

Address given by Jan Peter Balkenende at the signing of the Constitutional Treaty (Rome, 29 October 2004)

Caption: On 29 October 2004, at the official ceremony held in Rome to mark the signing of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Jan Peter Balkenende, Netherlands Prime Minister and President-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, delivers an address in which he welcomes, in particular, the progress and the distinctive features of the European Union.

Source: Speech by the President of the European Council, Dr Jan Peter Balkenende, at the signing ceremony for the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Rome, 29 October 2004. [ON-LINE]. [Brussels]: Council of the European Union, [25.05.2007]. Disponible sur

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/EN%20Balkenende%20REV.pdf>.

Copyright: (c) European Union, 1995-2012

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address_given_by_jan_peter_balkenende_at_the_signing_of_the_constitutional_treaty_rome_29_october_2004-en-b4424582-f321-4f9b-8701-25d01c0e17a3.html

Publication date: 21/10/2012

Address given by the President of the European Council, Dr Jan Peter Balkenende, at the signing ceremony for the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (Rome, 29 October 2004)

Fellow Europeans,

If this ceremony is proof of anything, it is Europe's ability to renew itself - to reinvent itself - time and again.

In the course of our history, we Europeans have given the world astounding ideas and works of art. But we have also brought brutal violence, and crushing oppression.

After the dark years of the Second World War we realised that we could only build up a life of freedom, peace and prosperity if we worked together. We linked hands and set off on this road.

Together we have created new prosperity, new opportunity. As Europeans, we have acquired the freedom to go anywhere. To contact anyone. To carry out any enterprise we please.

We have seen former dictatorships turn into democracies. And witnessed the reunification of Europe. More and more countries have joined us. Not because they were forced to, but because they chose to.

Next year much of Europe will celebrate sixty years of peace. Never before in our history have peace and freedom lasted so long. By signing the Constitutional Treaty today we show that we want to carry on together. Once again we commit ourselves fully to a life without war and injustice. To the freedom we hold so dear.

I should like to say a word to my colleagues, who will soon be signing on behalf of their countries and their people. Our signatures are not a finishing touch, but a new beginning. After this milestone, the road continues.

The Constitution gives us - together with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the national parliaments - greater capacity for making Europe more secure, more prosperous and more just.

We must work together to make full use of this capacity. Our task is not yet done.

The success of the Union is very much the success of all Europeans. In many other parts of the world, people admire Europe's achievements. Europe is no longer a place where might makes right. Instead we believe in peace, freedom, partnership and dialogue. The Constitution for Europe upholds these ideals. That is something to be proud of.

Does Europe threaten our own identities? It's a question a lot of people are asking. But isn't it Europe's very freedom, and our openness to others, that allow us to discover who we truly are?

The Constitutional Treaty that we are signing today is a sound basis for our common future. Peace, security and prosperity are valuable - but they are also vulnerable. This Constitution makes them stronger. And that, in turn, makes us stronger. That's why this ceremony is a symbol of hope. A fresh start.

For centuries, the story of Europe was one of enemies and their wars. It has become a story of friends and their partnership. The Constitution for Europe sets a seal on that partnership.

In Europe and elsewhere, hopeful faces are turned towards us. Today, Europe enters a new era. Let us firmly grasp the new opportunities that the Constitution offers. We have every reason to be optimistic. To believe and trust in our common future.

Thank you.