

**"The political Europe and its role in the world".
Rome, 23 March 2007 - Senate Chamber**

Summary report of the ceremony

Welcoming the participants, the President of the Senate, **Franco Marini**, said that what had only appeared to be a dream of integration 50 years ago had given life to a great Europe, and had proven to be the most important political and institutional development in the modern age. This was bound to grow further because it was underpinned by the support of the people and the governments. The interaction of human experiences, the free movement of goods, the launching of the single currency, and the establishment of Europe's civil and cultural values have all been achieved starting from a grandiose integration project which was not limited merely to economic co-operation but was driven by faith in Europe as a spiritual homeland. Throughout this long process the parliaments, as the organs of democratic representation, have played a front-line role by taking an active part in framing Community law, but they must also make their vital contribution to the future construction of Europe. The coming challenges, beginning with the Extraordinary Council in Berlin, will require bold decisions to be taken to endow the European institutions with constitutional rules which will strengthen their political role and hence their capacity to affect the social and democratic development of many areas of the world. He also thanked all the persons present, particularly those who had been witnesses of significant events in the integration process, and those who had taken up the invitation but, for health reasons, had been unable to attend. *(Applause)*

The President of the Chamber of Deputies, **Fausto Bertinotti**, said that the current difficulties cried out to the consciences of all Europeans, and placed them face-to-face with numerous divisions and painful social inequalities, and ancient forms of poverty and new forms of instability. It was therefore essential to refer back to the experience of the fathers of Europe who successfully demonstrated their political capacity to innovate and transform Europe and to rediscover the moral and civil basis of our continent, which was subsequently often clouded over by technocratic tendencies. It was now necessary to adopt a new spirit that could enhance and exploit the value of differences and take on the risk of a common European project based on the democratic method and on social inclusion. It was therefore in recovering the pluralist character of Europe's roots and history that the high road had to be followed in order to respond to the demands of justice, solidarity

and peace that were being so loudly voiced in the contemporary world. *(Applause)*.

The Prime Minister, **Romano Prodi**, emphasised the importance of the present moment in the life of the European Union not only because of the anniversary of the first 50 years of the world's largest area of peace, democracy and prosperity, but also because of the need to restart the European process. The forthcoming Berlin Declaration must put an end to the pause for reflection following the negative outcome of the referendums in France and the Netherlands on the Constitutional Treaty signed in Rome in 2004 and lay down the conditions for strengthening Europe and adjusting it to meet the increased global challenges. The starting point for this renewed commitment had necessarily to be the constitutional text adopted in 2004, which had been the outcome of very painstaking negotiations and had been already validated by 18 member states. The essential aim was to reach an agreement before the 2009 European Parliamentary elections, because our citizens would never agree to be called out to vote without a clear and functional institutional framework. This result had to be achieved using the Community method, namely, reconciling national demands with the need to strengthen the European institutions, and with the broadest involvement of the citizens, particularly the younger generations. Europe's citizens were aware that Europe, which everyone now saw to be a necessity and no longer an option, ran the risk of falling short: the Berlin Declaration, which would be short but ambitious, was intended to point the way towards successfully completing the greatest experiment of peace, democracy and prosperity of the contemporary world. *(Applause)*.

The President of the European Commission, **José Manuel Barroso**, spoke in Italian to pay tribute to the symbolic value of Rome not only as the place in which the Treaties had been signed but also as the cradle of European law. The enlarged Europe of 27 states was the affirmation of the dialogue on war, the best possible response to the history of a Continent which, during the last century, paid an enormous blood price. This enlarged Europe was now facing the construction of a future in which the younger generations could play an active part, and the challenges of globalisation. Sustainable development, competitiveness, climate change and security were huge challenges, and Europe's ability to play a role there would be the best possible way of paying tribute to the plan and the work of the founding fathers. But they were challenges that demanded new rules and a new constitution, to enable Europe to make an effective contribution to

creating a better global order, to support freedom and the rule of law, and diminish the areas of poverty. *(Applause)*.

The floor was then taken by a number of the leading figures of the construction of the European Union.

Fifty years after the date of the signing of the Treaties that enabled Europe to become a generator of peace within, and peace in the world, taking its inspiration on the common ethical and religious values of the countries comprising the Union, and the principles of freedom, democracy and respect for the individual, Senator **Carlo Azeglio Ciampi** emphasised that the European unification process had reached a turning point. For after the historic results achieved by establishing a single market and the common currency, breaking down all barriers to the free movement of citizens and defining joint initiatives for security and defence, it was necessary for the impressive process of Union enlargement to be followed very rapidly by the strengthening of the institutions governing it. The pause for reflection following the stalling of the procedures for ratifying the Constitutional Treaty signed on 24 October 2004 by 27 member countries of the Union had now ended. But it was not desirable to have any solutions which, while supported by all the partners, would only be initially applied by a few of them. An agreed solution was needed which would exempt the 18 countries that had already ratified the Treaty from having to do so again, but which would encourage the other nine countries to pronounce themselves in favour of it in order to offer their citizens who would be voting in the 2009 European Parliamentary elections a common constitutional framework and governing institutions that were consistent with the new dimensions of the Union and its mission in the world. A mission which Europe could not perform without the active and convinced involvement of the younger generations, who would have to give a renewed impetus to the construction of the Union and to defining its objectives. *(Applause)*.

The next speaker was President **Valéry Giscard d'Estaing** who recalled that the European Community had been established on economic foundations but with eminently political purposes. The first 25 years of Community life had been devoted to building up the European institutions, the Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The last 25 years had been the ones that saw the reunification of Germany and the enlargement to take in the countries of Eastern Europe, with the result that the Union now comprised 27 countries on the basis of solidarity and fraternity. The third period in

the life of the Community, which would commit the European institutions and the citizens in the coming years, particularly the young people, who were aware that they were living through a historic adventure, had to be dedicated to establishing a common identity. Europe's citizens had to fully identify with democratic, transparent and efficient institutions and in order to achieve this result the Constitutional Treaty had to be rectified as soon as possible, ensuring that it enjoyed the broadest possible support, while duly respecting national needs. The world was being organised into large groupings: Europe was a large grouping in terms of its population, economic importance and civil and social progress. Europe had a single system of values and a common heritage of democracy, tolerance, respect for human rights and a commitment to peace. Europe had to propose and not impose this value system in its relations with all the other international groupings. (*Applause*).

Senator **Giulio Andreotti** looked back to the events which had led Italy, in 1957, to become party to the construction of the European Community under the prime ministership of Segni, in whose government he had served as Minister of Finance. In particular, he recalled the role played by the then Foreign Minister, Gaetano Martino, in identifying the new model for economic unification following the failure of the project based on the construction of a common military force, and the constant commitment of Alcide De Gasperi to overcome the obstacles against involving Germany in the Community process and in the Atlantic Alliance. The process that began with the Treaties of Rome, and which was supported from the outset by a large majority in the Italian parliament, gathered more support as the years passed, and also managed to win over to the European cause, for example, areas of industry that had originally been concerned about the disappearance of customs protectionism, and subsequently advocated extending the European model in terms of quality and quantity. And in 1977 the Italian Communist Party also acknowledged that the European Community and the Atlantic Alliance were fundamental benchmarks of national foreign policy. As we celebrate today half a century of constructive community life, Europe should renew its commitment to establishing other essential forms of continental co-operation, such as the WEU and the CSCE. (*Applause*).

Senator **Emilio Colombo** saw the celebrations of 50 years of the Treaty of Rome as an opportunity not only to take stock of European history but also to look confidently ahead to the future, dispelling any sense of disappointment and pessimism. The constitutional process

was a necessary phase in creating an authentic European society and a functioning continental democracy that could play its part as a civil and global power at the service of human advancement and peace. In the present stage of crisis in this process one could take comfort from seeing the ambitious projects of the founding fathers as models and ideas that were still as valid today for addressing the challenges of the new century. It was therefore the responsibility of politics, and primarily the parliaments, to build up the future of Europe in close dialogue with the European public, to give a fresh impetus to real democracy and to involve the younger generations. (*Applause*).

After the projection of archive films taken at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and on the construction of Europe, the President of the European Parliament, **Hans-Gert Poettering**, took the floor and stressed the role played by the European Parliament and the national parliaments in the democratic decision-making process that had led to the present political configuration of Europe. The European Parliament today represented 500 million citizens, their interests and their political convictions, and was playing a decisive part in the Union's lawmaking process; national legislatures had developed increasing powers of political scrutiny over the activities of the Union, and thanks to the application of the subsidiarity principle that had been introduced by President Giscard d'Estaing himself, they were playing an active part in the joint legislative process. Integrating the tasks of the European Parliament and the national parliaments, which had been tested out successfully in recent years, particularly for the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, could receive a further impetus with coming important events for the future of the Union and issues connected with climate change. There had to be a common commitment to tangibly implementing the improvements introduced by the Constitutional Treaty (whose substance had to be safeguarded) with specific reference to the efficiency of the European institutions and the democratic participation of the citizens. Europe was on the threshold of a new beginning, to which everyone had to make their own contribution, drawing their inspiration from the courage of the founding fathers. (*Applause*).

The Speakers and Presidents of several national parliaments then took the floor.

Mrs **Katalin Szili**, Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly, emphasised that the 27-member Europe was now taken for granted by the younger generations, and that past divisions had been relegated to

history. It was therefore necessary, thanks to the contribution of the national parliaments, to strengthen the cohesion of the Union, eliminating the differences between the old and the new member countries. Working together, everyone had to support the European Constitution, consolidate democracy and the defence of human rights, and guarantee a European standard of living to all citizens. *(Applause)*.

The Speaker of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives, **Herman De Croo**, assured the meeting that Belgium intended to renew the boost it had given in the 1950s when it set the stage for the negotiations leading up to the signing of the Treaties of Rome. To enhance the democratic nature of the European construction process and the awareness of citizens, Belgium had convened a forum similar to those organised in other countries, an experience which could be repeated every year when the annual programme of the European Commission was presented. *(Applause)*.

The Speaker of the National Council of Slovakia, **Pavol Paska**, expressed his happiness at the fact that his country was a member of the European Union, and recalled with admiration the path that had been started in Rome, the cradle of Western civilisation, with the signing of the Treaties. He also expressed his conviction that this path towards a united and democratic Europe based on solidarity was to be completed. *(Applause)*.

Michael J. Martin, the Speaker of the British House of Commons, without ignoring the difficulties that had marked the participation of the United Kingdom in Europe, pointed out that a closer union among the peoples of the continent would enable us to meet the challenges of globalisation and affirm democracy and the rule of law. *(Applause)*.

According to **Viktoras Muntianas**, the Speaker of Lithuanian Seimas, thanks to modernity and farsightedness of the Treaties of Rome that had had an effect on such matters as the free movement of people, energy and transport, Europe and the European model of balancing solidarity and competition was as attractive as before for other countries. Highlighting the importance of the Neighbourhood Policy, he expressed his conviction that parliaments must work together to restore confidence to our citizens in the European project and to ensure that Europe would be able to speak with a single voice in its external relations. *(Applause)*.

In the opinion of **Anna Benaki**, Speaker of the Hellenic parliament, the negative outcome of the constitutional referendum in two member states was due to deficient knowledge of Europe by the citizens. The Hellenic Parliament and the other national parliaments had to play an active part in reducing the democratic deficit of the European process which had to be completed in order to safeguard the achievements made thanks to the courage of the founding fathers, at a time when the memory of the war was still alive in Europe. (*Applause*).

Premysl Sobotka, the Speaker of the Senate of the Czech Republic, said that pride at the achievements of the first 50 years of Europe helped us to address the challenges of the future, which nevertheless needed very careful reflection. For it was essential to avoid taking hasty decisions, bypassing stages which were necessary in a democratic process. (*Applause*).

The Speaker of the Irish Dail Eirann, **Rory O'Hanlon**, defining the European Union as the second great political achievement in the history of humanity after the establishment of democracy, emphasised Ireland's commitment, and that of its parliamentary bodies, to supporting the participation of citizens in the Community process and expressed the hope that the divisions would be overcome, so that the process of building up a united Europe that began 50 years ago with the founding fathers could be completed. (*Applause*).

The Speaker of the Romanian Camera Deputatilor, **Bogdan Olteanu**, recognised that the model of democracy and prosperity for which the European Union stood had been the main incentive behind the efforts made, and the difficult changes introduced, by Romania following the collapse of the Communist regime. Romania was particularly committed to expanding regional cooperation, developing economic and political relations, but above all strengthening individual freedoms, and playing a positive part in helping to further strengthen the European Union. (*Applause*).

The Speaker of the Portuguese Assembleia da Republica, **Jaime Gama**, while recognising the great progress made by the united Europe in its first 50 years of life, pointed out that there was still a great deal more to be done, faced with the new challenges of globalisation, both in terms of the economy and integration policy. A renewed impetus therefore had to be given to the constitutional process which had probably begun without adequate guarantees in place to ensure its political sustainability. To this end the Intergovernmental Conference should find a way out of the present

institutional paralysis looking ahead to the 2009 European Parliamentary elections. *(Applause)*.

Yvonne Timmerman-Buck, Speaker of the Dutch Senate, urged the delegates not to limit the ambitions of European reform, just as the founding fathers had not been afraid of bringing into being a project which, while fraught with difficulty, had since been amply achieved. The Dutch parliament considers it necessary to introduce reforms that would make Europe more effective on the international stage, and more effective in addressing such challenges as climate change, energy issues and terrorism, while being capable of defending the social achievements of the European democracies. *(Applause)*.

The Speaker of the Turkish Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, **Arinc Bulent**, addressed the role that Turkey could play in the European Union and the efforts that Turkey, and in particular the National Assembly, were making in order to reach the political, economic and cultural standards required to be able to play a full part in the ambitious European project. Europe was a world player, which influenced the future of other regions and peoples. For this reason Turkey's accession would be an opportunity for dialogue with other peoples and other political and cultural visions for the European Union, and the most effective response to approaches based on the clash of civilisations. *(Applause)*.

The Speaker of the Croatian Hrvatski Sabor, **Vladimir Seks**, said that Croatia had experienced the drama of war only a few years ago, and was therefore extremely interested in the European project grounded on democracy, equality and the advancement of human rights, and the creation of an area of prosperity, peace and stability. Croatia had achieved remarkable results along the path towards accession to the Union and, what was more important, the idea of European unity had become deeply rooted in the country both at the level of the institutions and among the citizens. *(Applause)*.

Finally, the Speaker of the German Bundestag, **Norbert Lammert**, thanked Presidents Marini and Bertinotti for the initiative and for their courteous hospitality, emphasising the symbolic value of the cities which were hosting these celebratory and political events connected with the 50th anniversary of the birth of the European Economic Community: Rome, where the Treaties were signed in 1957 that had led to a Europe whose territorial, political, economic and social dimensions were originally unimaginable, and Berlin, the city which for four decades had epitomised the division of the continent before becoming a concrete demonstration of the reconciliation of Europe and

its yearning for unification. Conscious of its debt towards Europe, Germany was actively committed to overcoming the present difficulties and hoped that this could begin to take place with the joint support and efforts of all, thanks to the forthcoming Berlin Declaration. *(Applause)*.

The President of the Italian Senate, **Franco Marini**, then announced that the representatives of the parliaments of Cyprus, Finland, Poland, Luxembourg, Spain, Bulgaria, Austria and Macedonia had also asked to speak, but that it had not been possible to give them the floor because of the lack of time. At all events, their contributions would be published in the official proceedings.

Thanking all those attending, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, **Fausto Bertinotti**, emphasised the importance of a celebration as a moment to acknowledge a common history and its great achievements, reiterating that Europe needed a political project in order to be able to address the great challenges facing today's world: peace, civil harmony, and combating inequalities. *(Applause)*.

Closing the ceremony, the President of the Senate, **Franco Marini**, warmly thanked all the participants, whose words had strengthened - albeit with differences of emphasis - the commonly shared ambition to pursue that common project which, 50 years earlier, had run through the spirit of Rome. The integration process was Europe's contribution to the peaceful governance of the planet, because it would enable the Union to speak with a single voice. Parliaments therefore had the paramount duty to convince citizens and exert pressure on governments in order to enable Europe to overcome the fears that were holding it back and acquire the structures it needed to enable its peoples to remain leading players on the world stage. *(Applause)*.