

Dear Rabbi Marc Schneier, President of the Foundation for ethnic understanding

Dear Doctor Mustafa Effendi Ceric, Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dear Doctor Moshe Kantor, President of the European Jewish Congress

Distinguished Rabbis, distinguished Imams

Distinguished leaders of Jewish and Muslim organisations

- Allow me first of all to address you a word of welcome of my President José Manuel Durão Barroso. Sadly previous and urgent commitments prevent him from meeting and exchanging with you, as we would have very much appreciated.
- He asks me particularly to assure you, dear Rabbi Marc Schneier, of his appreciation for the commitment and enthusiasm you have invested in this noble cause of intercultural dialogue and of interreligious understanding.
- President Barroso also requested me to convey his respect and admiration for the momentous work your father, Rabbi Arthur Schneier, for almost 50 years deployed and continues to deploy in the favour of the same endeavour.
- His «*Appeal of Conscience Foundation*» is a remarkable example of what can be achieved by the determination to promote mutual respect and reconciliation.
- This is why I believe appropriate to pay tribute to his devotion to interfaith dialogue at the beginning of our gathering.
- He is an example and inspiration for what we are striving to achieve here today.

- We also, the European Commission, are strongly committed to the very same combat, the fight against intolerance, racism and xenophobia.
- The ideal of a united Europe was born precisely out of the ruins of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.
- The EU Founding Fathers had learned well the sad lessons of our continent's recent history: nationalism, racism and anti-Semitism provoked a cataclysm of global dimension that almost destroyed Europe.
- In the end, it wasn't really the «other», the foreigner, the religious or ethnic minorities alone who were destroyed by the racist and xenophobic madness of totalitarian regimes.
- It wasn't the "other" but rather ourselves, the Europeans and Europe, that was brought to the brink of destruction.
- It was this continent that was so proud of being the cradle of democracy, of the Rule of Law, of liberty, of ancient philosophy and of science.
- It was this continent that was about to destroy its own soul and its own identity.
- One would say nationalism, racism and xenophobia almost drove Europe to collective suicide.
- Bearing this mind, the new Europe, the European community dreamt by great men like Schumann, Adenauer, de Gaspari or Monnet, remains strongly committed to the combat against nationalism, xenophobia and all forms of racism and intolerance.

- The idea of a European Community has to be much more than only the common market.
- The European Union is a community of values, based on the respect for human dignity, Human rights and fundamental liberties.
- The complex regulatory mechanisms of the internal market are beneficial
- Even necessary, without them there will not be the so much needed economic growth – sustainable, smart and inclusive growth, as underlines President Barroso in his Communication “EU2020”.
- But Europe has to be much more than only the efficiency of the markets.
- Its ambition is not to setup a free trade area of the most competitive economies of the globe.
- Europe wants to assert itself as a space of peace, of liberty and of solidarity.
- Freedom and liberty are not a function of the markets; it’s rather the opposite: free markets are not the end in itself, but only means; they are the mean to build a just society.
- Economic growth is the mean to pass to future generations a better Europe, based on the respect for human dignity and made out of solidarity.
- This objective however is not a given, it is rather a challenge.

- These great ideals – peace, liberty, solidarity – are not guaranteed just because they're enshrined in the Treaties.
- These ideals have to be built, they're not a «present».
- We need to conquer them, often against all sorts of obstacles and by overcoming resistance from several quarters.
- This is how democracy works: not as the simple product of natural causes or the legacy of supernatural forces.
- Democracy requires **our** commitment and joint efforts.
- Democracy, as the government of the city, is made **for** human beings but above all it is **by** human beings.
- This Europe, community of values, is also not «private property» of the Brussels Institutions.
- Peace and solidarity cannot be brought about by a Commission directive.
- And the success of 50 years of prosperity and peace in Europe cannot either be credited to the technocratic skills of European bureaucrats.
- They were made by the Europeans, the women and the men of this continent.
- And the very same goes for today: in a moment of crisis, as in all crisis, financial turmoil and economic slowdown has provided additional fuel to the rise of all sorts of populism and of extremism, bureaucrats of European institutions alone will not be able to face intolerance

- Particularly the rise of anti-Semitism and of islamophobia.
- And to guarantee rights and liberties.
- The institutions need you, not only your encouragement; they need especially your cooperation. Europe needs **your** commitment.
- Our Europe, community of values, is indeed a «joint venture».
- Not only because the community method is the result of a complex interaction of the European institutions.
- I mean that it is a joint venture rather because Europe can only exist and survive through the contribution and the attachment of all Europeans, of its civil society, including of your religious communities.
- This is why the European Commission warmly welcomes and wishes to associate itself to your initiative dear Rabbi Schneier.
- The combat against intolerance and racism and at the same time peaceful coexistence based on mutual respect and on respect for the democratic Rule of Law demands the contribution of us all.
- We, European institutions, are expected to set the appropriate legal framework and to pass the appropriate political messages at the right moment.
- You, the civil society, are expected to take advantage of the conditions offered to you by the political institutions.
- If you take this opportunity you can make the difference, I mean: you can take advantage of the democratic setting that you can enjoy today in Europe and make the difference by publicly declaring your

attachment to democracy, to the Rule of Law, to Human rights and to fundamental liberties.

- Europe and its democracy will only last if it will be claimed by the Europeans.
- This is precisely what we are trying to fulfil today, here in Brussels.
- The Commission thanks you and congratulates your initiative.
- But most of all the Commission remains at your disposal to cooperate with you.