

(Only the spoken word prevails)



**Wilfried Martens**

**President of the European People's party**

**EPP-ED European Evening**

**Brussels, Concert Noble, 4 March 2008 19h00**

**“Europa - quo vadis ?”**

Dear Presidents,  
Dear Hans-Gert and José Manuel, Dear Joseph,  
Dear colleagues and friends,

Leadership is a precondition of successful politics. The politicians who have made history are those who showed integrity and an iron will in their determination to resolve major problems. Prominent among them in the recent past has been Helmut Kohl, who reunited Germany and thus made it possible to end the East-West division of Europe.

So, are decisiveness and leadership as fundamental on a European level as they are in national politics ? Yes, most certainly. The European project would have been unimaginable without the vision and greatness of Europe's Christian Democratic founders Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and Alcide de Gasperi.

Without vision, it would have been unthinkable to escape the bitter legacy of two world wars and millions upon millions of deaths. Replacing hatred and prejudices with cooperation and confidence-building. For more than half a century, this model of peaceful conflict resolution through integration has been successful. I believe that by uniting our continent, the European Union has been able to enlarge the area of peace and stability, while safeguarding democratic society and market economies in Central

**and Eastern Europe. It was the prospect of EU membership that helped to transform those formerly communist countries.**

**Despite these achievements, perceptions of the EU are more and more characterized by national egotism. We increasingly find national politics blaming Europe for problems that have arisen from their own unwillingness to reform social and economic systems. Instead of recognizing the European Union as the right answer to the pressures and requirements of our globalizing world, the EU is more often presented as the problem. All the economic indicators show that our economies in Europe have profited enormously from the EU's open markets. Where would our economies be today without the impetus of the liberalization of telecommunications, electricity, air traffic and many other markets?**

**Instead of simply defending national interests, leading politicians of EU nations would do better to make progress in those areas that need to be dealt with at a European level. Does anyone in Europe believe that alone our nation states are capable of defending themselves against global terrorist networks? Or dealing with climate change? Or ensuring their own future energy security?**

**Again, this takes leadership, vision and solidarity.**

**In our globalized world with new economic superpowers as China, India and Brazil the only option is to turn to the European Union to assure our economic future, our European identity, our democratic system, the rule of law, the respect and the protection of minorities, our social system and the diversity of cultures and languages.**

**Dear friends,**

**Especially in a globalized world we need to base our policies on values. I am particularly happy that our Group is taking the lead inspired by this initiative of Jaime Mayor Oreja.**

**There are a number of enormous challenges ahead. Combatting Climate Change will certainly be the most important concern for future generations as Europe's demographic survival; a prosperous Europe through an economy with renewed vigor, better cohesion and chances for everybody; Europe, a safer place through combating terrorism and crime; Europe, a power in the world with a common voice and a model for cooperation.**

**We look forward to cooperating with our EPP-ED Group. I have no doubt that we will remain the largest political force in the European Union.**

**Dear friends,**

**Friendship means also to be loyal. We often call this solidarity. We may sometimes have differences but when needed friends stand together for shared ideals of freedom and democracy, principles and values – for the common good. In our unstable and dangerous world we need unrelenting determination. Europe must hold the political power to engage with and reap the benefits of globalization, while respecting our cultural diversities. Let us not refrain from our ambition and duties. I ask you to engage yourself fully with willpower, integrity and solidarity.**

**Thank you.**

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