

## 里斯本條約下的歐盟統合願景

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be here again, in this prestigious university, on the occasion of the seminar on the Lisbon Treaty and the future of the European Union.

I am grateful to Dr Chang for inviting me as the representative in Taiwan of one of the founding member states of the EU.

Actually, my country Belgium has indeed played over the years a significant role in the development of the European institutional architecture as well as in the elaboration and implementation of European policies. Since the early stages of the European construction, and particularly since the entry into force of the first important treaty marking the beginning of the European adventure – the Treaty of

Rome, in 1957 – Belgium has been in the vanguard of a deeper European integration.

To be honest, this pro-Europe attitude does not come so much out of a visionary perspective. Our European commitment is less the expression of idealism than of pragmatism. Because we are a small and multicultural society, with an open economy and surrounded by larger nations, our people and our political leaders feel more deeply than others the necessity of a united Europe.

This European commitment explains in part why over the past decade no less than three Belgian Prime Ministers have been nominated by a large majority of member states for the EU highest position. The first two were eventually rejected by the opposition of one single country: Jean-Luc Dehaene was vetoed by the Conservative British Prime Minister John Major

in 1994 while ten years later Guy Verhofstadt was stopped in 2004 by Tony Blair of the Labour Party. In both cases, the reason for Britain's opposition was the same: they would not allow the EU Commission to be led by a president supporting a federal model for Europe. London was not to accept any orientation that could potentially lead toward a gradual infringement on its national sovereignty.

The third time, however, we were more successful with the appointment last month of our Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy as the first permanent President of the European Council, one of the two new institutional positions created by the Lisbon Treaty. Interestingly, the selection of Van Rompuy came shortly after Tony Blair's candidature had been opposed by several Member States. I won't try to analyze here the complex motivations for this choice. Clearly, many factors played a role in this designation. One of them is the necessary political balancing which resulted in the simultaneous appointment, alongside a Conservative president of the Council coming from a smaller country, of Lady Ashton, a British supported by the Labour Party, as the High Representative for Foreign Affairs. Another factor might be the personality of Herman Van Rompuy which probably makes him more acceptable than his two predecessors to those who favour intergovernmental cooperation as the main pattern for governing the European Union instead of a more federal-oriented system. I think that realism is probably the predominant feature of his political character. Van Rompuy is known for his pragmatic and consensus-building approach to policy-making, which recently proved very helpful in dealing with Belgium's internal difficulties. At the same time, however, he certainly has an ambitious vision for a stronger, more coherent and more efficient Europe.

These remarks bring me to the theme of this conference: 「The Lisbon Treaty and the future of

the European integration, continuity and change」. I think that the title is very appropriate as the modernized institutional framework shaped in the treaty paves the way for closer integration and it also marks indeed both continuity and change.

There is continuity: the Lisbon Treaty is not the launching of a new system, nor does it bring drastic changes to EU policy-making. But it does constitute a new phase, a new milestone, in the process of European construction. As a matter of fact, changes to the EU institutional framework have always come about through amendments to previous treaties: this was true of the Single European Treaty, as well as the Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice. The Treaty of Lisbon uses the same technique.

In my view, it is certainly not a masterpiece of political creativity but rather the result of yet another compromise between the two main factions (or orientations) existing among EU member states which I just referred to: those who advocate for a system primarily based on intergovernmental dialogue and those who believe in the virtue of deeper integration. Put in that perspective, the Lisbon Treaty appears to be more the realistic translation of feasible options than the fruit of imagination. This being said, this treaty is still definitely a major step forward.

Indeed, it also means change in the sense of improvement. A brief look back at the recent evolution helps understanding its significance. During the past decade, the EU has undertaken a double transformation process: horizontally by incorporating new member states and vertically by adapting its structures to the necessity of more integrated mechanisms in order to maintain efficient decision-making processes. Indeed, a union of 27 countries cannot operate with rules which were designed for 10 or 15 countries. The two movements were supposed to be conducted in parallel. But this strategy did not

succeed as the progress in institutional reforms lagged behind. In fact, the EU kept enlarging geographically without adapting its structures. Indeed, the deep reluctance of some Member States to relinquish part of their national sovereignty while others leaned towards giving the EU a more federal character resulted in a lack of clear direction and even cast some doubts on the Union's future.

Let us however keep in mind that considerable efforts have been made over that period to move forward. Among them was the visionary project, launched in 2001 under Belgian Presidency, of drafting a European Constitution. Three years later, a Constitutional Treaty was signed in October 2004, which laid the foundation for stronger institutions with larger competences. That treaty was ratified by a majority of MS and came very near to become reality. Still, it failed when two countries – both founding members of the EU – rejected the treaty by referendum. In retrospect, this bold initiative turned out to be a step too far, or too fast. My interpretation is that this setback was generated, among other factors, by the mixed feelings and sometime negative perception of the EU among our populations. Contrary to national or local administrations, the EU institutions sometimes appear to ordinary citizens as remote and disconnected from their daily life and immediate concerns. Moreover, although there is a European Parliament elected by universal suffrage, many people still have the impression to be deprived of a democratic control over the European machinery. Ironically, the project of European Constitution seems to have been defeated due to the very problems that it was supposed to solve by bringing more efficiency and transparency to the EU institutions.

After two more years of political deadlock, a compromise was eventually reached at the end of 2007 with the signing of the less ambitious but still

effective Lisbon Treaty. Still, another two years were necessary to complete the ratification in all 27 MS. And that is where we stand today. After having made two steps forward, we made a step backward. In the end, it is still one step forward.

To make it short, the significance of the Lisbon Treaty is that it provides for a strengthened institutional framework which reinforces the EU operational capability. As Jean Monnet said, 「rien ne se crée sans les hommes, rien ne dure sans les institutions」 (「nothing can be achieved without men, nothing can last without institutions」).

Internally, the treaty brings more efficiency to the decision-making process, notably by extending qualified majority voting to new policy areas where unanimity was previously required.

Externally, it will bring more coherence to the EU foreign policy and raise the profile of the European Union in the world. Beside the permanent president of the European Council, the most significant institutional change introduced by the treaty is the creation of the function of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. In that position, Lady Ashton, who is concurrently promoted to Vice-President of the EU Commission, will chair the monthly meetings of the 27 Foreign Ministers and she will also represent the EU within the international community. Without question, that will be a strong position with considerable authority, giving the EU more opportunities to speak with one voice and therefore increasing its international influence.

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