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A EUROPE OF VALUES

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

International Meeting for Peace, Faiths and Cultures - "The Spirit of Assisi in Cracow"

Cracow, 6 September 2009

Royal Highness,
Eminence,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Thank you, Cardinal Dziwisz and Professor Riccardi, for inviting me to take part in this very special meeting organised in this historic and very beautiful city of Cracow by the Archdiocese of Cracow and the Community of Sant' Egidio.

I know very well and I have a high respect for your commitment and that of the Community of Sant'Egidio for the cause of dialogue and Peace.

But this meeting is special also for two reasons.

First, because of its location - here in Cracow, the home of John Paul II, who convened that first, historic gathering for peace in Assisi in 1986.

And secondly because of its timing - just days after the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, a conflict in which between 50 and 70 million people lost their lives, a conflict that brought Europe its darkest hours and when we experienced the absolute evil of the holocaust.

What better reminder of the need for efforts dedicated to the cause of peace today?

It is extremely moving for me, as President of the European Commission, to be here, in Poland, so close to this anniversary.

This is where the War began and no other country symbolises more the pain and the sufferings of war and the atrocities it brings.

The European Union was created to ensure that those horrors could never be repeated on our continent.

It has been successful. The commemorations of the last few days, where former enemies have come together to remember the dead, have shown how far Europe has come. But we must not be complacent. Europe must never forget this most tragic and barbaric chapter in its history.

Unfortunately, however, once the war had ended the dream of freedom remained unfulfilled for the countries of central and Eastern Europe, including Poland.

Europe remained unnaturally divided, unable, as John Paul II put it, to "breathe with both its lungs."

I would like to pay tribute today to the very special part that Poland played in the reunification of Europe. John Paul II, certainly one of the greatest personalities in European history, played an inspirational role. Indeed, Mikhail Gorbachev said that the collapse of communism would have been impossible without him.

Also important, Lech Walesa and the Solidarnosc movement were the first to form democratic structures in 1980ies which eventually lead to overthrowing the totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe.

The fall of the Iron Curtain paved the way for the wave of EU accessions just over five years ago. Poland, along with the other countries which joined the EU in 2004, has now found its rightful place in Europe.

It is now a very respected member of the European family, fully participating in decisions on the future of the continent.

What should this future be? My own view is clear. The starting point must be our belief in the dignity of the human being. The belief that this dignity is inalienable.

That it cannot be granted or taken away by any other person, by any state or by any political authority.

This belief stems from our common intellectual, cultural and spiritual heritage. It should unite all Europeans - regardless of their culture, religious faith or philosophical belief.

It is shared by all the main democratic political families.

It is the source of our common European values:

- Freedom: because each individual is responsible for developing their own potential. But they cannot do this without responsibility. Indeed, without responsibility freedom is an empty concept.
- Human rights and all the fundamental freedoms that go hand in hand with the rule of law and democracy are now recognised as indispensable values in our Union;
- Tolerance – or to put it more strongly – a robust appreciation of the value of pluralism and diversity in our society. This of course ties in strongly with the Spirit of Assisi. John Paul said: "Saying 'Europe' must be equivalent to saying "openness."

Tolerance implies that we cannot accept any form of discrimination between human beings.

- Solidarity - Solidarity between human beings who do not exist merely as individuals; they are part of a community. Solidarity because freedom is not enough to allow individuals to develop their full potential; they need security and the means to do it. Solidarity particularly at this moment, because we must shield the poorest and most vulnerable in our society from the effects of the current crisis;
- But solidarity also between the member states of our European Union, and with other parts of the world; because no country in the world alone can cope with the global challenges of the 21st century;
- For a Europe built on values, the moral challenge of global poverty must remain one of our most compelling goals. We must not allow economic crisis in the developed world to dilute our mission to bring help to those facing the challenge of survival in so many parts of the world. I am determined to continue to make the case that Europe must build on our pioneering work, with Africa in particular, and act as a champion of the developing world. Our focus must remain on achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and on making a real impact on the challenges of food security and water security, health and education.
- I would add a special concern for the environment, because, in addition to the obligations we have to our fellow human beings, we are also increasingly aware of the obligations we have to our planet and future generations. This should enjoy life on it.

But Europe should do more for peace. That is why I hope that the Lisbon Treaty will soon be ratified and signed by all Member States because it will reinforce our capacity to act globally. We have been actively promoting human rights, never hesitating to condemn their violation. But we must better use our potential as a civilian power for peace, by linking security and development to help rescue and rehabilitate failed states. We can and must do more to play our role in conflict resolution and peace-keeping and peace-building. Non-proliferation will be a major challenge in the coming years.

Of course, not all of these values are unique to Europe and we should regard them as universal values. But those values are at the basis of the 'European Model of Society' that surpasses the destructive dichotomy of unregulated markets or over-powerful states. Our common history and experience after the second world war and throughout the process of European integration show that the answers to today's challenges do not lie in the market alone, or in the state alone. They must come from society so that they can respond to people's needs. We must put human dignity at the heart of our endeavours.

I believe that neither the market nor the state is an end in itself. They are simply a means to an end. That end is human development. In other words, they are our servants, not our masters. They must create the conditions which favour the fullest possible development of each and every one of us.

So, to consider the market for a moment, this crisis has taught us that we need effective regulation to make sure that it works for people. But that is not enough. Because even the smartest and the most effective regulation does not replace the need for businesses to behave responsibly.

Because in the end, the crisis was not primarily a crisis of regulation or supervision. It was above all a crisis of values, and I insist on the word values. It resulted, in part at least, from a failure by some to understand their wider ethical responsibilities, from the preponderance of a paradigm which was not sustainable. In future, markets must be directed towards the pursuit of the common good.

I also believe that our unique European experience is crucially relevant internationally. The crisis has shown that the world needs values and new models to inspire new ideas. The post-crisis economy will be different to the pre-crisis economy. There will be a much greater emphasis on all kinds of sustainability – financial, social, environmental. It is our model, the European model of Society which is best equipped to meet this challenge.

The crisis proved beyond any doubt that global interdependence is irreversible. Yet the global community has yet to find a common set of values or rules or even the correct fora within which we should work on those rules and values. With over 50 years of trans-national rule making and the management of interdependence, Europe is the natural advocate of the global governance which the world now needs, and which the world now needs more than ever. It is in this way that Europe wants to help shape this global governance with its positive values.

This, then, could be Europe's moment. A continent where terrible atrocities were committed in the last century has the vocation to become a leading force for progress in this one. As the eminent historian Tony Judt, professor at New York University, put it in a book about European history after the war:

'In spite of the horrors of the recent past – and in large measure because of them – it was Europeans who were uniquely placed to offer the world some modest advice on how to avoid repeating their mistakes. Few would have predicted it sixty years before, but the 21st century might yet belong to Europe.'

But to play this role we, Europeans, must position ourselves carefully. The crisis has resulted in a shift in the global balance of power. The world has become more multi-polar. Europe now faces a stark choice. A choice which can no longer be delayed. If Europe acts as a single entity and speaks with a single voice, it can become a co-leader in the world, working in partnership with the others. But if it fails to act as a single entity – if it falls prey to 'fragmented power syndrome', to short-termism, to ugly nationalism and chauvinism, - it will be consigned to the sidelines.

Europe must choose the first of these options. Not so that it can seek power for its own sake– but so that it can become a champion of the values of peace, freedom and solidarity and to give our positive contribution.

This is the kind of Europe I believe in. A Europe that puts people at the heart of its project. A Europe that puts its values at the heart of the relations with the rest of the world.

A Europe which promotes human development in the fullest possible sense.

A Europe which promotes the development of "the whole man and of all men."

Thank you.