

The Berlin Declaration: For A Europe That Plays An Active Role In Democratic And Fair Globalisation

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Former members of Parliament wish to contribute, with their reflections and experience, to the strengthening of European political integration, in order for Europe to be a key player in a fair, democratic and humane globalisation, thus guaranteeing peace, freedom and development for all people. That is the essential outcome of a colloquy held in Berlin on October 16, 2004.

The Berlin colloquy was hosted by the German former MPs association in the premises of the Reichstag complex. It attracted close to 80 former parliamentarians representing a broad political spectrum from all the thirteen national member associations of the European Association of former Members of Parliament. They were welcomed by messages from the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Horst Köhler, the German Bundestag President, Wolfgang Thierse, and the Minister of State for Europe, Martin Bury.

The third colloquy of the European Association (EA) dealt with the "European political integration in the face of the international challenges" - in Horst Köhler's opinion the most important actual problem of Europe. The former MPs discussed, amended and finally adopted - unanimously with some abstentions - the "Declaration of Berlin", drafted by the Bureau of the EA on the basis of a report prepared by EA President Nuñez Encabo and of contributions submitted by national associations. The most interesting and striking parts of the Declaration are presented in the following.

The former MPs want to see ensured the consolidation and the development of the political integration in Europe. For this end they request that the European Constitution - despite some shortcomings - be ratified as quickly as possible by the Member States of the EU, leading to a new stage of European political integration, and that the process of strengthening the European Parliament continue and citizens be allowed to take part in the development of the process of the European unification so as to avoid a democratic deficit which would paralyse the construction of the European Union. They support the referenda on the Constitution in different European countries as a chance for more European democracy and identity and plead for the enhancement of good governance, accountability of all institutions and democratic transparency. In their eyes the adoption of the Constitution and the accession of ten new Member States will make the construction of the European Union take major steps. However, they made clear that Europe is more than the EU. There should be a better coordination with the activities of the Council of Europe, and the EU should adhere to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

The former parliamentarians didn't just pay tribute to the *genius loci* by declaring that they welcome the German unification which, after the fall of the Wall of shame, constituted the first step of change towards the current European enlargement, which made it possible to realise this European Union of twenty-five Member States, with the perspectives of membership of other candidates, turning into a reality the dream of the founders: the democratic unification of Europe, divided since World War II, in a common area of peace, democracy and socio-economic prosperity.

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They launched an appeal urging that common political integration should not turn out in practice to be a mere change from a divided Europe into an unequal Europe. With regard to development asymmetries, they recommend the flexible application of the safeguard clauses which can leave some chapters of Community legislation temporarily suspended for the new Member States, while adhering to the principles of solidarity which guarantee social cohesion. If alignment to the top of the social systems of the member states of the Union may appear to be an illusion, it is also true for them that the aim must be a better economical balance, stopping non controlled east-west immigration and, reverse, delocalisations encouraged by illegal work and lower labour costs.

The Declaration of Berlin notes with satisfaction that the European Constitution states that "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights", and stresses the fact that these values are common to all Member States advocating pluralism, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination. It calls for decisive efforts to be made to abolish still existing discrimination of women and promote gender equality.

The Declaration condemns the terrible terrorist attacks and threats of the last years towards various European countries which are aimed at these values and believes that Europe has a duty, in order to remain faithful to its values, to put pressure on the international politics and to make public opinion aware of the causes of terrorism. The European Union has acted to implement a common strategy and actively develop the solidarity clause providing the European counter-terrorism co-ordinator with the necessary means. This common strategy should not only imply matters of security, defence and foreign policy, but also measures to be taken in order to protect and strengthen the common values and the quality of democratic societies.

The former parliamentarians are well aware of the fact that a united and strong Europe cannot live alone on planet Earth and that this tiny continent is part of the One World. They recognise the contribution of the Council of Europe and the European Union to the strengthening of democracy in the world and to peaceful co-operation. They ask Europe to be a key player in a fair, democratic and humane globalisation, which takes as orientation the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Universal Declaration on Democracy, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the revised Social Charter of the Council of Europe and the respective ILO conventions.

They advise to pursue a social and ecological world market economy which assures the liveability and the harmonious and sustainable development of the planet. May be they bear in mind what Bundestag President Thierse stated in his welcoming address: "Seeing the global competition, Europe will be able to exist as a power of influence in the world if it is conscious of its own capacities and makes use of its particular experiences - for example in the question of welfare state and social justice."

The former MPs reaffirm the primacy of the UN to prevent, resolve and repress international conflicts, consider effective multilateralism as being the guiding principle, denounce the refusal of impunity as well as the violation of international law, racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, and recommend - as one of the best means of avoiding wars and conflicts - to co-operate in the eradication of world poverty and illiteracy, to encourage democracy and to allow all human beings, holders of universal fundamental rights, to have access to a decent life. >>>

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OF THE MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE OR THE EU

The European Association (EA) was founded in 1994. The EA consists of associations of former members of parliament of the member countries of the Council of Europe or the European Union. It includes thirteen national associations of former MPs, coming from Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and Turkey.

The EA's objective is to promote the European ideal and to contribute to the European construction. To this end, it may organise meetings and colloquies aimed at examining the major problems of society. The themes of the two first colloquies were "Reinforcement of the parliamentary dimension of the European institutions" (Strasbourg, 2000) and "Common European values" (Rome, 2002).

PERSPECTIVES / PERSPEKTIVEN

Former parliamentarians meeting in Europasaal of Paul-Löbe-Haus in Berlin.
Photo: European Association of Ex-MPs and MEPs



The colloquy participants' proposals include:

- European emancipation and the setting up of a genuine, coherent and visible common foreign, security and defence policy, not excluding the development of a liveable strategic partnership with the U.S., based on the equality of both partners (as State Minister Bury underlined in his written message: "Europe is not in opposition to the U. S., but we feed our particular experiences into this partnership and the fight against terrorism.");
- Harmonisation of the rapid reaction force created by the France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg, with the aim of having an autonomous force for prevention, peacekeeping or crisis management missions compatible with Nato's rapid reaction force;
- Recognition of democracy as an international principle, too;
- Establishment of a parliamentary dimension to the UN;
- Enhanced endeavours of the European Commission and the national governments helping realise the Johannesburg "Plan of Implementation" and the eight Millennium Development Goals based on the broad concept of sustainable human development;
- Reinforcement of economic and technological aid aiming at facilitating economic and social cohesion in developing countries;
- New efforts for a worldwide disarmament, co-operation in the fight against illegal arms trafficking and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as well as of small arms, and firm actions against terrorism, organised crime, torture, trafficking in human beings, slavery and drugs trafficking;
- A single voice for the EU within the international Community as well as better and stronger forms of cooperation with international and regional organisations;
- Use of the internet as an instrument for culture and education, mainly in schools of developing countries, so as to avoid the emergence of new inequalities;
- Support of European institutions for European universities in becoming important vehicles of co-operation in the fields of education and sustainable development with the rest of the world;
- Reinforcement of the co-operation with NGOs.

The "Declaration of Berlin" will be forwarded, among others, to the national parliaments, to the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - in the hope that active parliamentarians will be inspired by some of the ideas of their former colleagues and that they will be encouraged to put into reality proposals which may seem visionary today.

The former MPs declare their readiness to co-operate actively with the main European institutions, in particular the Council of Europe and the European Union, and with the governments and Parliaments of the Member States as well as with an enlarged and even stronger European Parliament.

— **COMMUNICATE WORLDWIDE** ■