

Address given by José Manuel Durão Barroso at the inaugural meeting of the Portuguese Presidency of the EU Council (Oporto, 2 July 2007)

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[José Manuel Durão Barroso] Thank you very much for your speech, Mr Prime Minister. I would like to say, on my own behalf and on behalf of the European Commission, how much we value this working session, which has clearly shown that opinions on the European Union's priorities at this time converge entirely.

The European Union is on the move. The Portuguese have arrived at the right time, when the agenda is a dynamic one and Portugal is well prepared to sustain the momentum. The signature just now of the NSRF by the Commission and by the Portuguese Government clearly illustrates this, so congratulations, Portugal. The European Commission has come to this magnificent city of Oporto today pledging to work hand in hand with the Portuguese Presidency, whose success will be Europe's success. We shall do our utmost to support the Portuguese Presidency.

You said very clearly, Mr Prime Minister, that our priority is to finalise the issue of the Reform Treaty. We have a sound base, and now we must finalise matters. We must sustain the momentum here, too, and we cannot allow issues that have already been approved to re-emerge. It would be a mistake to reopen discussions on a mandate that the Member States have unanimously approved.

To draw a parallel with the Voyages of Discovery and equating this Treaty to the Cape of Storms, I would say that the German Presidency has already done the work of Bartolomeu Dias — we have rounded the Cape of Good Hope — but it is the Portuguese Presidency that must do Vasco da Gama's work of reaching India.

There is still much to be done, and the excellent work already carried out should not be called into question now. However, neither should we confuse the IGC, the Intergovernmental Conference, and institutional issues with what should be a priority in Europe: the results, the people, the People's Europe, the Europe of results. That is the Europe to which people usually pay greater attention: more jobs, the Lisbon Strategy. With the Portuguese Presidency, 'Lisbon is coming home'.

I also expect this Presidency to focus on essential issues such as those to which the Prime Minister has already referred, i.e. innovation. We shall make the December European Council a Council which is also devoted to innovation and to everything connected with energy and climate change in particular. We are drawing up a technology plan for energy, and, during this Presidency, we hope to launch a European Institute of Technology whose first priority, whose first innovation and knowledge community, will be 'Energy and climate change'. This is also particularly relevant, since the United Nations Conference that will launch the post-Kyoto process will take place in Bali in December.

Like anyone who comes home, we are often not the same on our return some years later. The Lisbon Strategy has also changed; it is more focused on the objectives of growth and employment and is now producing results. Recovery is a reality throughout Europe, the indicators are the best in the last 10 years. It is, therefore, now important for the Lisbon Strategy to focus on the social dimension, too, the debate on 'flexicurity' being particularly important in this respect.

Another issue chosen by the Portuguese Presidency as a December Council priority, with our full support, is precisely justice, freedom and security, especially the question of migration.

We are working hard. We have already presented some proposals, and we shall present others by the end of the year, so that the December Council of Europe can focus on the challenges of both legal and illegal migration from a global perspective. It will also focus in particular on the social dimension of reception for this complex range of issues so that Europe can pursue a migration policy. I have already said many, many times that it is pointless, if not ridiculous, to have 27 migration policies in the border-free Europe to which we aspire. We need one migration policy. And this whole area of justice, freedom and security is becoming an increasingly pressing issue. Some of the Reform Treaty's most important advances have been in this very area, and the, fortunately unsuccessful, recent attacks in London and Glasgow clearly show the need for us

to carry out our programme in order to combat terrorism jointly.

The challenge of immigration, like other challenges, aptly demonstrates that Europe's problems are now global problems and that global problems are European problems. I welcome the Portuguese Presidency's excellent slogan — a stronger Europe for a better world. This is why the Portuguese Presidency has also adopted a range of initiatives in foreign affairs: the Summit with Brazil this week, the EU-Africa Summit, besides all the summits already scheduled — China, India, Russia, the Ukraine and ASEAN, all bearing witness to Europe's vocation. This vocation must also involve our calling upon our global partners to exercise greater responsibility in resolving global problems.

I am quite sure that we shall see this during the current Presidency. Our commitment to Brazil, as well as being the first Summit to give a strategic dimension to relations with that country, also bears this out. On the following day, President Lula will come to Brussels with Prime Minister José Sócrates to open an international conference on biofuels with me. And then, on this very day, as the Prime Minister said, we shall travel to Accra to deliver a message expressing Europe's interest in the EU-Africa Summit, which will be held in Lisbon in December.

This is, therefore, an ambitious programme, but it is a programme which is equal to the ambition that Portugal has always shown in our common European project.

Thank you very much.