

“GREATER EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: THE WAY FORWARD”

ROME, 14 SEPTEMBER

DECLARATION

We, the Presidents of the Camera dei Deputati of Italy, of the Assemblée nationale of France, of the Bundestag of Germany, and of the Chambre des Députés of Luxembourg, which currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Presidency of the EU Speakers Conference, **are convinced that new impetus must be given to European integration.**

As the Presidents of national assemblies, whose members represent the people’s will expressed through democratic elections, we pledge to contribute to this process and underscore the indispensable role of parliaments.

We believe that more, not less, Europe is needed to respond to the challenges we face, both internally and externally.

The European Union and its development have undoubtedly been a success story. Its original objectives as a project for peace and widespread prosperity across the whole of Europe are no less relevant today than they were when the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957. In addition, the Union, an economic area of global importance, in which democracy, fundamental freedoms, rights and security are guaranteed, has exercised - and still exercises - great political influence globally.

The European Union is, however, also currently confronted by extraordinary challenges: the greatest refugee and migration crisis since World War II, the threat of irreversible climate change, insufficient growth and high unemployment rates, increasing inequality relating to poverty and material deprivation in many Member States, financial and economic crises, international crime and terrorism, as well as a perceived inability to address citizens’ concerns and needs. The latter contributes to rising voter apathy, intolerance towards migrants and other minorities, and resentment against national and European institutions, all of which undermine social cohesion.

Despite the important reforms implemented over the last five years, these problems have also highlighted weaknesses in the construction and functioning of the Economic and Monetary Union, as well as the need to forge

ahead with European political integration. Courage and pragmatism will be needed to move towards a sharing of sovereignty at the European level.

No European country can effectively represent its interests in a globalised world and meet challenges in Europe and beyond by acting alone. Our common goal is a stronger and more integrated European Union, as stated in the Treaty on European Union.

Our citizens need a stronger Europe, a project based on respect for fundamental rights and human dignity and on the principles of the rule of law, the social market economy, economic and social cohesion, solidarity between Member States and sustainable growth. Our priority in the immediate future must be responding to our citizens' needs by developing effective policies at the national and EU level to stimulate growth, competitiveness and employment, particularly of the youth, while combating social exclusion and discrimination, and promoting social justice and protection.

Our partners want a stronger Europe to face the great instability surrounding our continent - our neighbourhood is in turmoil, both to the South and to the East. It is clear that when Europe does act, like it did in brokering the historic deal with Iran, it can play a major role. In a globalised world, Europe can be a key player if it speaks with one voice and acts as one.

We believe that greater political integration is needed

Greater European political integration - in line with the principle of subsidiarity - is needed to overcome the inherent weaknesses at the heart of the European Union and of the Economic and Monetary Union, and to provide Europe with the vision it needs to avoid stumbling from one emergency to the other. These weaknesses have been highlighted by the handling of the economic and financial crisis – including the case of Greece - and by the fact that there is a real risk of there being a 'lost generation' in some Member States despite the recovery.

The current moment offers an opportunity to move forward with European political integration, which could lead to a federal union of States.

Greater integration will also allow our continent to successfully face global challenges such as forced displacement and increasing migration flows, climate

change, the spread of conflicts and terrorism, instability on the monetary and financial markets, competition from emerging economies and the need to diversify and coordinate energy sources.

The on-going integration process should not be limited to the field of economic and fiscal matters, or to the internal market and to agricultural policy. It should include all matters pertaining to the European ideal - social and cultural affairs as well as foreign, security and defence policy.

To better respond to citizens' concerns, the people's representatives in national parliaments must also explain how the European institutions work to their citizens more clearly, as well as what the medium- and long-term prospects for the Union are.

We believe that the strengthening of Europe's Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), as well as of its social dimension, are needed

We believe that we must complete the EMU by forging a veritable financial and fiscal union, but that we must also strengthen the institutions overseeing it and work towards ensuring genuine democratic accountability and legitimacy, thereby creating the stability and prosperity which the citizens of the Eurozone look for. More ambition is needed in order to achieve a genuine and fully functioning EMU, including by further strengthening and mainstreaming the social dimension in the governance framework.

We therefore welcome – as a basis for future discussion - the joint initiative by the Presidents of the European Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament, the Eurogroup and the European Central Bank for reform of the EMU.

In this context, the transfer of greater powers to the EU institutions should be sought. This will require a greater role for national parliaments in EU decision-making.

We believe that greater adherence to the founding fathers' vision is needed

As envisaged by the founding fathers of the European Union, it is essential that the countries of the signatories of this Declaration, together with all the driving

forces behind the process of European integration, remain aware of their special historical responsibility.

Our countries, which have the same obligations and rights as all other EU Member states, are duty-bound, because of their decades-long experience in the construction of the European project, to inject new impetus into the integration process.

Since all national Parliaments of EU Member States have a part to play and do play a prominent role, we think that subsequent events could be held to present this joint Declaration and to launch a discussion on concrete proposals on strengthening the Union, including at the next Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments in Luxembourg in May 2016. This Declaration is open for signature on the part of the Presidents of all the parliamentary assemblies of the EU Member States, and will be presented to the European Union institutions.