's Institutions could do with a blast of fresh air, and the oxygen of real democracy. What better opportunity could there be than these European elections, in this very special year, to ensure a genuinely European dimension to the campaign over the coming months?

Of course domestic political considerations, and issues of personality, will always play a part in the European elections. But if the people are ever going to be able to properly relate to the EU's activities, we need a wide-ranging, open, and public debate on European issues.

The agenda of this Summit illustrates precisely the kind of issues that should be debated in the election campaign. You will be focussing - to simplify somewhat - on job creation and economic growth, on protecting our citizens from the scourge of international terrorism, on deciding through the new Treaty who does what in the EU on our citizens' behalf, and on strengthening Europe's role in the world.

However wise and extensive the decisions that you will take here today, the debate should not end in Brussels. I would appeal to you all, over the coming weeks and months, to actively campaign on all these issues and for our common cause - for long-term peace, prosperity and stability throughout our continent.

Over the past five years the European Parliament has played its part and largely fulfilled its institutional duty, particularly in the efficient and responsible exercise of its legislative powers and in giving enthusiastic and unqualified support to the enlargement process.

I would now submit that the time has come, as we move towards these unique European elections, for Europe's political leaders to honour the European part of the bargain with Europe's electors. At this historic milepost in Europe's history, I respectfully appeal to you all to go out and campaign for Europe's democratic future.
