

Enlargement of the European Union

Keynote by
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Mr. Gérard Hauser, ICF President

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome and introduce as keynote speaker on the Enlargement of the European Union, Mr. François Scheer, who served as Ambassador to Germany from 1993-1999. As one of only 3 Ambassadors of France and closely acquainted to President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl, Mr. Scheer is certainly one of the most authorized individuals to cover this subject.

François Scheer is a graduate of the Institut d'Etudes Politiques of Paris and of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration. He was private secretary to the President of the European Parliament (1979/1981), then to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1981/1984). He served as the French Ambassador to Algeria (1984/1986) and the permanent French Ambassador to the European Communities, from 1986 to 1988 and then from 1992 to 1993. He was appointed Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1988. He was named a French Ambassador in 1993 and served as Ambassador to Germany until 1999. Since then Mr. Scheer is the adviser of the Chairperson of the Executive Board of AREVA.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address this world congress today as an introduction to the debates which follow on a subject that is constantly in the news. I am not going to talk about the situation of the international cable industry (I admit my complete ignorance of that particular subject) but about Europe, which occupied much of my time during my career as a diplomat before being able to enjoy my retirement.

A few weeks ago, the organizers of this event asked me to send them the text of my speech, standard practice for such an important congress. I was quite impolite (and apologize once again) and told them that it was absolutely impossible for me to do this since I had then no idea of what I could possibly say today, October 7, 2004 on my given subject of "European Enlargement". My aim was not to make myself seem more interesting than the next man or to suggest that I am on a totally different wavelength from the participants at this congress but simply to emphasize my desire to remain as up-to-date as possible on such a sensitive and sometimes baffling situation that can change dramatically from one day to the next. I could have erred on the side of caution and offered a technical exposé. I'm sure you would have found it much less interesting.

I would therefore like to try to talk about European enlargement without sounding like a diplomat. In terms of the history of Europe's construction, this latest enlargement offers good or not so good aspects. I will address it from two angles:

- 1) Firstly, what - in my opinion - are these good and not so good aspects?
- 2) Secondly, following this event, what is the future of European unity?

The accession of ten new members to the European Union is a momentous achievement for a number of reasons: firstly because it is the most visible sign and the clearest consequence of the end of the Cold War, which is a strong factor in the progress of European unity; secondly because for the first time in their history – and it has been a violent and troubled history - virtually all European nations are rallying around a shared project via peaceful and democratic means. There will be no more empires, conquests, unfair treaties or totalitarian governments, only a celebration of peace and freedom. Enlargement is a victory for Europe won against itself: vengeance therefore has no place, making this success even sweeter.

Indeed, at the end of the Second World War, the situation was a complex one: the victorious and vanquished faced each other, just as in 1918 when treaties were signed that would throw Europe and the rest of the world into turmoil twenty years later.

Would history repeat itself in 1945? It seemed inevitable at the time. But it was not to be for a number of reasons: Europe's nations were exhausted, victorious and vanquished alike, following the two conflicts that had ravaged the continent. There was a strong American presence this time, determined to prevent Europe from relapsing into more suicidal madness. The onset of the Cold War, which would force Western Europe to increase the pace of its recovery, while the Iron Curtain was being closed on Central and Eastern Europe and especially the beginnings of reconciliation

between two countries whose rivalry was a prominent factor in triggering the two world wars: France and Germany.

Don't think that I'm digressing with these remarks on events that took place 50 years ago. I simply wanted to show that there could be no European unity today if France and Germany had not decided to change the course of history at the end of the Second World War and move into a new era of friendship. This was by no means easy. It required a lot of courage and lucidity from the two countries' governments to make this first move. The two former adversaries took action in 1951 by signing the treaty that brought about the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community. While this treaty clearly served as a foundation for European unity, it was also the beginning of a Franco-German friendship that would last fifty years and which has guided and sometimes carried the process of European unity.

I lay great stress on this relationship because I have heard comments from some of the new European Union member states concerning what they perceive as a Franco-German stronghold on Europe. These countries should not forget that without the relationship between France and Germany they would not be members of the European Union as it stands, since it simply would not exist. Furthermore, I can even reassure them that Paris' and Berlin's partners in Europe, whether of 6, 12 or 15 member states have survived the so-called "diktats" of these two countries. While other countries have sometimes bemoaned the Franco-German way of doing things, which - I admit - has sometimes been clumsy they have very rarely regretted the initiatives taken by the two member states, which always contributed to the progress of unity.

Thus in terms of history the 2004 enlargement has been a momentous event. It has laid the foundation for a market that reaches to the very extremes of the continent, strengthening the economic power of a European Union that is capable of standing shoulder to shoulder with its main partners and competitors: the United States, Japan and - in the future - China and India.

So the enlargement has brought Europe economic power, but is this enough to call this year's enlargement a success?

Debate between EU member states (and France and Germany in particular) over the single market and whether it should be deepened or extended has always been intense. The French have traditionally supported the theory that the market should be consolidated before opening up to new members, while Germany has taken the opposite stance in favor of a speedy widening of community boundaries. An initial compromise enabled the EU to grow from 6 to 12 members over a period of 35 years. And now for mainly political reasons - that were nevertheless difficult to dispute - Europe has jumped from 12 to 25 members in just 10 years. It would be futile to suggest that this sudden expansion has had only a negligible impact; indeed, it has completely changed the face of Europe which no longer resembles the ambitious project embarked upon by its founding fathers.

The initial idea that sparked the formation of a European community was the creation of a single market. This has been achieved with 45 years of constant effort via the establishment of a common legislation and procedures of unparalleled amplitude and

complexity. This is the single market that the 10 new members have joined with so much conviction and with the desire to participate unreservedly. This situation will benefit them and could in the long term be equally advantageous across the board. I say "could" because it is not yet clear how financial efforts from the initial 15 members to help their new colleagues make up for lost time in terms of development will be recouped. The delocalization phenomenon, increased unemployment in the West, the challenge to the social economic model that has been the trademark of the European Union: all these have been cited as disadvantages of the enlargement.

It is of course too early to discern the veracity of these perceived threats. While growth in the European economy may be far slower than that of Japan or the United States - particularly in the Euro-zone - this is not due to enlargement but rather to Europe's slowness in terms of adapting its business structures to the challenges of a globalized economy, its perilously inadequate policy on research and innovation, its ageing population, the threats hanging over its social safety net and lastly to the lack of coordination between the economic and budgetary policies of those governments that chose to switch to the euro without abiding by the rules of the single currency. In 2000 the then 15 member states made much of an ambitious project to recover this lost ground in just 10 years by making Europe and I quote: "the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" (end of quote). This objective is known as the Lisbon Strategy. Today at the half-way point it has to be said that the competitive edge of the European economy has been dulled rather than sharpened. A factor that will not make it easier for the new member states to integrate into the single market.

However, unifying Europe was never just about constructing a single market. The aim was also to bring Europe's nations together to form a movement that would one day enable them to outgrow their status as an economic power and migrate to that of a global player, an entity with the ability to play its part in seeking and maintaining global balance all over the world. It matters little whether this ambition was named political Europe. Clearly, in order to fulfill this objective genuine economic governance is needed at least, in addition to guidelines for a common policy in terms of foreign affairs, security, justice and defense. This was the method chosen by the European Union, then made up of 12 member states. However, this method does not seem to be favored by the Union's newest members.

The war in Iraq has been a telling demonstration of this. A number of Central and Eastern European governments - NATO members long before they joined the EU - rushed to differentiate their stance from that of Chirac and Schroeder, who for entirely well-founded reasons of their own had publicly denounced the war and at the same time committed the fatal error of not consulting their fellow EU members in advance. These members of the European Union were joined by some of the Union's older members, who were only too happy to openly contest the so-called Paris-Berlin leadership.

Europe's credibility took a beating in the ensuing turmoil, the blame for which can be laid at many doors. It is understandable that post-iron curtain countries look first to the United States to ensure their safety: after all they owe the greater part of their freedom to this country's military power and the EU for them is not a strong enough

figure to defend them against what they consider to be a threat from neighboring Russia. History still weighs on them, whether from the recent past or further back, but their fears seem misplaced given the state of Russian society in 2004. Nevertheless, the European Union - as it is today - is still not close to becoming Washington's privileged partner in restoring global balance upset by the 9/11 tragedy and more recently by the Iraq war. Europe has neither the desire nor the political and diplomatic means, nor the military capacity to accomplish this and encouragement to achieve this is unlikely to come from the American camp. Their priority is fighting the war on terror and not to revitalize fading US-Europe solidarity, which has been built up over the last fifty years.

Neither has enlargement made debating the reform of certain European institutions any easier. 15 members negotiating between those in favor of maintaining the Union in its current state and those in favor of greater integration was already difficult. At 25, this is virtually impossible. The result is a draft treaty establishing a constitution for Europe that deserves better than the criticism it has received and that contains some useful advances. But we will have to accept that if the Constitution passes, it will provide the Union with institutions that reflect – and will probably continue to do so for a long time to come – a Europe that is struggling in terms of integration.

And all this at a time when the prospect of further enlargement is looming, a move altogether more complex than the recent operation. I am not referring to Bulgaria and Romania, whose membership would scarcely change the situation. It would - at the very most - add to the already considerable efforts that Europe is going to have to make to bring its new members up to speed.

Clearly I am referring to Turkey. 40 years ago Europe made a commitment one day to open its door to this country. Is it now ready to respect this commitment? Numerous are those who have risen against this for a multitude of reasons that I will now explore further. Firstly, Turkey is not part of Europe: while geographically speaking this is not a completely false statement it seems to me that a united Europe is above all an idea and not simply an area. Turkey is not yet a democracy: this may be true today but it is doing its best to change this. Moreover, a number of current Union member states did not boast a long history of democracy when they were negotiating their membership either. Turkey is a Muslim country: this does not seem to me to be the best argument to put forward against a country that 80 years ago dared to choose secularism despite its traditional Muslim background. Turkey has a population of 70 million whose numbers will no doubt swell even further before membership becomes a reality. Now here I admit that in terms of a European Union already bursting at the seams and with clear integration problems, this argument merits careful thought.

Finally it seems to me however that arguing for and against Turkey's membership of the European Union is the opportunity to debate a much larger issue: that of the future of European construction, incidentally a debate that should have been triggered by its most recent enlargement.

I've said it once and I'll say it again: a Europe of 25, 27 or 30 member states has no chance of becoming - unless in the very distant future - the united continent dreamed of by its founding countries. So, what is its best hope? Almost certainly an extended

single market, a zone of prosperity and growth where peace and freedom reign. A community of values rather than interests with a Charter of basic rights. We should not underestimate this outlook given the continent's history: a Europe at peace with itself would already constitute a revolution. But would this Europe be in a position to take on by itself the dangers that threaten global balance? I don't think so.

This is why in my opinion now is the time to think very seriously about the future of a continent that no longer really knows where it's heading. Today this is precisely what the Union lacks most: a clear vision of its long-term prospects. In 1950, the disciples of European unity knew exactly where they wanted to lead the continent's nations. If European governments want to stem the flood of euro-skepticism amongst their populations, wouldn't it be a good idea to clearly demonstrate their ambitions for Europe for the next fifty years? I think Europe needs to stand back and take a good look at itself, to adapt to the world as it is now at the beginning of the 21st century, but without losing its ambition. We should never forget that European unity was not a natural process. It was formed by men and women who believed that fate is what we make of it and that with a great deal of determination and courage we can write our own history, if we are motivated enough. It seems to me that European governments lack this drive, this determination and that this is where Europe's greatest danger really lies.

I am not an architect who builds cathedrals; I am simply a stonemason among many, working on the huge building site that is European unity. I do not therefore presume to tell you how to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of a community that has become too heavy to continue along the road to integration. I would simply state that several scenarios exist. I will now talk about my own personal preference.

Despite American ambition to hold the world's future in the palms of its hands, it is clear that groups or areas of influence are forming across the planet from North America to Asia. Europe can no longer afford to remain an onlooker of this new world order; it must return to its roots and reorganize its ranks around its natural home: the Mediterranean. The continent's geography, history and culture all point to this tactic, as much as economic logic and the threat to European security posed by consistent under-development on both sides of this sea, made worse by population explosion and the continuation of age-old conflicts. Why should the future of the European Union not be tied to the construction of a Euro-Mediterranean group? Let me reassure you that the idea is not to swell the already bursting ranks of the Union in its current state any further by welcoming all Mediterranean nations into its midst, but to make room for the commitments, needs and abilities of all in a union of states that would group together political, economical and social relationships. By constructing a political group that would not be based on the level of development of each of its participants, Europe could go beyond the fruitless debate over the Union's configuration: variable or at two speeds.

The desire harbored by certain governments to further integration within this enlarged community would be given a new lease of life. It would not necessarily apply to all European countries but would nevertheless enable this community to be gradually perceived as a key player on the international stage.

This approach would provide a useful framework for Europe to find solutions to problems that are a continuous source of turmoil within the Euro-Mediterranean zone. By this I mean economic and social development in North Africa and the Near East, without which furthering democracy in these countries would be impossible. We know from experience that democracy does not travel well! I am also referring here to the conflicts that have afflicted this region for far too long now, in Israel and Palestine in particular. It is entirely inconceivable that Europe does not have its part to play in solving conflicts that represent a direct threat to its countries, as well as to world peace.

Another priority of a European community rallied around the Mediterranean would also be to develop close relationships with the former Soviet republics. The continent's stability and that of continental Asia is also dependent on the standing of these countries. In this Post-Cold War era, the Union is without a doubt the partner Russia needs to continue the construction of a real democratic society and market economy.

Furthermore, this Euro-Mediterranean group would naturally be in a better position to address the increasingly serious situation of under-development on the African continent. Indeed, now that the Cold War is behind us, which other countries are in a position to focus on a struggling Africa, a continent whose poverty will sooner or later become a key factor of insecurity and destabilization in Europe?

Last but not least and without laying itself open to bad jokes about weakness or senility from across the Atlantic, a Euro-Mediterranean union could bring new meaning to the mission conferred on the United Nations 60 years ago: to maintain international peace, to found an international order based on multilateralism, refusal of power struggles, to focus on rights and emphasizing the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It may be that not all wars can be avoided, but the European community deeply believes that the best way to defend peace is not to make war. Perhaps this European community will one day have the necessary authority and credibility to invite the United States to rebuild lost solidarity, a relationship the world is clearly in need of.

I won't say any more. I have already stated that there are other possible scenarios for reshaping European unity, an ideal that won't come cheap. But whatever path Europe chooses to take, it seems to me that there are two essential conditions that need to be fulfilled:

- Firstly, Germany and France - in association and agreement with those member states that share their ambition - need to take up their former roles in devising and proposing to the rest a new vision for Europe in the 21st century.
- Secondly, the Union's institutional provisions, regardless of treaties and rulings in force (Treaty of Nice, the European constitution) should not hinder the reconstruction of European society or the strengthening of unity on the continent. If this is the case, then those countries determined to move forward in this vein will be left no other solution than to continue building a united Europe on other foundations.

I thank you for your attention.