



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

TRANSCRIPT

OF THE STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA JANEZ JANŠA AFTER THE MEETING BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION (Brdo pri Kranju, 8 January 2008)

PRIME MINISTER JANEZ JANŠA: I, too, would like to wish you all a warm welcome, especially the Vice-President of the European Commission, Mrs Margot Wallström. We are very pleased to see her and the other members of the European Commission here today.

This is an important meeting which marks the beginning of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The meeting may be a traditional one, but it is also one that so far has been devoted principally to matters of hard content, and this will continue in the afternoon. We have got to know each other better. We have talked chiefly about the key challenges facing the European Union in the first half of 2008. The Commissioners and colleagues from the Government of the Republic of Slovenia have already had discussions on eighteen dossiers. We have also had separate talks with the Vice-President, Mrs Wallström. The proceedings will continue with a working lunch and a plenary meeting between the European Commission and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

The common thread running through all the debates is the question of the key challenges facing the European Union in the first half of 2008 and the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency. One priority is the Lisbon Treaty. We have established that it is in the political interest of the European Union as its most important priority to ratify the Treaty and to succeed where it had previously failed. During the Slovenian Presidency, we will do our utmost, in cooperation with the EU institutions, to make sure that the all other events and processes are managed with a view to clearing the way for ratification to proceed smoothly. Preparations for the successful implementation of the Lisbon Treaty are also part of this agenda. Our joint goal, of course, is for the Treaty to enter into force on 1 January 2009, providing the European Union with new institutional foundations on the basis of which its role as a global player in the world arena will continue to grow.

The energy and climate package is also being discussed. In terms of content, this will probably be the most demanding task of the Slovenian Presidency. Close cooperation between the European Commission, the presiding country and the European Parliament is of utmost importance when it comes to adopting useful conclusions and decisions, or successfully following up the decisions adopted last year. During our talks here, we are doing our best to lay the foundations for such cooperation. In this context, there are also some very demanding negotiations ahead of us in the relatively limited period between the publication of the European Commission's proposal on 23 January and the European Council in March, which this year will be held quite early. We are talking about the launch of the third cycle of the Lisbon Strategy. Here we concur with the European Commission that Europe must boost innovativeness, provide incentives to small and medium-sized enterprises to that end, and thus contribute to the greater competitiveness of the European Union both in general and within the European Union.

During these talks, special care and attention has been devoted to the Western Balkans. We take as our joint unified and coordinated starting point the principle that resolving the outstanding issues of the Western Balkan region must be built on a unified approach of the entire European Union and solutions must be sought that will stabilise the region in the long run. In the afternoon and after these working meetings, the Opening Event of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue will be held. We shall be delighted to open this event together with the Commission, and thus launch the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. It represents a significant added value, not only for the Slovenian Presidency but also for the French Presidency in the second half of 2008. It is a very important point where we can build on everything that the European Union has achieved to date i.e. the European Union can actually take stock of the shared values and value foundations that shaped the European Union at its inception, values which have been upgraded in the course of the 50 years of its existence and growth, and can examine how, on the basis of these values, the EU can pursue a dialogue on an equal footing with other cultures both in the immediate neighbourhood and worldwide.

The Slovenian EU Council Presidency has taken Synergy as its watchword. By this we mean that we are calling for more synergy between cultures, between generations and between citizens in the European Union, and between the Member States and the institutions. Our premise is that the potential of the European Union is immense. The European Union represents an enormous wealth of good practices that, through reciprocal exchange, imitation and upgrading, we can in future enrich and draw on a potential which is effectively unique in the global context.

I would like to conclude by saying that today we have established a framework for excellent cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the European Commission. On the basis of this cooperation we will have the optimism and courage to face the challenges which await the European Union in the next six months.