

Strasbourg, 11 September 2013 – "In 8 month's time, voters will decide. Now, it's up to us to make the case for Europe", European Commission President **José Manuel Barroso** said in his fourth State of the Union Address in the European Parliament. The EU has come a long way since the crisis, President Barroso told MEPs, and although recovery is in sight for Europe, we still must continue to work together to reform our economies. The President also made the case for a genuinely united and more integrated Europe, where our values and standards, responsibility, solidarity and the rule of law are upheld. An overview.

1 **Scene Setter:** 5 years ago, the global financial crisis started. But Europe has fought back – by reforming the financial sector, improving the way governments work together, return to sound finances, modernise their economies.

“What matters now is what we make of this progress. Do we talk it up, or talk it down? Do we draw confidence from it to pursue what we have started, or do we belittle the results of our efforts?”

2 **We have come a long way since the start of the crisis.**

“The facts tell us that our efforts have started to convince. Overall spreads are coming down. The most vulnerable countries are paying less to borrow. Industrial output is increasing. Market trust is returning. Stock markets are performing well. The business outlook is steadily improving. Consumer confidence is sharply rising.”

For Europe, recovery is within sight.

“Of course, we need to be vigilant. ‘One swallow does not make a summer, nor one fine day’. Even one fine quarter doesn't mean we are out of the economic heavy weather. But it does prove we are on the right track.”

“This should push us to keep up our efforts. We owe it to those for whom the recovery is not yet within reach, to those who do not yet profit from positive developments. We owe it to our 26 million unemployed. Especially to the young people who are looking to us to give them hope. Hope and confidence are also part of the economic equation.”

3 **We must continue to work together to reform our economies**

There is a lot that still can be delivered at European level in this Parliament's and this Commission's current mandate:

– deepening the economic and monetary union by delivering the **Banking union**, the **Single Supervisory Mechanism**, the **Single Resolution Mechanism**;

– delivering our **growth agenda**: the decisions on **youth employment**, the **financing of the real economy**, the **single market act I & II**, the **Connecting Europe Facility**, **Horizon 2020**, investments in **skills, education and training**, an **industrial policy** fit for the 21st century, support for **SMEs**, a new **climate framework** for 2030, pursuing our **trade agenda**, implementing the **Multiannual Financial Framework**.

“From the Commission's side, we will deliver. (...) There is no time to waste, so I warn against holding it up. In particular, I urge Member States not to delay.”

“I cannot emphasise this enough: citizens will not be convinced with rhetoric and promise only, but with a concrete set of common achievements. We have to show the many areas where Europe has solved problems for citizens. Europe is not the cause of problems, Europe is part of the solution.”

4 **Fighting this crisis is not easy. But it is possible – and necessary**

“At this point in time, with a fragile recovery, the biggest downside risk I see is political: lack of stability and lack of determination.”

“In this phase of the crisis, governments' job is to provide the certainty and predictability that markets still lack.”

“I'm sure you all know Justus Lipsius, he was a very influential 16th century humanist scholar, who wrote a very important book called *De Constantia*. He wrote: 'Constancy is a right and immovable strength of the mind, neither lifted up nor pressed down with external or casual accidents.' Only a 'strength of the mind', he argued, based on 'judgment and sound reason', can help you through confusing and alarming times. I hope that in these difficult times all of us – including the government representatives that meet in the Justus Lipsius building – show that determination and perseverance.”

5 Europe can only face its challenges by being genuinely united

“ In today’s world, the EU level is indispensable to protect these values and standards and promote citizens rights: from consumer protection to labour rights, from women’s rights to respect for minorities, from environmental standards to data protection and privacy. ”

- **Only by acting together** as a Union we can better help our **companies** compete, safeguard our **social model**, guarantee **security and stability**, stand up for our **values** and speak up for **democracy** and the **rule of law**, defend our interests in international **trade**, secure our **energy** provision, seek impact for **development aid**.

- **Enlargement** has been a success; **neighbourhood policy** was and still is the best way to provide security.

“ (...) It is only because they were offered a European perspective that now even Serbia and Kosovo come to an agreement, under mediation of the EU. ”

“ Let me say to all those who rejoice in Europe’s difficulties and who want to roll back our integration and go back to isolation: the pre-integrated Europe of the divisions, the war, the trenches, is not what people desire and deserve. ”

“ It is precisely with our values that we address the unbearable situation in Syria, which has tested, over the last months, the world’s conscience so severely. The European Union has led the international aid response by mobilising close to 1.5 billion euros, of which €850 million comes directly from the EU budget. The Commission will do its utmost to help the Syrian people and refugees in neighbouring countries. ”

6 We all need a Europe that is united, strong and open

Of course, as any human endeavor, the EU is not perfect

“ In the debate that is ongoing all across Europe, the bottom-line question is: ‘Do we want to improve Europe, or give it up?’ My answer is clear: let’s engage! If you don’t like Europe as it is: improve it! ”

“ Not everything needs a solution at European level. Europe must focus on where it can add most value. Where this is not the case, it should not meddle. The EU needs to big on big things and smaller on smaller things – something we may occasionally have neglected in the past. ”

There are areas of major importance where **Europe must have more integration, more unity**. Where only a **strong Europe can deliver results**.

“ I believe a political union needs to be our political horizon. ”

We can and must complement national responsibility with **European responsibility** and **European solidarity**

“ Strengthening the social dimension is a priority for the months to come, together with our social partners. (...) Solidarity is a key element of what being part of Europe is all about, something to take pride in. ”

Safeguarding its values, such as the **rule of law**, is what the European Union was made to do, from its inception to the latest chapters in enlargement.

“ Experience has confirmed the usefulness of the Commission role as an independent and objective referee. We should consolidate this experience through a more general framework. ”

“ There are certain non-negotiable values that the EU and its member states must and shall always defend. ”

7 Which picture will voters be presented with?

The **elections** will not only be about the European Parliament, nor will they be about the European Commission or about the Council. They will be about Europe.

“ [MEPs], the democratic representatives of Europe, directly elected, will be at the forefront of the political debate. The question I want to is: wich picture of Europe will voters be presented with? The candid version, or the cartoon version? The myths or the facts? The honest, reasonable version or the extremist, populist version? It’s an important difference. ”