

Ceremony for the Signature of the Treaty of Lisbon  
Speech from the President of the European Council

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Lisbon, 13 December 2007

Honourable Heads of State and of Government, dear colleagues

Mr. President of the European Parliament

Mr. President of the European Commission

Ministers for Foreign Affairs

Mr. President of the Assembly of the Republic

Dear colleagues from the Government and dear Luís Amado, Minister of  
State and Foreign Affairs

Mr. Mayor of Lisbon Town Hall

Distinguished guests

Today we sign the Treaty of Lisbon. And the idea that motivates us in this ceremony for the signature is quite simple: to advance the European project. A project that has always been generous in its purposes and ambitious in its objectives. A project that has proven to be at the service of peace, development and the affirmation of the values we share.

It was this project of European construction that many generations dreamed of and others before us erected, with a sense and a vision of the future. But it is this project that we want, today, to take further, reinforce and develop. And that is what the people of Europe, those we represent here, expect from us.

Today we need a stronger Union. Stronger to respond to the longings of the European citizens, to promote the European economy and defend European

values. But a more ambitious Europe is also the most important contribution we can give to a better world.

Perhaps History will not mention the words that will be uttered in this ceremony. But I am certain of one thing: what we are doing here is already part of History. History will remember this day as a day when new paths of hope were opened to the European ideal.

With the Treaty of Lisbon Europe finally overcomes the political and institutional impasse that limited its capacity to act during the last few years. The overcoming of that impasse started when, facing doubts and uncertainties, the Trio of Presidencies – German, Portuguese and Slovenian – undertook as a priority the elaboration of a new Treaty.

It is only right to recognise, also, that this process was successful just because, at the right time, relied on the engagement of Chancellor Angela Merkel, who reached a mandate without which it would not have been possible to follow through this path.

During all this process we could rely on the European Commission. I wish to thank the President of the Commission, Mr. Durão Barroso, all the help he gave the Portuguese presidency to conclude this Treaty.

I also thank the President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering and the Parliamentary Groups the support they always gave us during the difficult negotiations that preceded this agreement.

But what truly brought about the achieved result in the Lisbon Summit, what really carried us to the Treaty we are signing here today, was the

political will of all the European leaders and the trust they always displayed in the development of the European project.

The Treaty of Lisbon meets a central challenge. The challenge of European citizenship. Yesterday, in Strasbourg, the Council, the Commission and the Parliament adopted the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. This Treaty of Lisbon recognises the full legal value of this Charter. Here we reaffirm our compromise with the identity values of the European project. Democratic legality, respect for fundamental rights, communitarian freedoms, equal opportunities, solidarity, access to justice, respect for the pluralism and diversity of our societies. These were the values that inspired the founding fathers of the European project and that we proudly reaffirm here today.

The European project is a project founded on the equality among States, mutual respect, close cooperation and tolerance. The European project does not eliminate nor minimise national identities, nor the States' specific interests; rather, it offers a multilateral framework of regulation from which benefits can be drawn for the whole and for each of the parts that participate in the project. This is the reason why the project of the European political and economic Union is still a source of inspiration for other continents and a reference guide for a world in need of institutions, principles and rules that are capable of contributing for a regulation on a global scale.

But this Treaty also meets the challenge of improving efficiency in the decision process. During these fifty years, we always knew that the European project becomes legitimate through its results. And only a Europe that is capable of deciding will be a Europe that is capable of getting

results. In a world of accelerated change, in a global economy that is ever more demanding, it is absolutely imperative and urgent to adopt institutional reforms that allow Europe to meet the challenges it is facing.

Europe wants to be an open economy, which faces the challenge of global competitiveness. Which bets on Europeans' qualifications, research and innovation. Which bets on an economic growth that creates jobs and is friendly to the environment and also bets on a more efficient energy policy that is capable of fighting against climate change.

In all these areas the Treaty of Lisbon speeds up the decision processes, increases the number of decisions by qualified majority, extends the conditions of democratic participation in the European Parliament, reinforces the role of our national parliaments and safeguards the central position of the European Commission and the European judicial system.

But the Treaty of Lisbon also defines a new institutional architecture: the new permanent president of the European Council; the High Representative for external affairs and defence; the new composition of the Commission and the reinforcement of its democratic legitimacy; the new system of weighting of votes in the Council. These changes represent a new equilibrium among States and offer an improvement in the functioning of the institutions, guaranteeing new conditions for Europe to assert its voice, its economy and its values.

The Treaty of Lisbon includes the best in the tradition and heritage of the European project but is not a Treaty for the past; it is a Treaty for the future. It is a Treaty for the construction of a more modern, efficient and democratic Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen

For us Portuguese, this ceremony represents a return to the Jerónimos Monastery. It was here that, in 1985, Portugal signed the Accession Treaty to the European project. It was here that Portugal became a part of the European family.

I want you to know that it is an honour for my country the fact that it is precisely here, in the same place, that we sign the new Treaty for the future of Europe. And it is an even greater honour the fact that this Treaty shall be known by the name of Lisbon, a city where the 27 Member States sealed their agreement.

Lisbon has always been a city of openness and a meeting point. Its history is also the history of the discoveries, which this moment evokes. With the Treaty of Lisbon this city will also be linked to the history of the European construction.

This Treaty, however, is not the end of History. There will always be more History to be written. But this Treaty is a new moment in the European adventure and of the European future. And we face this future with the same spirit we always had: certain of our values, confident in our project, strengthened in our Union.

Thank you.