



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

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ADDRESS

**BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA AND
PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL JANEZ JANŠA
AT THE XXXIXth MEETING OF THE COSAC**

Brdo pri Kranju, 7 May 2008

»The Slovenian EU Presidency and the future of the European Union«

*Mr Chairmen – Mr Kokalj, Mr Otoničar,
Representatives of European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union,
Representatives of the European Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Today's event proves that the European model of representative democracy works and is becoming stronger. Your traditional meetings are a good example of the international, inter-parliamentary and inter-institutional dialogue within the European Union.

Parliamentary democracy at the European level this year celebrates its 50th anniversary. In a special parliamentary session commemorating the anniversary, European Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering stressed that "the institutional balance which we have today created between the national and European levels represents a major achievement". The pace of cooperation has been intensifying. Proof of this can be seen in recent agreements concerning the climate change and energy package, the Galileo Programme, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology and all the other dossiers in which we have jointly achieved a breakthrough in the first fourth months of Slovenia's EU Council Presidency.

In terms of enhancing efficiency and promoting democracy the Lisbon Treaty promises further progress. The Treaty will give additional decision-making levers to the representatives elected directly by the citizens of Europe. In even more areas, at European level, you will have the right and the obligation to participate in co-decision. At national level, you will be given the possibility of taking action in the early phases of decision-making, when legislative documents are still at the draft stage.

The extent to which the role of national parliaments is enhanced by the Lisbon Treaty will depend largely on yourselves. The closer the ties between parliamentarians, the more effective you will be in monitoring subsidiary. It is important that you seize this opportunity to exchange good practices and coordinate your activities.

With the wish to ensure that the Treaty – when it enters into force on 1 January 2009 – is consistently implemented, taking into consideration the increased role of the European Parliament and the national parliaments, we started preparatory activities as early as January 2008. These activities are of a purely

preliminary nature, since ratification procedures are still under way. I am pleased to note that, at the moment, ratification is progressing well. To date, eleven countries have ratified the Treaty; five countries have announced ratification by the end of May.

You, the representatives of European Affairs Committees, who set the tone of parliamentary debates on the Treaty, exert a great deal of influence on the ratification process. I wish to thank you for your support and your initiatives to bring the Lisbon Treaty closer to the citizens of the European Union. Our joint efforts to ensure that the Treaty enters into force testify to the unity of our understanding of the direction the European Union is taking and to the pragmatic realisation that the European Union needs new instruments to effectively achieve its objectives in the age of globalisation.

I. THE SLOVENIAN EU PRESIDENCY'S ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

The spring European Council was also devoted to seeking answers to global challenges. It fulfilled the ambitions that we set ourselves for the first half of our Presidency – in compliance with the priorities that I outlined in the National Assembly in December and in the European Parliament in January. I would like, briefly, to highlight four key achievements:

- We have launched a new, three-year cycle of the Lisbon Strategy, one that affords a better balance between the competitiveness of the economy and concerns for people and the environment. This cycle will focus on the implementation of reforms, a task in which parliaments in their capacity as national legislators play an important role. The European Council has called for action in the three traditional 'Lisbon areas': promoting knowledge and innovation, promoting entrepreneurial potential and modernising labour markets.
 - We have introduced a 'fifth freedom' as the foundation of the European Research Area and the 'Ljubljana Process' launched in April. This process represents the removal of barriers to the free movement of knowledge and to the conversion of innovations into market products. Currently, only 3 per cent of the Europeans active in research and development engage in cross-border exchanges, and 95 per cent of the funds earmarked for this purpose are allocated from national financial frameworks. Compared to the U.S. and Japan, the European Union has significantly fewer active researchers in enterprises, although the very paradigm of the integration of research and entrepreneurship is the main driving force in an age of innovations.
 - We have agreed on measures to facilitate the operation and development of small and medium-sized enterprises. In this respect, two important achievements of the Slovenian Presidency are the agreement with the European Parliament on the legislative package on the marketing of products and the confirmation of the Eurostars Programme. The interest is considerable; as many as 202 applications were submitted in response to the first call for proposals.
 - We have called for the gradual implementation of the principles of "flexicurity" and for enhanced investment in human resources. In the period of globalisation, education is of vital importance for the competitiveness of the European Union and is also one of the most effective means of combating inequality and poverty.
- We have confirmed the basic principles and the timeframe for adoption of the energy and climate change package. The success of the agreement is all the greater since agreement was reached within just two months of the European Commission publishing the package and despite the fact that the current

situation on economic and financial markets is less favourable to ambitious agreements than in March last year. Our goal is clear: to adopt, in cooperation with the European Parliament, specific solutions within this parliamentary term of office. Furthermore, the tempo of our action will largely dictate the success of international efforts to adopt a comprehensive global agreement next year in Copenhagen. There is no alternative. Reports from climatologists clearly show that an environmental time bomb is ticking away. It is estimated that we have only fifteen years to prevent temperatures from rising by more than 2°C. If that were to happen, it would have irreparable consequences – not only for the atmosphere and biodiversity but also for health, international security and food supplies (*not to mention food prices*). We are therefore pleased to welcome the agreement adopted in April in Bangkok, where, on the basis of the commitments made in Bali, representatives from all over the world agreed on a work programme for the period until the conference in Copenhagen 2009. A similar strategic partnership and commitment to action were confirmed two weeks ago at the European Union - Japan Summit. It is important that industrially developed *countries (especially G-8 members)* arrive at a mutual agreement and extend help to developing countries.

- We have defined measures to stabilise the financial markets and have called upon the European Union Economic and Financial Affairs Council to continue its work. The first success has been the signature, in April, of the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the Financial Supervisory Authorities, Central Banks and Finance Ministries of the European Union on cross-border financial stability.
- Cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area has been kept within the Barcelona Process, with the participation of all 27 Member States and without setting up any parallel institutions. 'The Barcelona Process – the Union for the Mediterranean' represents added value especially in terms of visibility and co-ownership. Logically, you, as representatives of national parliaments, and the European Parliament – both very important actors in the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, will be engaged in further debate. One tangible contribution made by Slovenia in this regard will be the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean University in Piran (*to be inaugurated on 9 June 2008*), which constitutes an important initiative in the context of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Because we are striving for a balanced approach to the neighbourhood of the European Union, we will, on the basis of a proposal from Poland, also address the eastern dimension of European Neighbourhood Policy at the June European Council.

II. THE FUTURE OF THE EU IS ALREADY IN PLACE

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We already have the statistics for the future: the growth percentages of pollution, overpopulation, and desertification. In the larger European cities, polluted air causes around 80 thousand deaths per year; the world population will increase by a third (*2 billion people more*) in the next thirty years; desertification, particularly in the southern hemisphere, engenders a vicious circle of environmental degradation, migration and territorial conflict. We cannot avoid the problems of future but we can affect the scale of their impact on the life of European citizens.

This awareness will set the tone of discussions under the Slovenian Presidency until the European Council meeting in June:

- Energy and climate issues will continue to be at the top of the agenda. We wish to reach an agreement on further liberalisation of internal energy market as previously set out in the March European Council

conclusions. It would be useful to agree on how to proceed with biofuels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.

- Rising food prices have recently caused great concern – the crisis is estimated to have thrust an additional hundred million people into poverty. The problem is not one of shortage but of distribution. Restrictive measures are not, therefore, the right course of action. The solution should be based on openness in combination with increased production and the development of better technology. The European Union recently adopted a decision on compulsory set-aside and an increase in the milk quota, and the potential for technological development – the ‘green revolution’ – is being intensively investigated. Further steps to combat poverty will also be discussed next week at the European Union - Latin America and Caribbean Summit, a key meeting with non-EU countries under the Slovenian Presidency which will be attended by all the EU Heads of State or Government.
- In the field of justice and home affairs, we are working hard to achieve measures that enable Europeans to feel that openness is not damaging to security but may even enhance it. The positive effects of enlargement of the Schengen area, successfully completed at the end of March by the elimination of air borders, are eloquent proof of this. Since acceding to the Schengen Information System, Slovenia has arrested 87 persons, recovered 437 stolen vehicles and traced 43 missing persons, ten of them minors, on the basis of the European Arrest Warrant or international arrest warrant. In response to alerts issued by Slovenia, it was possible to arrest 24 persons and trace abroad four missing persons, all of whom had been sought unsuccessfully prior to joining the Schengen area. Transition to the second-generation Schengen Information System (*SIS II*) will ensure further progress in the area of security. I am, therefore, pleased that ministerial agreement has recently been reached on setting up the system by September 2009. The three agreements reached in April were also a great success: 1) on transforming Europol into an EU agency (*it is now up to those of you in the national parliaments to complete the parliamentary procedures necessary to adopt formal agreements by the end of this year*), 2) on conferring a mandate on the European Commission to open negotiations with the USA regarding future transatlantic visa arrangements, and 3) on the return of illegal immigrants (*agreement of the Presidency and the European Parliament after three years of negotiations*).
- We hope to complete the network of Stabilisation and Association Agreements in the Western Balkans, thereby fulfilling our Thessaloniki commitments. Great efforts were devoted to reaching accord on the signature of agreements with Serbia (*at the end of April*) and with Bosnia and Herzegovina (*planned for June*), which represent a major incentive for both countries on their respective paths towards European accession. Our wish for cooperation is clear, but a great deal will also depend on the resolve of the political leadership and the people in the region. We are probably all united in our wish to see the citizens of Serbia confirm their pro-European orientation next Sunday. Strong support from us is also required by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, especially following the decisions of the NATO Summit. It is of particular interest to us that, despite the announced early parliamentary elections, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia meets the conditions of the Accession Partnership and by the end of this year, if possible, obtains a date for the start of accession negotiations. We are, moreover, encouraging the whole region through additional sectoral incentives to increase the mobility of the population in the region (*the progressive abolition of visas, promotion of student and researcher exchanges, improvement of transport links, cooperation in combating organised crime*). It is also of the utmost importance for the stability of the region to maintain a united EU front on the issue of Kosovo. Although it may at moments have seemed that the European Union would be torn apart over this issue, we ultimately reached agreement on all the key decisions (*to deploy an EU Rule of Law mission in Kosovo and appoint an EU Special Representative*).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As EU High Representative Solana says, “new world, new way of thinking.” This should be based on openness and multilateral cooperation. This is the principle to which we adhere in addressing all the current challenges, ranging from the issues of climate change and turmoil on the financial markets to the questions of Kosovo, Tibet and Iran. Considerable attention has been paid to a series of EU summits with non-EU countries – following the April summit with Japan, the summit with Latin America and the Caribbean is scheduled this month and summits with the United States and the Russian Federation in June.

If the success achieved in the first fifty years of the EU was measured in terms of the peace and prosperity, the success of the next fifty years will have to be assessed in terms of the quality of our responses to global issues. The EU will have one simple question to answer: Did we taken sufficient advantage of the knowledge, technology and prosperity at our disposal to tackle the major challenges: security and peace, poverty and environmental conservation?

I hope that the debates today and tomorrow provide you with the maximum possible number of good suggestions to that end, and I hope that, at the end of the week, you will celebrate Europe day with optimism, in the awareness that we have available to us every possibility to make at least as much progress in future as in the first fifty years.