

Political visions for the next five years

Thank you for the invitation and for the opportunity to be a bit visionary.

We are now 2014 and we are approaching the end of the Greek Presidency. The Lisbon treaty has already been in force for several years and we have a more permanent chair of the European Council, so the role of the country taking of the rotating presidency is somewhat changed, but it is still a very important responsibility, in making sure that agreements are found in the many important files dealt with in different Council formations, and in preparations for the European Council.

Our friend Jan Schmidt just served for a few years in the European External Action Service, as Ambassador of the EU delegation in Pristina. He must have had a very interesting experience there, being able to witness steady progress and just recently- Kosovo's application for EU Membership.

The European Union now has 29 Members, as Croatia and Iceland joined a couple of years ago.

Turkey and Macedonia are approaching the end of their accession negotiations and Serbia, Montenegro, BiH, and Albania are making progress in their negotiations too, albeit at somewhat different speeds. They all know that they will have to fully respect the Copenhagen criteria and all benchmarks set in the negotiations, but they are working hard to qualify themselves and helping each other by sharing best practice.

Three important events during 2009 and -10 and set in motion a positive spiral of new developments: firstly, the Commission recommend EUMS to grant visa-free travel to Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro – a recommendation that interior ministers wisely followed. This meant very much to the countries concerned, and actually enabled the Macedonian leadership to finally agree on the name issue with Greece.

The second event originated in Belgrade, where the Serbs in the autumn of 2009 caught general Mladic and finally managed to achieve “full cooperation” with the Hague Tribunal. The EUMS kept their old promise of accelerating with Serbia, which inspired the rest of the region to also focus on a the future inside the EU instead of perceived injustices in the past.

The third event was the breakthrough and final agreement *in Cyprus on Cyprus*, which led to an end to the old division of the island. Turkey responded to the agreement by implementing the Ankara protocol, which meant that Turkey’s accession negotiations really

could pick up pace. This also inspired the Turkish government to really push through some badly needed political reforms and constitutional changes.

Turkey's strategic importance has become increasingly clear, both in terms of foreign policy, and economy and as a hub for energy transports. To ensure increased energy security and less dependency on one source of supply has been an important priority ever since the gas crisis during the CZ Presidency in 2009.

I am sure we all remember the dramatic autumn of 2009 and the collective sigh of relief in the EU capitals when the Irish people finally said yes to the Lisbon treaty. This meant that EUMS could stop their year-long obsessions with institutional matters and devote more attention to matters of political substance. Thanks to the new provisions in the Lisbon Treaty it has become easier to take forceful action in fighting cross-border crime, and also to shape a more effective and coherent foreign policy.

With a start already in 2008 the EU has fought a continuous, and very successful, battle against the double challenge of addressing the climate change and getting the economy back to a sustainable path.

The COPS-15 meeting in Copenhagen was most complex and complicated, indeed, but thanks to good cooperation – not least

between the EU and the host nation – we did reach an ambitious agreement.

The world realized that acting early would be much less expensive than postponing action. And EUMS saw that climate change is not only a threat. It also brings *opportunities*. A climate-friendly eco-efficient economy requires structural changes that also bring enormous gains.

Europe is now at the forefront and a world leader in developing the new technology needed in a eco-efficient economy. New industries in the field of energy technology are flourishing. It looks like the European Commission will be correct in its forecast, indicating that by 2050 the market for climate-friendly energy will have a total value of 3 000 billion dollars and employ some 25 million persons!

We have worked hard in the past five years, but it has paid off. We have gained many new jobs through exporting new smart solutions. But we have also gained a new standing internationally, and strengthened our role as a global partner, by the unity and leadership we showed in designing a wise strategy on both economic and climate matters.

A successful outcome in Copenhagen would not have been possible without strong cooperation with the US. But the first Obama administration realised that there was nothing that the US wanted to achieve globally that they could not achieve more easily in

cooperation with Europe, just as EUMS realised that there was nothing Europe wanted to achieve that we could not achieve more easily in cooperation with the US.

The renewed Transatlantic partnership has led to many important results, including our joint efforts a few years ago to bring the Doha round to a successful closure.

Looking back we can conclude that the EU now is in a much stronger position than 5 years ago- in 2009, which was a difficult year in many respects, but also an important turning point. We can conclude that one should never waste the opportunity that lies in a good crisis.

In 2009 you may remember that the Baltic Sea Strategy was adopted, and this new macro-regional way of thinking has proven very productive. We get so more output from *pooling* resources and by cooperating across borders, on everything from expert teams to handle accidents at sea to joint research centres and business clusters.

The action plan attached to the strategy, where different countries and organisations took responsibility for different projects meant that actions really were implemented on the ground. Today the Baltic Sea region is the place in Europe where the new Madrid strategy for growth and jobs is implemented in the most effective way.

The new financial perspective now in force gives new hope and confidence in the European Union, as the EU decided to modernise spending and phase out subsidies to a sector that has been declining for the past 200 years and boost spending on research, infrastructure, world class education and modern transport links.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I could go on and on, outlining possible developments for the next five year period. What you heard from me today is from my point of view a best case-scenario - maybe not the most likely scenario, but still a possible one, if we dare to dream a bit and put our minds to realising that dream.

Whatever happens in the longer run, it is clear that some of the issues on the SE Presidency agenda for this autumn will stay with us for many years to come:

1. The challenge presented by climate change
2. Our economic policy and our ability to stay competitive while tackling the effects of an ageing population
3. The EU's further enlargement
4. Our role as a global player

Someone has said that when you take over the EU Presidency you get to act like a superpower for six months. There may be something to this, but at the same time it is clear that Sweden to a very large

extent inherits an agenda, and that countries that succeed us also will inherit a number of important issues.

Let me conclude by noting that expectations seem to be pretty high on the Swedish Presidency, despite that fact that circumstances are rather difficult. Nevertheless I am very much looking forward to this half year as I can think of very tasks that are meaningful than the one of advancing EU cooperation to the best of one's ability.

Thank you for your attention.