

Address given by Monica Frassoni on the achievements of the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Brussels, 22 June 2005)

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[Monica Frassoni] Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, if, in order to make the European Union function, it were enough to have an effective Presidency of the Council and a President-in-Office endowed with a firm belief in Europe and a certain charisma and credibility, we would be home and dry. Mr Juncker, I also say to you that if you genuinely wished to continue your work, you could perhaps have chosen the presidency of another, rather more stable institution, and you might have been able to play a more direct part in a European debate that we, in fact, believe is very important. Luxembourg and its Prime Minister have steered the Union well during these turbulent months but that has not helped to restore confidence among the French and Dutch electorate, or to revive the European economic machine, or to put positive initiatives in the pipeline, of the sort that people dream about. The European Council has only confirmed the reality of a divided Europe of governments, which is perhaps not even very interested in nursing a genuine ambition in the face of a Europe of uncertain and frightened peoples. We regret, Mr Juncker, that the last action of your Presidency has been to put forward a genuinely unacceptable budget proposal, unacceptable because it follows the same failing logic of an unsustainable reduction of the Union's budget. I greatly respect your pragmatism, your realism and understanding of the difficulty and the complicated calculations that you have outlined to us here. It is also true, however, that even your proposal included cutbacks to positive policies – to the development policy, to the rural development policy, and even to the sacred Lisbon policy – that are not acceptable for today's Europe. We therefore genuinely hope that, once your Presidency has come to an end, your government will throw out such a proposal, partly because we believe that that could help you in your referendum. Today, it seems that those who only want Europe to be a large supermarket have a definite advantage compared with those who want a political Europe. For now they are the only ones who have been strengthened by the twin no vote, and I believe that we will have further confirmation of that tomorrow, when Tony Blair will come to us, spruce and smiling, explaining how to make Europe even more intergovernmental and weak. The only plan in sight for now is clearly the Blair plan. My group therefore believes that the failure to reach an unsatisfactory agreement on the financial perspectives is a positive result and considers it important that the Council has given itself time to reflect on the Constitution, without, however, putting an end to the ratification process for those who wish for it to continue. I can already tell you today, Mr President, that a great many members of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance will support you for the referendum in Luxembourg. We believe, however, that this reflection needs to be given time, method and clear objectives, and that, in terms of the financial perspectives, difficult chapters that already seemed to be closed need to be reopened. It is on those two issues that the conflict between the supermarketiers and the unionists will burn itself out. We therefore might as well begin to sharpen our weapons, Mr Juncker, because it is really not worth losing our way in abstruse compromises, even if they have brought 20 ministers together. If we genuinely believe that political union remains the aim, and if we are genuinely ashamed of having to accept the initiative of the ten new Member States on the budget, then we need to act immediately and unambiguously. Forget about agreeing on the

details! We have to reject the letter of the Six, finally begin to see that the debate on the size of the budget has to be based on the political priorities, and not the other way round, and reopen the debate on everything: the CAP, Life-Nature and the Structural Funds. Then, Mr Barroso, we also have to do something European, in the words of a famous Italian film director, something quite different from the Bolkestein Directive, software patenting, the arbitrary and secretive authorisation of new GMOs, or a bit of hot air on sustainable development, whereas in reality alas environmental policy is becoming an increasingly marginal issue in your Commission. Reflection on the future of Europe and its legitimacy will be made much easier if Europe has something to offer in the months to come: REACH, an action on climate change, the tangible redefinition of social Europe, the working time directive, serious attention paid to the Millennium Round commitments. All of this is perfectly feasible and will help us to revive the Constitution. I will conclude, Mr President: we have very serious doubts that reflection on the Constitution can be carried forward and guided by the bickering crowd operating at the top, and the European Parliament has to take some of the responsibility for that. Mr Borrell, I will address you in the very few seconds remaining: I would like Parliament not to be just a talk show, but you yourself to sponsor an action to place it at the centre of a European-initiative debate.