



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

## ADDRESS

**BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL JANEZ JANŠA  
AT THE CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS**  
*Ljubljana, 17 March 2008*

*Mr President,  
Mr Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to take part in the traditional Conference of Foreign Affairs Committee Chairpersons of the EU Member States, the European Parliament and candidate countries. This meeting is a good example of inter-institutional dialogue on matters of the joint EU agenda.

The European model of representative democracy has matured into a unique intertwining of parliamentarism at the European and national levels. The Lisbon Treaty promises further progress in this area, too.

The Treaty will provide the representatives elected by the citizens of Europe with additional decision-making levers at both levels. At the European level by expanding the co-decision procedure and at the national level by further involving parliaments in the EU legislation procedure.

“Adoption of the Treaty will be a signal that the EU is becoming even stronger,” said the former EU Council President, Mr José Sócrates, when he addressed this forum five months ago. Now that we have adopted it, our joint task is to give this signal our final confirmation. The successful conclusion of the ratification process is one of the Slovenian EU Presidency’s fundamental priorities also with a view to providing an easier and more credible EU standpoint when defending European principles and standards in a global context.

You, the representatives of the parliaments, have a leading role in the ratification process. The Presidency is pleased to welcome all the favourable decisions taken to date. The clear support of the European Parliament for the report on the Treaty of Lisbon is a powerful message for the continuation of the ratification procedure. Slovenia indeed hopes to see the majority of ratification processes successfully concluded when it hands over its Presidency. This would make it possible to achieve the basic goal: of setting up, by the end of the year, the renewed common foundation for further, even more ambitious development of the EU.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Slovenian EU Council Presidency is taking place at a very particular moment in time. On the one hand, Europe’s hitherto leading integration projects are drawing to a close: the beginning of our Presidency was marked by the successful expansion of the eurozone and the Schengen area. On the other hand, the recent European Council meeting has outlined the new objectives of the joint European project more clearly; our discussions in Brussels were in-depth and useful and have confirmed the fresh impetus in the European Union.

Progress was confirmed of reforms under the Lisbon Strategy which have helped consolidate the foundations of the European economy. At the same time consensus was reached that, alongside the challenges and the opportunities brought by globalisation, reforms must continue to be implemented in the new cycle. The key areas are still science and innovation, the promotion of entrepreneurial potential, in particular in the area of small and medium-sized enterprises, and the modernisation of labour markets. The European Council has already started thinking about the post-2010 phase, after the second cycle has run its course.

The European Council also confirmed the increasingly clear realisation that the transition to a low-carbon production is becoming a vital source of dynamism in the European economy. Today we stand at the doorstep of the third industrial revolution. This is also why agreement on the timetable for enforcing the energy and climate change package features among our major achievements. The EU Council wishes to reach, in cooperation with the European Parliament, a comprehensive agreement on the European Commission's proposals by the end of the year in order for specific solutions to be adopted within this term of the European Parliament. Even earlier – namely, by June 2008 – the European Council is expected to reach an agreement on key issues relating to liberalisation of the EU's electricity and gas markets.

Regarding the crisis on the financial markets, the European Council confirmed its resolve to set up effective mechanisms for control and trans-border cooperation as soon as possible. With conditions still fragile, the EU Council will be vigilant in monitoring the situation and, in April, a review of the effects of the measures adopted will be carried out. The European Council has also agreed that, based on the European Commission Communication, a joint European approach to sovereign wealth funds should be developed.

As I intend to present the European Council conclusions in detail to, first of all, the Slovenian National Assembly and then to the European Parliament, I think it reasonable, at this point, to stress in particular the common thread running through the discussions held in Brussels. It is essentially the paradigm of positive politics of globalisation. Running counter to the impression that globalisation is something that is *happening to* Europe, such a policy builds on the concept of the European Union as a global player projecting its values and interests onto the global space. From this angle, the 'external dimension' therefore constituted a major focus of discussions at the European Council.

An open economy and a stable international environment are not just prerequisites for achieving the Lisbon goals of creating growth and jobs in the context of the European economy. Promoting free trade and the openness of global markets is also the European Union's contribution towards more balanced globalisation. The European Union is widely known as the biggest development aid donor on the world scale. The European Commissioner for Trade, Peter Mandelson, recently remarked on the fact that the biggest EU contribution to eradicating global poverty was neither development aid nor debt relief but the openness of our markets. This is why the emphasis on free trade in the context of the external dimension of the Lisbon Strategy constitutes an important added value brought about by the last European Council.

The importance of European policy for global development is perhaps most evident in the area of environmental protection. The success of international efforts to ensure a new comprehensive regime of combating climate change will depend largely on the European Union's success in achieving the set objectives and on its ability to continue, on this basis, to set the pace at the global level. The European Union already played a key role in Bali, despite engaging in a dialogue with global partners equipped only with its objectives from March 2007. As early as this year in Poznan, but especially next year in Copenhagen, the European Union's ability to convey convincing arguments in global dialogue will mainly depend on the adhering to the timetable for adopting the measures to achieve these objectives. And also on

the success of the governments and the European institutions in setting the example: "A good example is worth twice as much as good advice."

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

To date, Slovenia has also paid a great deal of attention to the Western Balkans, one of the Slovenian Presidency priorities. The course of developments has shown that the decision to pay particular attention to this region was the right one.

Although the outcome of the Kosovo issue was not unexpected, it has nonetheless been an important achievement for the European Union as a whole to be able to act as one on this front, adopting timely and constructive decisions throughout the process. We have thereby set an example of how, in critical moments, with one dilemma following another, it is necessary to focus on the right issues. This is of particular importance in a region which has had too much experience of false choices. The right challenges must be identified and decisions for the future adopted. The European Union has repeatedly emphasised that it was willing to meet partners halfway.

The Slovenian Presidency, together with the European partners and institutions, will continue its efforts to help all the forces which recognise the European perspective as the region's only positive alternative. We are in particular pleased with the start of dialogue on visa facilitation, the goal now remaining is the definitive conclusion of the network of Stabilisation and Association Agreements. We also have high expectations of the informal discussions between Foreign Ministers at the end of the month, based on the European Commission's communication on 'the Western Balkans on the road to the EU'.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The events that will particularly characterise the second half of the Slovenian Presidency will, apart from the June European Council, be the four summits between the European Union and the US, the Russian Federation, Japan, and Latin America and the Caribbean. These are extremely important partners of the European Union. The summits will also be opportunities for exchanges of views which are important for certain key global debates. Combating climate change and energy issues are, for example, one common thread running through all the planned agendas.

The EU-US Summit will be devoted to progress on promoting freedom in the transatlantic area: in connection with the movement of persons, as well as the movement of goods, flows of investment, and climate change.

The June Summit with the Russian Federation will be held under the leadership of the new Russian President and Slovenia as the first Slavonic country to hold the Presidency of the EU Council. It is our hope that the willingness of both sides to upgrade the treaty basis for strategic partnership will be confirmed at the Summit.

Constructive dialogue with Japan should, in addition to climate change and energy, focus chiefly on strengthening economic partnership; an open exchange of views on certain regional issues is also expected to take place.

The EU-LAC Summit held in mid-May in Lima will address issues of poverty and climate change. It will advocate social inclusion and highlight the importance of primary education and vocational training in combating poverty and inequality.

Intercultural dialogue is also one of the key themes of the Slovenian Presidency. Since 8 January, when Ljubljana hosted the international conference on intercultural dialogue, we have established broad-based cooperation in this area. Special emphasis has been given to synergy with the European Parliament, which, by its own initiatives, has confirmed that Parliament is, above all, a meeting point and a place of dialogue. In June, Slovenia intends to round off the Slovenian Presidency's contribution in the context of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. During this period we hope to lay the groundwork for developing a Euro-Mediterranean University which would be not only the living heritage of the Slovenian EU Council Presidency but also the embodiment of the message of intercultural coexistence for future generations.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I hope you all have a pleasant stay in Ljubljana. I hope that you will be enriched by a constructive and lively debate in the spirit of the European parliamentary tradition. After this conference, I shall be delivering an address at the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, which, in a certain way, testifies to the scope of European parliamentarism today. But, before that, I will be pleased to answer some of your questions.

Thank you very much.