

Congress of Europe The Hague, May 10th 1998

APPEAL

In May 1948, three years to the day after the end of the long nightmare of World War Two and after the defeat of the Nazi and fascist dictatorships, the Congress of Europe gave a decisive impulse to the construction of Europe. Meeting at The Hague fifty years later, the International European Movement addressed the following Appeal to all the men and women of Europe to build together the Europe of the 21st century: an area of solidarity, freedom, peace and citizenship.

“On 9th May 1948 in The Hague, in a Europe ravaged by war, the Congress of Europe launched a message of hope by calling on European peoples and States to unite in order to establish lasting peace and prosperity.

The impact of the message exceeded all hopes : fifty years on, the dream is at last coming true.

Within the European Community, then the Union, peace has been preserved for several generations, economic progress has been ensured, democracy and fundamental rights have been strengthened, and a social model for our own countries has been put in place on the basis of our common principles of solidarity.

Today we welcome the countries of the centre and east of the continent - free from totalitarianism - which are preparing to take their place within the Union. The Union is at the same time reinforcing its ties with the other European countries of the Mediterranean.

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But the European construction is far from complete. It is still unbalanced and needs to be strengthened. We have made significant progress in the economic and monetary fields, but progress is also necessary in the political, social and cultural dimensions of European construction.

To counter selfish impulses, a European model of society should be built that guarantees - for all citizens - freedom, security, work and social solidarity, cultural fulfilment, protection of the environment and the quality of life. Separately, states are powerless against insecurity, unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

A democratic and effective European system of government must be established without delay, guaranteeing the participation of citizens and civil society. The system must enable the Union to fulfil its responsibilities in the world, through a real common foreign and defence

policy, and respecting the competences of the member states and of local and regional authorities.

Within the framework of this system, it is necessary to ensure the success of the single currency which serves employment and growth, to preserve and strengthen economic and social cohesion among our states and regions, to enhance the international competitiveness of the Union and give it the means to enable us to confront together the challenge of globalisation.

We must make a success of the progressive enlargement of the Union, without impairing its unity and cohesion, and through strengthening in advance its effectiveness and democratic character.

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These are no small tasks. We believe that the Amsterdam Treaty does not itself guarantee the achievement of such objectives and that a new impulse is now needed towards a Union that is ever closer in its shared destiny.

The time has come to move to a new phase and to strengthen the bonds that unite us for good, with a clear and public statement of the Union's federal nature as an indispensable condition for building an area of solidarity, freedom, peace and citizenship.

To this end we propose, before the next enlargement, the adoption of a constitutional pact open to accession by all the citizens and democratic states of Europe that wish to join.

We call upon the European Parliament and the Commission, on the occasion of taking up their new term of office in 1999, to take the initiative along these lines, elaborating by common accord a proposal that can rally the citizens in the European election campaign. We pledge our support for such an initiative.

We believe the governments of the member states of the Union should be aware of the need and the urgency of such an initiative, which alone can guarantee the lasting cohesion of an enlarged Union, and we call on them to commit themselves to accept its legitimacy with a view to the next Treaty revision.

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But the destiny of Europe is no longer the affair of governments or institutions alone: it is now that of all citizens. We call on them to demonstrate their will to live better together in unity and in freedom.