

Mesdames, Messieurs,

Mes chers Amis,

Je remercie très chaleureusement la présidente de l'ELDR, Annemie Neyts-Uitebroeck, pour l'organisation du lancement de la Campagne ELDR dans le cadre des élections européennes 2009 ainsi que les membres du Mouvement réformateur et de l'Open VLD.

Après vous avoir entendu toutes ces interventions, je dois vous avouer que je suis fort impressionné.

- Impressionné par votre engagement libéral, par la profondeur de vos réflexions, par la force de vos convictions.
- Impressionné par votre énergie à placer l'Europe dans le cœur des citoyens.
- Impressionné aussi par la constance de l'engagement libéral en faveur de l'idée européenne.

Vos préoccupations, je les fais miennes car seule l'Europe peut nous apporter les vraies réponses efficaces et généreuses

à nos incertitudes, à nos doutes, à nos craintes, mais aussi à nos attentes et à nos ambitions.

Renforcer les institutions européennes, c'est le seul moyen de répondre avec succès aux défis, à la crise financière, aux dangers du terrorisme international, à la lutte contre la grande criminalité, aux effets du changement climatique.

L'Europe est mieux armée qu'aucune autre puissance au monde pour faire face à tous les problèmes globaux qui dépassent de loin la capacité individuelle des Etats.

Grâce à l'Europe, nous avons pu rapprocher des points de vue, forger des accords de paix, améliorer le sort de millions d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants.

En 50 ans cette idée de génie qui est une idée de liberté et qui fondamentalement est une idée libérale de solidarité, de paix et de sécurité a engendré des acquis irréversibles dont il n'existe aucun autre exemple dans l'histoire des hommes.

Nous devons croire plus que jamais dans cette Europe.

Nous avons des dizaines de raisons d'aimer l'Union européenne. La solidarité sociale, le partage équitable des fruits de la croissance, la liberté d'association et

d'entreprendre, le droit à la différence, la tolérance, le respect des diversités culturelles et linguistiques sont des principes qui sont tous coulés dans la charte des droits fondamentaux.

Parce que l'Europe est le plus grand espace de liberté de la planète, l'Europe est un espace multiculturel dont la diversité est une source permanente d'enrichissement d'élévation et de progrès.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Without Europe a very large part of the planet would have not the slightest prospect of progress. We must not forget that there is no crisis worse than that faced daily by 1.4 billion human beings who live on less than \$1.25 a day.

There are some things I think should be sufficiently clear to everyone:

Europe is one of the finest stories in the history of humanity.

It is our duty to ensure that this story does not come to an end: if it did, we should certainly have reason to be afraid.

It is vital that all of us resist the siren voices of protectionism and parochialism, which can give only the illusion of safety, and would in fact bring down our economies and endanger the survival of our social systems.

My dear friends,

For decades Europe was a centre of fascination for millions of people who lived under the yoke of Communism.

Today Europe is in the forefront of those calling for world governance, demanding the reform that the great international organisations so badly need, in order to democratise globalisation, to humanise globalisation, to secure a world that serves humanity.

All this confirms our common belief that Europe is a force for the future, and that we need more Europe – not less Europe.

Europe is a centre of fascination because of the results it has achieved in 50 years.

In conclusion, I cannot but recall the brilliantly lucid and invigoratingly optimistic words spoken by Desmond Tutu, that great African and holder of the Nobel Peace Prize, at the

closing session of the 2006 European Development Days.

What he said was this:

*"Even most recently Europe had a thoroughly unprepossessing antecedent. And yet, this West was able to emerge to be the giant it has become. [...]"*

*Just in the 20th century Europe had two World Wars. Two! There was a Holocaust, which saw the death of six million Jews. There were the several millions who died in Stalin's gulags. Europe was devastated by the excesses of fascism, Nazism and communism. There were dictatorships in Spain and Portugal; even Greece, the birthplace of democracy, was just a few years ago ruled by a military dictatorship. There was a time when one was not sure who was the government of Italy, for they changed so rapidly, so often. There has been also a new phenomenon, so-called "ethnic cleansing", which happened in Europe. There is still the running sore of Northern Ireland. You can imagine that, if someone wants to describe Europe, they could quite easily have said you have the ingredients here to cause Euro pessimism.*

*So Africa should take heart. That the West that was some time reduced to dust and ashes, rose like the proverbial phoenix to*

*soar to its present heights. This West, so prosperous and so powerful, knows a time when suspected witches and heretics were burned at the stake; when many of the citizens of these states, as a result of the industrial revolution, were victims of grinding poverty. The march to the modern democracies that we see was characterized by excesses, the excesses of the powerful and considerable bloodletting. It has not been a smooth and uneventful journey. We in Africa can draw much encouragement and inspiration from your ultimate triumph, considering what preceded it all.*

*You triumphed because you invested in democracy, freedom and peace because development and prosperity require peace and good governance. You showed near zero tolerance of corruption. You upheld the fundamental rights of all, the freedom of expression, the freedom of movement. You helped to establish the rule of law. You had accountable and transparent governance, a vibrant and free press. And you had an engaged and lively civil society, vigilant watchdogs; for they say the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. [...]*

The real danger is not so much the financial crisis, the economic crisis, the food crisis, the climate crisis; rather, the

real danger is fear of all kinds, and the use that can be made of it in politics.

The worst possible course we could take would be to pull back.

The worst possible course would be to abandon our dreams.

The worst possible course would be to abandon our belief in freedom.

Let us stand united and turn our dream into a reality: a better world for all.