

**REMARKS BY PROF JERZY BUZEK, PRESIDENT OF THE
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**EU PRESIDENTS MEETING WITH LEADERS OF
PHILOSOPHICAL AND NON-CONFESSIONAL
ORGANISATIONS**

BERLAYMONT, 30 NOVEMBER 2011

I am delighted to co-chair this annual meeting on my second occasion.

This exchange between you, leaders of philosophical and non-confessional organisations, on one side and the Presidents of the EU institutions on the other side has become a good tradition. I would like to thank President Barroso for his invitation.

It is also the second time that the meeting takes place since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which provides a legal basis for such dialogue.

But this is not the only reason for us to meet. The development of new forms of dialogue through social media, and thus society's 'virtual participation', reached a breakthrough level during my term. The Arab Spring has shown that the networked mobilisation of citizens can bring down governments.

However, networked citizen, require from politicians new means of communicating. Not only in North Africa, but also in Europe. Many citizens feel not well informed about political and economic decisions. They lost the feeling of belonging and of being needed.

This is one of the reasons why I have personally so strongly desired all forms of dialogue and communication. The European Parliament is a place for the friction of various visions, because dialogue is the essence of democracy.

As the directly-elected institution, Parliament has always been open to citizens and has hosted many conferences, seminars and exhibitions over the years which allow both, religions and free thinkers, to contribute to European public policy debates.

This afternoon Parliament too, as an institution, will continue its own dialogue with philosophical and non-confessional organisations, which it has already started this May with representatives of churches and religious communities.

These two seminars, in May and now in November, are fully complementary. They are a form of public consultation to get input from different organisations of belief or conviction on how they would like us to structure our dialogue.

I would like to warmly invite you all to attend our public seminar this afternoon at 4 o'clock in the EP.

Our discussion here and now should focus on the recent Communication of the Commission and the High Representative on "A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity".

An underlying principle is that our shared European values are in fact universal values. Because all our values boil down to the core belief in human dignity.

It is on this basis that we seek to promote human rights, freedom and democracy beyond our borders. We are not seeking to impose our European way of life in our neighbouring nations; but we must respond to the cry for freedom and dignity that calls from every human heart.

My own experience in the Solidarnosc movement in Poland in the 1980s taught me that human hope cannot be repressed forever. It also taught me that solidarity from free democratic states is vital for keeping this hope alive in the people.

In all of this, philosophical and non-confessional organisations like yours can play a major role in defending human dignity. You can give thoughts and orientations for promoting openness, tolerance, respect for minorities and religious freedom.

Our political order relies on fundamentals that it cannot create itself. It relies on the beliefs and convictions of its citizens. It relies on organised communities of values.

We need you and your organisations also to build bridges to other parts of the world. The exchange of ideas and ideals is perhaps

the most important contribution to the establishment of a true and new partnership, based on shared values.

Our new EEAS has the potential to be a major force for good in the world, promoting, as stated in the Lisbon Treaty Preamble "the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law."

It is clear that the EU's Foreign Policy needs to develop its understanding of different beliefs, cultures and identities if the EU wants to be effective in fostering our values in our neighbourhood.

I look forward to the contributions of you, representatives of different philosophical and non-confessional organisations on this vital subject of our time.