

**CONFERENCE OF THE SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENTS
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Saturday February 28, 2009

The Future of Europe for the Year 2030

**Chaired by Mr. Bernard Accoyer, President of the French National Assembly
and Mr. Gérard Larcher, President of the French Senate**

The sitting was opened at nine a.m.

President Bernard Accoyer. President, speakers, dear colleagues, we are here to debate the future of Europe for the year 2020-2030. The European Council of December 14, 2007 set up an independent working group whose remit was to identify the fundamental questions which Europe is liable to face in the next twenty years and to study the responses to those questions. The group was given the task of deciding the best way to establish the stability and prosperity of Europe and its surrounding region, without going into the details of institutional and financial questions. The group will submit its report to the European Council in June 2010. I salute the importance of this work as, more than ever, we need to revive a collective project which can garner the support of our fellow citizens for European construction.

I encourage the members of the group to ask all the questions which concern our future: the durability of the European model of social cohesion in the 21st century; the essential issue of sustainable energy; protection against the widespread threats of terrorism and organized crime; demographic needs and the challenges arising from conflict zones on the edges of the Union. The very basis of our identity will thus be at the heart of this reflection from which, I have no doubt, we have much to gain.

National Parliaments have a very specific role to play in this framework: first of all, of course, according to the letter of the treaties, since the Treaty of Lisbon provides us with the mission of participating in the conventions which will, from now on, deal with the preparation of the revision of treaties, but also according to the spirit of our new mission, which makes us a precious stepping stone between the peoples of Europe. It is for this reason that we propose to you, my dear colleagues, to debate at this moment on this essential topic.

Mr. Bruno Le Maire, Secretary of State in Charge of European Affairs. Presidents, speakers, President of the Reflection Group on the Future of Europe, it is a great pleasure for me to be here with you today to debate on the future of Europe for the year 2030.

France worked very hard in 2007, upon the initiative of the President of the Republic, for the setting-up of the working group, now referred to as the “Gonzalez Group”, which has the remit of reflecting on the future of the Union. In these uncertain times such an initiative is particularly relevant and our expectations concerning this group are even higher.

My deep conviction is that the European Union is going through, during this economic and financial crisis, a decisive stage in its history. When every day brings its share of new announcements and new resolutions, you need a reliable compass, a clear direction

and a precise idea of the road to follow. This is the challenge which the reflection group must help us to meet.

We need, as quickly as possible, the institutions which are set out in the Treaty of Lisbon. Without the Treaty of Lisbon, there are no stable institutions and without stable institutions, there is no future for Europe! In this regard, the recent vote of the Czech Parliament sent a very positive signal which we all welcome.

Coming back to the crisis, I want to say that the choices our nations will make will be decisive for Europe which is hesitating today between an everyman-for-himself attitude and an approach involving solidarity for a common destiny. There is a great temptation to fall back on oneself and for protectionism. But these reflexes are dangerous and they must be driven back by the European institutions, governments and the Parliaments of member states. Criticizing the behaviour of each other is useless during a time of crisis: dialogue must win out over stigmatization. In order to reassure and convince our fellow citizens we must propose a new direction for Europe and accept that one cycle in the construction of Europe has come to an end. This was a cycle of shared prosperity during which the spirit of competition between member states was emphasized. After the crisis the world will never be the same again.

The Union has the legitimacy and the courage to propose a model for the future. It now needs to create the means by providing itself with new instruments. In order to show that it is the only efficient solution to the crisis, Europe must have clearly worked out for itself the economic model, as well as the model for society and values which it intends to defend over the coming decades.

I have three convictions regarding this subject.

Firstly, after our bad habits of the past, it is absolutely essential to introduce efficient regulation and monitoring of all the financial players. The encouraging results of the February 22 meeting in Berlin prove the desire of Europeans to have influence at the London G20 summit. The alternative is simple: either we arrive united, with strong positions on hedge funds, supervision and tax havens and we will make ourselves heard or we arrive divided and we will carry no weight in front of the United States and the other world powers. Let us recognize that we have our own interests which are not necessarily the same as our American friends. The European Union must be in the vanguard of the fight against tax havens and for the regulation of hedge funds, the assessment of credit rating agencies, the capping of pay in the financial sector and the strengthening of supervision bodies.

These are the expectations of our fellow citizens and we must be equal to the task.

France and Germany have played a vital role in gaining these early results and they are committed to continuing this fight without fail with all of their partners. These are not technical discussions, for what is at stake here is no less than the definition of the European economic system that we want: regulated, sustainable, responsible entrepreneurial capitalism at the service of a dynamic, innovative economy.

Secondly, our industrial policy must become a great ambition for the Union. The crisis has shown the limits of the notion of competitiveness when used alone. The Lisbon Strategy was useful but it is now out-of-date. Close cooperation, joint investment between member states and collective strategies are now what is necessary to enable European industry to come out of this crisis stronger. No national industry will manage this alone.

To gain in competitiveness, we have a decisive advantage over other regions: the internal market. We have a great strength: our capability to innovate. We also have a decisive

asset: the quality of our workforce. Let us understand together how we can use them better! A European industrial policy of cooperation and sustainability is the promise of new growth. This will be the only efficient strategy for controlling public debt.

To overcome the crisis, we have made the only possible choice: recovery through public spending. But this will be at the price of massive public debt in all European countries. In a few years time, the problem which we will have to solve will be that of the reduction of public debt. In order to do this there will be no other possibility than through innovation, research and a collective industrial policy aimed at regaining substantial growth rates.

Thirdly, the idea of solidarity must return to the heart of European construction. Crisis tends to sharpen selfishness. However, we have need of solidarity: as regards those member states, in particular in Central and Eastern Europe, who are suffering today from the financial and banking crisis; within member states themselves and within nations in order to fight against all forms of poverty and to reduce inequalities. The reduction of inequalities is one of the founding values of Europe and we must remain fundamentally attached to it. On this difficult subject, the French presidency initiated a common step by proposing to set quantified national targets for the reduction of poverty. It is through collective responses to this challenge of social cohesion that we will remain faithful to a common conception among all Europeans of what living together in Europe actually means.

Presidents and speakers, the crisis forces us to think about the future of Europe with new ideas. We have a duty to reflect and use our imagination. Your parliamentary institutions and the reflection group must play a major role in this task by bringing the sensibility which each member state has. No state holds the truth alone. The future of Europe depends on the exchanges between each of the states of which it is composed. It will come out stronger from the tests it is currently going through only if the members of the European family which you represent, can come together to move forward with a common ambition. *(Applause.)*

Mr. Felipe González, Chairman of the Reflection Group on the Future of Europe. I would, first of all, like to thank the President of the French National Assembly for his invitation.

I will begin my speech with a series of warnings.

As the reflection group has just begun its work, I can only speak today in my own name. I have always been a convinced European and, with this crisis, that is even more the case. If the European Union did not exist, we would have to invent it. The crisis we are going through is global but the instruments we are using to combat it are local. Even the United States admits that it cannot solve the international crisis by going it alone: the situation has changed.

Just after the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon, we decided to set up a reflection group on the future of Europe. However since then, we have had a succession of bad news. The first piece of bad news is that, in order to obtain results, we should have begun to implement deep structural reforms quite a while ago. We must set a course and take away the bottlenecks which stop us from progressing.

The Treaty of Lisbon has had its ups and downs, but as the reflection group's remit does not include institutional problems, let us suppose that the treaty has entered into effect.

Between the European Councils of 2007 and 2008, the crisis turned out to be of an unprecedented nature and its effects have been destructive on the internal market. The institutional crisis is coupled with a financial and economic crisis.

The threats which hang over European security come from other sources than international terrorism and organized crime – the Georgian crisis and the deployment of the antimissile shield, without mentioning the break in gas supplies for certain European countries, have proved that. Security thus appears as an integrated concept within which the notion of borders seems ineffective. It is for this reason that we must propose joint responses.

The crisis we are going through is systemic but there is no alternative to the capitalist system. No one any longer believes in communism and utopias lead to regression rather than progress. On account of its global nature, the crisis underlines the contradiction between the local and national framework of democracy and sovereignty on the one hand and a more internationalized and interdependent economy on the other.

Ten years ago already, I noted in a report that, taking into account the characteristics of the financial system, each epidemic which appeared here and there could be transformed inexorably into a pandemic: in 1998, the Asian crisis spread to Turkey, Russia and Brazil before reaching the central markets with the bursting of the dotcom bubble. Mr. Le Maire is right: we have no other solution than to find a form of global governance for a globalized financial system.

To give substance to the concept of a European Union, being united is not enough: we must also reach agreement with the others. At a time when President Obama is putting an end to American unilateralism, we cannot, for our part, any longer act without the United States: no one can contain the crisis alone.

Provisional losses are estimated at 60,000 billion dollars, i.e. four times the GDP of the United States but we have not really understood certain phenomena. Whilst the world economy was growing at the very satisfactory rate of 4,5% per annum, financial movements progressed 60%. Why was there such a gap? Why were we not concerned? The funds which should have financed future projects were being used to create empty financial instruments: derivatives and structured products and their underlying about which we know nothing because of a lack of monitoring and accountancy.

I am a member of a left-wing clan in which being the advocate of the market economy is no easy task. I then defended that the market did not suffice and that there had to be the possibility of intervention in the economy. However, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, politicians believed in the invisible hand of the economy and were taken back by the strength of the shock of 2008. Now the markets are asking us to deal with the problem but it is just like in football: we need training. We must also, at all cost, avoid hyper-regulation, which will not solve the problems of the international financial institutions. I am like Don Quichotte who, five hundred years ago, advised Sancho Panza, the new Governor, to be pragmatic. Instead of setting down rules wholesale, those which are adopted must be respected. The system has need of coherence above all: there cannot be American regulation, Asian regulation and European regulation. The G20 must guarantee the transparency of movements of capital so as to better deal with them.

The situation is serious. Last spring we were surprised by the sudden jump in oil prices – we reached 147 dollars per barrel. At the same time, capital was transferred onto the futures markets where purchases went from 70 billion to 280 billion dollars in two and a half months. Prohibiting such operations would hinder the freedom and the dynamism of the economic players, but it is irresponsible to rely on deposits of 5%. Those who buy rice or

energy should put down 60% of the amount of the transaction – at this level the financial institutions would run no risk, considering the size of the variation in rates – to contain speculation which is the cause of inflation.

Let us now move to Europe's priorities for the period 2020-2030. They have not changed but the crisis, whose full effects we have not yet grasped, will oblige us to carry out structural reforms which did not appear essential to strengthen the necessary cooperation. National initiatives cannot take advantage of the synergy which is gained from the cooperation of twenty-seven countries. In this respect, the crisis can also be an opportunity.

The reflection group has one advantage over the other bodies of the Union: it has much greater liberty of speech because it does not depend on any vote. Thus, Europeans are proud of their model as the best in the world as regards social cohesion. This is true and we are told that to reach our goal we must refocus the Lisbon Agenda. But it did not work. Was the aim of Lisbon not to make the European Union the first economic and technological power in the world for 2000-2010? But far from having progressed, we regressed, and all that before 2007. The gap with the United States widened, never mind our position by comparison with China and India. If we decide to make social cohesion a matter of civilization, then we must ask ourselves the question; how to finance it with an economy which creates no value through innovation and which is losing in global competitiveness?

There is also a crisis in social cohesion on account of developments in our demographics. The population pyramid was reversed with a drop in the active categories. Migratory flows enabled us to offset certain problems and to preserve social cohesion. We cannot disassociate the social dimension from the economic dimension, especially with the external crisis which is hitting us. We will never be able to compete with countries with very low labour costs. The extra dimension which we possess must be used to gain an advantage in competitiveness. The objectives of Lisbon must be reviewed because, even if the diagnosis was right, was the treatment correct? One of our priorities must be to solve this problem of global competitiveness in order to guarantee social cohesion and this is even more the case given that the shortcomings of the system, such as unemployment, will not be corrected if we lose competitiveness. And this will be difficult in the current national situations.

In conclusion, I would set down three priorities.

First of all, we need a new social pact for the 21st century such as that which the signatories of the Treaty of Rome agreed upon. That agreement was a virtuous model because, at that time, we were able to give work to everyone, as well as to export, and finance solidarity, but that was clearly in the past.

My second priority is energy and climate change. The suspension of Russian gas deliveries to Ukraine which led to the break in supply to several European countries, is worrying. In fact, if Europe does not shake with cold when two or three of its members, no matter how small, shiver, then there is no Europe. The European Union must act as a union.

The Soviet Union was a disastrous regime but its elders would never have imagined not respecting a contract. The leaders of modern-day Russia are unpredictable – it is not in fact the first time that they have closed the pipelines – and Europe cannot accept to be at their mercy.

In the same way, with the drop in oil prices, the temptation is very strong to go into reverse in our search for alternative energies and to postpone the “20-20 by 2020” idea until later. This would be a huge mistake as the moment the world economy regains a growth rate of 3%, the energy crisis will recommence.

Why shouldn't we debate about nuclear energy, whether we are for or against? Certain countries refuse it whilst others develop it. The Union will no longer be able to continue to pretend that this is not a real issue in the difficult context of our insufficiency in independent energy and of our environmental tensions. It is therefore important to debate this question! Certain countries may take advantage of the Union's silence to postpone their anti-global warming programmes by twenty-five years. Even if we should strictly apply the principle of subsidiarity, it is essential that Europe moves towards a common energy policy. If the European Union does not take advantage of the synergy provided by the internal market, of the technological revolution and of the interconnection between energy networks, it will not reach the objectives it has set itself and will not respect the commitments it has made.

My third priority: migratory flows. Immigration is seen as both a need and a threat. Within the Schengen Area, it is not possible to have national policies which are based on the logic of a state's own borders and on bilateral agreements with the countries of emigration except for matters concerning the process of integration for immigrants. Without an overall policy, we will never manage to regulate the flows. It is not possible to have different laws coexist within a common zone.

The organized crime and international terrorism which threaten us do not recognize any borders. To protect ourselves, we need transnational legal and policing instruments. At the present, our responses to these threats are totally uncoordinated. Certain countries plan on giving more power to central authorities but bureaucracy is not the solution!

In all these areas, we need to look at things differently.

All this should lead us to ask the following question: what foreign policy do we need?

The return of France to the military structure of NATO led to an irrational debate because this return is not harmful to the functioning of NATO, nor to the foreign and defence policy that we need. There is no contradiction between the two since, in fact, France and Great Britain have defence policies which are mutually coherent.

Europe has more than 1.5 million soldiers, 90% of whom are deployed in territorial defence. This is out-of-date. 100,000 of them, at least, would need to be ready to intervene elsewhere. Not all countries would necessarily be called upon to make up this force but if we want a security and foreign policy worthy of the name, then we need to avoid situations where each request for troops in Lebanon or in Africa, leads to a bidding war. It would be preferable to have a military and a police force – in accordance with what is requested of us in Afghanistan or in Lebanon - capable of being deployed rapidly. The United States will once more ask for Europe's help and Europe should reply in order to fulfill its role as a partner. We need a foreign policy and a security policy which fit with our priority objectives and in particular in the fields of energy and immigration.

During the French presidency an unforeseen crisis broke out: the Russo-Georgian conflict. I do not support the Georgian initiative nor the excessive Russian reply nor even the antimissile shield which is supposed to protect us from Iran. The Russians know fine well that they are its target. We should also ask ourselves how we can integrate Russia into the concept of European security. Russia is no longer the great traditional enemy, even if it is not easy to negotiate with this country. The security of Europe cannot be built without Russia and the message concerning the antimissile shield is not believable.

In such conditions how can one be surprised that European citizens are eurosceptical? How can you imagine that they believe us?

In the preparatory documents for the G20, the Union proposes, along with the United States and Latin America to regulate tax havens. It does so in language typical of our waffle. Everyone knows what it is about but no one understands why we use such language.

How can we improve communication with our citizens? By speaking more clearly! And I will continue to express myself in this way, even if melancholy is the price to pay. *(Applause.)*

(Mr. Gérard Larcher succeeds Mr. Bernard Accoyer in the chair.)

M. Přemysl Sobokta, President of the Senate of the Czech Republic. There are several ways to debate the future of Europe for the year 2030 but the worst one would be to fall into the trap of optimistic slogans which claim that everything is rosy in the garden and to set down five-year plans. We, the former communist countries, have known economic centralization, state interventionism and bureaucratic paralysis: in the very interests of Europe, we refuse such temptations which seem to attract certain of our western European colleagues, for reasons which escape us.

The experts must provide us with serious forecasts as regards demography and the economy and in energy and security matters. However, as we are gathered here today as European parliamentarians, let us discuss the future of our institutional practices.

Let us not be afraid to listen to the smaller or newer members of the European Union.

Václav Havel, former President of the Czech Republic proposed the setting-up of a European Senate. I share this idea which would enable us to avoid certain of the mistakes made by the European Parliament. My long parliamentary experience has taught me that a Senate can take a certain distance on matters and knows how to deal with fundamental issues; it does not seek to decide on the size of bananas and cucumbers.

The proposal was met with a wall of silence. However, this was not the case for the critical message of Mr. Václav Klaus on the risks of integration, which caused quite a stir.

If I mention these two examples, it was so that no one here might think that Czech politicians are indifferent to European policies!

Let us open up then a serious debate on a second European chamber, its make-up and its powers. Let us not be afraid of a robust debate on the risks which threaten European democracy and let us replace media flashes with real reflection. Thus I believe that equal representation in a European Senate will be a guarantee of equality and will strengthen democracy without discrimination.

Let us not forget the national Parliaments which are close to the citizens and protect us from bureaucracy. I am convinced that in 2030, they will play this role more than ever. Otherwise a grey Europe, a sad Europe, an economically weak Europe will not be able to face up to the challenges of the future.

The ideas of subsidiarity and proportionality are essential signposts on the European road. We must not give them up!

The debate on Europe is precious, not only for the experts but also for the national Parliaments. I wish that we all may live long enough to see the year 2030 and I hope above all, that our efforts will enable our children to live happily in 2030 in each of our countries. *(Applause.)*

President Gérard Larcher. May I just remind you all that the idea for a European Senate was first of all put forward by one of my predecessors at the presidency of the French Senate, Mr. Alain Poher, who was, incidentally, a companion of Jean Monnet.

Mr. Javier Rojo, President of the Senate of Spain. Good management of public policies is necessary for our democracies to progress. However, so that our citizens feel associated with the European idea, we need to have a shared future and offer real hope. Today there are many uncertainties especially in the field of security.

Strong leadership will be needed to reply to the great challenges of tomorrow: social cohesion, climate change, migratory flows. As Felipe González said, in a democracy, it is not the bureaucracy which is in charge of these problems: the European model depends on this.

There is a European institutional problem: the constitutional treaty failed and we must wait to judge the fate of the Lisbon treaty. But we no longer have much time to set up a Europe which operates. We must however be able to define what Europe's role is. We must do this with confidence since hesitation has dangerous consequences and can lead to the birth of scepticism and xenophobia.

We must both reflect and act but without abandoning the legitimate interests of each nation. As Felipe González said, each of us must reflect upon a common project in order to strengthen the European Union which must play a leading role as a major political and economic player. I am not only speaking here of political players but also of economic players and of the citizens who, in their daily lives, sometimes have the impression that they are the forgotten players in a bureaucratic project.

I am a convinced European and I believe that we must make all possible efforts for Europe to be strong. The contribution of people like Felipe González will help us to build the strong Europe which we desire, to bring us closer to the aspirations of our citizens and to bring the institutions closer to the citizens.

Mr. Pavel Gantar, President of the National Assembly of Slovenia. I believe that none of those who set up our meeting could have imagined the effects of the economic crisis on Europe today. However if we do not wish to relive the scenarii of the past, then we must react.

Today's Europe is not that of fifteen years ago; we have been able to reply to the problems of economic integration and to successfully follow the transition in the countries of Central Europe. We have built the Euro and the new countries have settled down in the European house. The European Union has come through this period stronger.

Today we are facing new challenges: globalization, demographic flows, climate change and security problems. Our economic conceptions and even our institutions are being put to the test. Are they reacting quickly enough? Is their democratic legitimacy sufficient? Answers have already been given at an international level and I hope that we will go even further along this road.

We must be quick and fair – as the crisis is serious – and we must avoid the every-man-for-himself attitude and remain optimistic.

We do not know what the Europe of 2030 will be like. It would perhaps be easier to imagine it if we could know what it will be like in a few years.

M. Alan Haselhurst, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom. The task of the reflection group led by Felipe González, is a difficult one, if ever there was one: it is indeed difficult to imagine what the world will look like in 2030 when we do not even know what it will look like in 2010. Few were those who forecast in 2008 the situation we would be living through in 2009: the crisis happened too quickly for even the most brilliant minds to predict.

Europe must show its solidarity and look ahead. However it must not wallow in insularity: the world is changing around us. A new world order is emerging and the balance is shifting – think about the new role of the countries of the east. Will Africa be an important actor on the world stage in 2030? Will the clashes in the Near East be solved or will they lead to a nuclear war? What about the Middle East, on which we depend for our energy supplies? What about climate change and demographic developments? How will we feed our planet – I am thinking of genetically modified organisms? What will be the future of the energy question – I am thinking of nuclear energy? What about the medicines of tomorrow and their trafficking? Will the single currency help us to overcome the crisis? Will we manage to resist protectionism? What will life expectancy be?

We must, above all, be involved in gaining the best means to use our knowledge: if we want to stay in the race, we must use our continent's talents and go well beyond what we are doing today in the education field. Then and only then will we manage to give birth to hope.

Mr. Arunas Valinskas, President of the Diet of Lithuania. The Europe of today is entirely different from the Europe of yesterday. Then the idea of a united Europe was born thanks to our powers of imagination. The European Union has been able to create a European Institute of Technology: innovation and research must be the engines for solutions which we will find to the problems that we will meet. Thanks to reflection and imagination, these solutions will come from original sources.

I agree with certain speakers and in particular Mr. Haselhurst, in remembering that the founding fathers conceived of Europe to ensure security through solidarity and economic growth and that protectionism and the protection of national interests are hurdles to solidarity. Thus, courageous decisions must be taken on a common market for energy supply, on the introduction of the Euro, on the future development of transatlantic links and on immigration questions.

I am optimistic: the current period seems much better than the Brezhnev one.

Between now and 2030, our economic model will have to take sustainable development into account whilst, at the same time, respecting the principle of free competition. It will be then, we hope, that unemployment and social exclusion will belong firmly to the past.

Europe depends on our decisions. But will we have the will to act or will we content ourselves with listening to those who speak loudest? (*Applause.*)

M. Vannino Chiti, Vice President of the Senate of Italy. I much appreciated the speech made by Mr. Felipe González: he set down long-term perspectives, whilst underlining the importance of concrete action. It is not so easy to deal with both at the same time.

The President of the French Republic, Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, told us yesterday: the European Union must, in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century, have a strong identity, but it must also know how to protect its own interests. This European identity, that of a supranational homeland, does not abolish national identities: these remain but cannot solve

the current problems. M. Pöttering, the President of the European Parliament, spoke to us yesterday of the dignity of the human being, of freedom and democracy, of the promotion – not aggressive but uncompromising – of human rights and of social justice founded on solidarity.

After this crisis nothing will ever be as before. The European Union is essential for us to come through it. As Mr. Bruno Le Maire said, the Treaty of Lisbon along with other courageous decisions, will help us to do this: we need a new social pact for the 21st century. The Lisbon Agenda must be reviewed and we must promote social cohesion, thanks to regulation, as well as helping innovation. It is also important to gather together the means which today are dispersed.

I express my agreement with what has been said on energy independence and immigration.

International relations are essential. The European Union must know how to play its role, more often than not, hand in hand with the United States but also in assuming its own responsibilities in crucial areas such as the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. We must find a way to integrate Russia into the security policies.

I would like to conclude with a topic which, although it is not at the heart of the work carried out by the group led by Mr. Felipe González, is nonetheless at the heart of the political debate: Turkey and its relations with the European Union. The countries which wish to join the European Union must, of course, respect its principles and must satisfy certain criteria. But I believe that the majority of Italian political groups consider that Turkey should be part of the European Union, so that Europe may be a common house for peoples who defend the same values and the same aims, who respect the same democratic rules and who share the conception of a Europe which takes action in the security and energy supply fields.

We must avoid the clash of civilizations! This is one of the main objectives of the European project. (*Applause.*)

Mrs. Barbara Prammer, President of the National Council of Austria. I feel that it is very important for national Parliaments and for the European Parliament to discuss the conclusions of the reflection group led by Mr. Felipe González and to add their own contributions.

We must successfully implement our formal tasks, in particular the Treaty of Lisbon, but the national Parliaments, which are closer to the citizens, must also help in defining a perspective for Europe.

The era of unilateralism, as Mr. Felipe González underlined, finished a long time ago. We must redefine Europe without knowing what 2030 will look like; but one thing is certain – Europe will only be strong if its citizens are with us, if we can make the Austrians, the French, the Spanish and all the others, understand that they are, above all else, Europeans. This will only be possible if we give a meaning to the European idea.

The European social model is at the centre of our concerns. In these times of crisis, we must avoid social tensions. We must therefore meet the economic challenge as quickly as possible.

The European model is that of a community where democracy lives and where the dignity of man is at the centre of our concerns. In the case of the Romani people, I want to underline that what happened in Hungary in recent days, occurred in Austria twelve years ago. The way we treat our minorities is a good indicator of the state of health of our democratic values.

I agree with what my British colleague said concerning education: education alone can guarantee that the democratic development of Europe will continue.

In the security field, I agree with Mr. De Decker's speech. We must continue to debate the organizational strategy for the parliamentary monitoring of our common foreign and security policies.

As for nuclear energy, Austria remains firmly opposed to it and I am convinced that all those who have nuclear power plants on their territory would, most of all, wish to avoid any kind of attack. Our hope is to persuade others that there are indeed alternatives to nuclear energy.

M. Louis Galea, President of the Chamber of representatives of Malta. The long speech by Mr. Felipe González asked a question concerning European communication towards its citizens. Unfortunately he did not reply to that question.

Mr. Felipe González referred to several issues. I would like to concentrate on information and communication technologies – a question which is closely linked to that of social cohesion.

The digital divide is a new phenomenon and it must be reduced if we are to avoid new social fractures. There must therefore be specific reflection on how to gain the most from such technologies and the changes in the media and how they will totally transform the way authorities communicate with the citizens. Think about the electoral campaign and now the presidency of Barak Obama: this direct communication with the citizens of the United States is a true revolution!

As speakers of the national Parliaments of our respective countries, we must solve this problem urgently: the general public is setting up its own internet sites and is exchanging experiences and information. Within the framework of our reflection on the future, it is crucial to understand how our populations may obtain the abilities necessary to use such information and communication technologies wisely, for they will be at the very heart of our societies in the future. *(Applause.)*

M. Georgi Pirinski, President of the National Assembly of Bulgaria. If I am not mistaken, it was in 2007, at the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon, that President Nicolas Sarkozy proposed the setting-up of this reflection group: the idea was to set down the perspectives for several decades to come. The crisis makes such work even more necessary as we must find solutions and construct a common political project.

Almost twenty years have passed since the changes of 1989: at that time none of us could have imagined the world as it is at present. In hindsight, we understand that the market economy does not provide the answers to everything. We therefore need a strategy, rather like the Monnet Plan.

I propose that Mr. Felipe González be invited to all the European Councils in order to debate with all the participants. The members of the European Parliament Committee on Constitutional Matters advised him to talk to the citizens: I believe that they were right. *(Applause.)*

Mrs. Katalin Szili, President of the National Assembly of Hungary. This debate, along with the fascinating speech made by Mr. Felipe González, proves that the future is being built. As national representatives, we have a great responsibility in this construction: we do not have the right to use uncertainties as a pretext to not set out a vision for Europe in 2030. We must respond to this crisis.

As Mr. Felipe González underlined, social problems cannot be solved independently of each other: we must do all we can to come up with overall solutions. We must contribute to this reflection on a European level but it is also important to react at a “local” level by taking into account what the citizens think. I feel that all of this should be discussed by national Parliaments.

To conclude, I would like to quote a proverb: if the Captain does not know where to sail his ship, then it is the wind which is at the helm. (*Applause.*)

M. Luka Bebić, President of the Parliament of Croatia. I would like to thank you for having invited me to share with you, once again, my thoughts as a representative of a candidate country.

Mr. Felipe González brought up a number of essential questions for the future of Europe and the world. We may, it seems to me, summarize his speech in one principle: we must meet our responsibilities and build solid foundations for the future.

The modern world is in permanent flux. But it does have its problems, like those raised by the financial crisis or by climate change. The whole world faces these problems but the same solutions are not necessarily applicable at a national level as at an international level.

Today, the European Union is the most successful model for multilateral integration. Its origin lies in a vision for regional cooperation and Europe has changed, thanks to the perspectives which were laid out by its founders. In the future, Europe must be a protagonist on the international stage. It possesses economic, political and even military instruments and its institutions are the best way to overcome the crises we are currently facing and which will continue to get worse.

In 2030, Europe’s ranks will have swelled to include all of the countries of the south-west of the continent: it will stretch as far perhaps as Ukraine and Turkey. It is therefore quite difficult to see how it must proceed in order to ensure a prosperous future.

Europeans must speak with a single voice and reply together to the common challenges. The importance of energy is growing and growing and Europe must continue to invest more to ensure its supply. Such efforts are closely linked to immigration policy and to the problems it poses, in particular illegal immigration which can be a threat to internal security.

Mr. José Manuel Barroso told us that Europe must be open to change, to dialogue and to an exchange of ideas. This opening-up would ensure the promotion of the vision of Europe which I mentioned: this powerful Europe which will speak with a single voice, will know how to play its role for the benefit of all on the international stage. (*Applause.*)

President Gérard Larcher. Thank you to everyone.

What seems important then is that today’s challenges can very usefully light up the future and allow us to meet the economic, social and ecological challenges of tomorrow. Let us not forget to think “locally” and to define European values well: nothing can be constructed without the understanding of European citizens.

(The sitting which was adjourned at eleven-fifteen is reconvened at eleven-thirty.)

M. Miloslav Vlček, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic. Ladies and gentlemen I will allow everyone to draw his/her own conclusions from this debate. I just wish to inform you that Mr. Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and I would like a European delegation to go to Gaza

and to Israel during the Czech presidency. This delegation which I will lead, will be made up of representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly.

I would request all the delegations of national Parliaments who are interested, to contact me. The dates of the mission and the composition of the delegation will be decided upon later.

I am convinced that, together, we can bring progress to the peace process in the region.

DEBATE ON THE DRAFT CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRESIDENCY

President Gérard Larcher. Certain of you have made it known that you request modifications to the draft conclusions of the presidency.

We have had a modified version of these conclusions distributed which takes into account your requests and has a summary of the different desires expressed. A new version which includes the proposals which have just been made, is available in French and will be available in English in a few moments.

I remind you that our aim is to adopt by consensus what we agree to call the “conclusions of the presidency”. Consequently, we must now reach a general agreement on the conclusions which reflects as faithfully as possible, the very rich debates which we have had, even if each of us would, no doubt, have preferred a slightly different wording. However, we must take into account all the different tendencies and make sure that the conclusions create no fundamental problems for any of us.

This is what we have attempted to do in trying to gain a balance between the amendments suggested by the various delegations on the basis of the text which was presented to you yesterday evening.

I suggest that we go through the paragraphs of the draft conclusions.

Preliminary Remarks

President Gérard Larcher. I call on you to express an opinion on the six paragraphs of “preliminary remarks”.

(Paragraphs 1 to 6 of the “Preliminary remarks” are adopted.)

Conclusions of the Presidency

President Gérard Larcher. Let us now move on to the “Conclusions of the Presidency” *per se*.

Provisions “Concerning the institutional future of the Union and the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon by national Parliaments”

Mrs. Barbara Prammer, President of the National Council of Austria. If we all agree with the fact that the European Council of December 11-12, 2008 laid down the way, then why don’t we “welcome” in paragraph 1, rather than simply “observe”. I feel that we would thus send out a more positive signal.

Mr. Georgi Pirinski, President of the National Assembly of Bulgaria. The formula “a renewed institutional framework liable to bring Europe closer to its citizens” could perhaps be reformulated.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom. I would come under enormous pressure in the House of Commons if I were to support our Austrian colleague's proposal, as not all my British colleagues "welcome" the fact that the European Council has laid down that particular path.

In addition, it seems to me, that keeping the word "observe" would be more respectful to the countries where the process of ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon is ongoing.

President Gérard Larcher. We are very careful about this process and we wish that the Irish people, in particular, can go along with the Treaty of Lisbon.

M. John O'Donoghue, Speaker of the National Assembly of Ireland. The last phrase in the paragraph underlines that the European Council has provided a reply to Irish concerns. However we must not anticipate the result of the referendum even if I hope that it will bring good news for Europe – a recent opinion poll shows that public opinion supports ratification more and more.

President Gérard Larcher. I propose the adoption of paragraph 1 with the following wording:

"The Speakers observe the continuation of the ratification process of the Treaty of Lisbon which provides the Union with a renewed institutional framework liable to bring Europe closer to its citizens, in particular thanks to the strengthening of the prerogatives of Parliament whether it be those of the national Parliaments or those of the European Parliament. They observe that the European Council of December 11-12, 2008 laid down the path to make it possible for the treaty to come into force before the end of 2009 by committing itself to supplying the necessary legal guarantees which answer the concerns expressed by the Irish people."

(Paragraph 1, thus modified is adopted.)

(Paragraph 3 is adopted as also are paragraphs 3 to 8.)

Provisions "Concerning the Involvement of Parliament in Crisis Management"

(Paragraph 9 is adopted as is paragraph 10.)

M. Arunas Valinskas, President of the Diet of Lithuania. Solidarity is a constant value in the Union. Emphazing the fact that it is necessary "in times of crisis" seems quite reductive and I therefore propose to remove these words at the end of paragraph 11.

President Gérard Larcher. What do the Polish and Danish representatives, who are the authors of this wording of the paragraph, think?

(Agreement.)

(Paragraph 11, thus modified is adopted.)

Mr. Alan Haselhurst, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom. Even if it is necessary that Europe speaks with a single voice in dealing with the crisis, it seems rather excessive to use the verb “welcome”, three times in paragraph 12.

Mr. Gianfranco Fini, President of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy. I understand the reticence of our colleague, even if the idea of a common vision is precisely at the basis of the European Union.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom. We could propose a wording which should satisfy everyone before the end of the sitting.

President Gérard Larcher. Paragraph 12 is held over until just after the end of the examination of the other paragraphs.

(Mr. Bernard Accoyer takes over the chair again.)

President Bernard Accoyer. We shall continue with the examination of the paragraphs of the draft conclusions.

We are now at paragraph 13.

Lord John Roper, Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom. Paragraph 13 does not deal only with crisis management but also with inter-parliamentary exchanges in the broadest sense. I therefore suggest that we place before this paragraph the sub-title “Concerning the Practices of Parliaments during European Presidencies” which is currently placed before paragraph 14.

(This is agreed upon.)

Provisions “Concerning the Practices of Parliaments during European Presidencies”

(Paragraph 13 is adopted, as is paragraph 14.)

Provisions “Concerning the Future of Europe for the Year 2030”

(Paragraph 15 is adopted as also are paragraphs 16 and 17.)

Mrs. Barbara Prammer, President of the National Council of Austria. It seems to me to be rather unwise to write in paragraph 18 that the institutional framework will be a decisive element for the future of the Union whilst decisions in this matter have not yet begun to be applied. This could create difficulties in several national Parliaments, in particular in Austria. It has already been sufficiently difficult to become involved in the way of the Treaty of Lisbon for us to avoid anticipating the conclusions of the working group on inter-institutional cooperation.

I therefore propose the removal of this paragraph.

(Paragraph 18 is removed.)

President Bernard Accoyer. We now come to paragraph 12, which was previously held over.

I shall read you the wording proposed by our British colleagues.

“The Speakers envisage that the European Union will speak with a single voice in order to play its full role in the reform of the international finance system, to strengthen the coordination of the national recovery plans and to launch a cooperative dynamic in the common interest.” The rests remains as is.

(Paragraph 12, thus modified, is adopted.)

Mr. Alan Haselhurst, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom. We are delighted that our colleagues have accepted the amendments which we proposed.

Mr. Gianfranco Fini, President of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy. I am sorry but I would like to come back to paragraph 4: why refer in it to other languages than French and English? The publication in the language of each state is up to each national Parliament.

President Bernard Accoyer. I propose that we keep to the wording adopted, upon the request of several colleagues, at our last conference.

Thank you all for having participated in this debate on the conclusions of the presidency. Each of us has shown good will and so we have reached agreement. The definitive version of these conclusions, which will include your last propositions, will be sent to you as of Monday.

Closing of the Conference

President Bernard Accoyer. So we arrive at the end of our proceedings. I would like to thank all the speakers, deputy speakers, Presidents and vice presidents for having come to Paris for our annual conference. I want to say that, as far as I am concerned, and I think I also speak in the name of Gérard Larcher, our meeting will be an excellent memory.

On each of the topics we dealt with, the exchanges were particularly rich and have enabled us to put forward promising ideas for the future.

Thus we have come to a broad agreement to strengthen inter-parliamentary cooperation and to each a new stage in the implementation of our enlarged powers. The presidents of assemblies clearly have an important role to play in this area.

Similarly, the debates on Europe and crisis management proved that Parliaments can become more involved and contribute to the search for joint solutions which would clearly avoid the dangerous path of protectionism.

And finally, the exchanges we had this morning on the future of Europe have underlined that, beyond the understandable differences between national positions, our common desire is to provide Europe with a project which can find broad acceptance amongst our citizens.

Mr. Per Westerberg, President of the Swedish Parliament, now wishes to say a few words to us.

Mr. Per Westerberg, President of the Parliament of Sweden. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on the excellent organization of this conference and thank you for your hospitality.

I would be very pleased, on behalf of the Swedish Parliament, to welcome you to Stockholm, on May 14-15, 2010, for our next conference. *(loud applause.)*

President Bernard Accoyer. Thank you very much for this invitation. We have no doubt concerning the quality of the welcome which we shall receive in Sweden.

We shall now conclude the meeting with a lunch-cruise on the River Seine.

I would like to thank the interpreters in the name of us all for the quality of their work and for their dedication.

My dear colleagues, I thank you very warmly for your presence, for your active participation and for your unstoppable desire to make progress together in the great causes of Europe: peace, democracy and justice. *(loud applause.)*

The sitting was closed at five minutes past twelve