



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 PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL JANEZ JANŠA AT THE OPENING OF THE EU-LAC SUMMIT

Lima, 16 May 2008

*Mr President, Mr García Pérez,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
President of the European Parliament, Mr Pöttering,
President of the European Commission, Mr Barroso,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Señoras y Señores.*

We, the leaders of 60 Latin American, Caribbean and EU countries, have gathered today at the heart of the ancient Inca Empire. I wish to express my own personal gratitude as well as the deep appreciation of the Slovenian EU Presidency to the Republic of Peru and its people for hosting the Fifth Summit between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean. I am delighted to have the honour of opening the Summit, together with our host, President García.

Almost a decade ago, our commitment to common values and principles was celebrated at the first EU-LAC Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Building upon the strength and the variety of ties between our two regions, a positive process was then set in motion that has brought the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean closer together.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I still have vivid memories of the discussions in Vienna two years ago. I remember our Latin American friends commending the achievements of European integration. Another sentiment, however, was also felt in Vienna. The then President of the European Parliament Josep Borrell mentioned problems that many Latin Americans had with understanding Europe's "indecision about the European Union's *raison d'être*". Well, I am sure that you will see a different Europe today. This Summit finds the EU wholly reinvigorated.

The latest wave of enlargement has now been finalised. The round was completed with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania. Moreover, the new Member States have made their way to the very heart of integration. The expansion of the Schengen regime has rendered borders that were once ironbound, redundant. We have also got three new sets of euro coins, Slovenian one included.

On 27 October last year, the Member States unanimously agreed that the time of indecision had come to an end. The enlarged European Union has proved that it is capable of achieving consensus on issues of strategic importance. The Treaty of Lisbon was signed in December 2007, providing the European Union

with a new common foundation. Half-way through the ratification process, the EU is already engaging itself fully in global affairs.

With the active support of its partners, the Slovenian Presidency is trying to convert this regained momentum into decisions that are important for the global role of the EU. In tackling climate change, the European Union's first comprehensive response to a key global challenge is within reach. A similar approach will be needed in fighting poverty. The June European Council, at which the Millennium Development Goals will be on the agenda, will be the next opportunity for this.

So far, the idea of the European Union as a positive force of globalisation has been well received throughout the world. It is built upon the realisation that the EU needs to acknowledge various expectations if its global role is to be credible. The European vision of global leadership is an inclusive one, in which we listen carefully to the concerns, the needs and the hopes of all our partners.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are living in an age of dynamic global repositioning: various alliances and partnerships are taking shape and evolving. None of them should be taken for granted. Ours is no exception. This is why this Summit is so important. It gives us an opportunity to reaffirm that the strategic partnership between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean is worth all our efforts. Why?

Firstly, important results have already been achieved. On a broad agenda ranging from social cohesion, environmental protection and migration to the fight against drugs, terrorism and corruption, open dialogue has been advanced. Trade and investment flows have been further strengthened since the Summit in Vienna. Exchanges of higher education lecturers, researchers, students and artists have substantially increased.

The second reason is the great number of stakeholders in a wide variety of areas that have already become involved in our project. As Kofi Annan said in Vienna, "If governments lay the foundations, civil society and the private sector will respond." We are lucky to have very responsive civil societies and private sectors.

Their incentives add important value to our work. Yesterday I had the honour of addressing the Second EU-Latin America and Caribbean Business Summit, bringing together more than 400 participants. Legislators along with trade unions and other civil society organisations from both sides have also developed vibrant relations.

Last but not least, our common efforts have global leverage. It has often been said that our summits bring together one third of all UN member states, discussing issues that affect a billion of people. It sounds impressive. Yet it is, in fact, an understatement. Our reach should not be measured by our size or population. Increasingly, our impact will be measured by our potential to make a positive change on the global scale.

In this respect, our two regions shoulder the responsibility of addressing the wider dimension. Together we have the resources and the knowledge to find effective, sustainable and equitable answers to the challenges of the twenty-first century. Simple copy-paste solutions do not apply. In the search for the best possible responses, however, we have unprecedented opportunities to share good practices. Let us make the most of them today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To have too many priorities is to have none. The decision to have discussions focusing on two core sets of topics is a good start. I look forward to exchanging views on ways to attain the ideal of a society of equal opportunities while keeping the issues of climate change and energy in the equation. Then we can involve others and help spread our solutions.

We can draw inspiration from football, a game close to the hearts of Latin America and Europe. FIFA, the International Federation of Football Associations, summed up its mission as "*Develop the game, touch the world, build a better future*". Our objective could be: to develop strategies for social inclusion and sustainable development, help them expand and thus build a better future for all.

Those sceptical about such a mission need have no worries. Although Europeans and Latin Americans have spread the passion for football with great success, the World Cup records are telling: of the eighteen World Champion titles so far, nine went to Latin America, the other nine to Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Señoras y Señores,

Let me close with my best wishes for the success of this meeting. Thank you.