

THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION

THE CHAIRMAN

ADDRESS

BY MR VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING

CHAIRMAN OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION

STUTTGART – 5 May 2002

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I should like to thank Minister-President Teufel very much for his invitation to Stuttgart. I was very glad to accept.

I am well acquainted with your land, as I spent some time in the Black Forest and on the shores of Lake Constance at the end of the war. And, when I was a member of the European Parliament, I paid a three-day private visit each summer to your region.

Baden-Württemberg lies at the heart of Europe. In Baden-Württemberg, you have always been convinced of the advantages of European integration. You have always played a major role in Franco-German understanding over the past few decades, not least as evidenced by your strong commitment to the teaching of French in your schools. And Franco-German cooperation will continue to be of central importance, particularly in an enlarged Union. Chancellor Schröder emphasised this only a few weeks ago in Freiburg, not far from here.

These, Minister-President, are just some of the reasons why your contribution to our work in the Convention is so important.

The European Union is today faced with two problems:

- its decision-making mechanisms, designed for six States, have already reached their limits and no longer function satisfactorily, by which I mean in a way which is effective, comprehensible to public opinion and democratic.

- at the same time it finds itself facing the biggest enlargement in its history, because despite never having taken in more than three new members at one time it will very probably have ten more by 2004.

This extensive enlargement amounts to a geopolitical shift in Europe. Its merit is to bring about the political unification of the European continent, something which, contrary to some political oversimplifications, has never happened before in the course of history. This will change our Union.

The European Convention is a precursor in this respect. We are already working within the context of an enlarged Europe, since the candidate countries take part in all our discussions!

Without a thorough overhaul, this enlarged Union will be unable to function satisfactorily.

To undertake this overhaul, Europe's decision-makers meeting in Laeken convened our Convention, the first opportunity since the Messina Conference in 1955 to conduct an in-depth reflection on the future of the European Union – and open, moreover, to the public. I shall see to that personally. Civil society, public opinion and all of you are invited to take an active part in it.

In this connection, Germany's contribution is of major importance for the success of the Convention.

Why?

- The public debate in Europe on the future of the Union began in Germany. The speech given by Joschka Fischer in Berlin two years ago and President Rau's speech to the European Parliament a year later contributed much to the debate.
- The importance of Germany's experience. Germany – as a Federal State – has 50 years of political experience with powers divided among several levels. This experience could be very useful to us.
- And of course, the importance of Germany in the Union's economic and financial life.



One of the European Convention's fundamental tasks will in fact be to give a clearer answer to the question "*who does what in Europe?*". How is competence divided between the European Union and the Member States? The personal participation of Minister-President Teufel is thus crucial to the success of our enterprise, and I have listened with especial interest to the remarks he has already made.

Some lessons can already be drawn from the Convention's preliminary debates:

- We have received no requests for the Union to assume new competences in the national life of the Member States.

- However, many members of the Convention have voiced the need to strengthen the common external policy, that is to say the influence and authority of Europe at world level. I shall return to this point in greater detail later.

- Many have also insisted on the need for increased European cross-border action in the sensitive areas of security policy and justice. They feel that the Union should be able to take more effective action, notably against terrorism, large-scale organised crime, illegal immigration, drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings – women and children. You yourself, Minister-President, have emphasised these points.

- The question of better economic policy (and, for some, social policy) coordination to bolster monetary union has also been raised.

It has also emerged clearly that certain areas should continue to be the responsibility of the Member States, primarily:

- Member States' internal organisation,
- schools, vocational training and higher education,
- the running of public services,
- social and health protection and pension schemes,

- culture,
- local environmental protection and regional planning,
- and finally, the military commitment. It goes without saying that decisions to engage or not to engage our national armies in external missions – even if taken in future as part of a common policy – must remain the responsibility of the Member States.

We have also noted that we must be clearer about what we want Europe to do.

It is not because a problem arises in all or most of the countries of the European Union, such as for example unemployment, that the European Union needs to be given specific competence to deal with such problems at European level, while the appropriate competence remains at national level and the social partners refuse to be divested of it.

In these areas, we need to envisage how to enhance coordination – sometimes even cooperation – between the Member States. But it is unwise, and counter-productive, to create political expectations in areas where there is no agreement to assign competence at European level.

From these initial discussions I draw the following guidelines, which of course remain provisional:

- The European Union must concentrate its efforts on its key areas of competence.
- The division of competence between the European level and the Member States must be improved and clarified, in the framework of the Treaties.
- It must be made quite clear that all competence not specifically assigned to the Union remains the competence of the Member States.

- Competence must be exercised in strict yet objective compliance with the principle of subsidiarity.

The concept of subsidiarity has been gaining ground. This idea, dear to Germany's Länder, has become a general point of reference for the European Parliament and the Convention. A large majority of the Convention's members have spoken in favour of introducing effective means of monitoring the delimitation of competence, and the application of the subsidiarity principle, expressing the wish, more often than not, for the participation of national parliaments. The Convention will be called upon to make a more detailed study of this question, which will be considered by a working party, and to submit substantive proposals on this point.



At the next session of the Convention, we shall be dealing with the question "*Who decides on what in the European Union?*". In other words, how is competence exercised within the European Union?

Preliminary studies reveal singular confusion, not to say great disarray.

We have moved well away since the 1980's from the relatively simple rules laid down by the Treaty of Rome.

Here in Germany you are aware of the rules establishing relations between the Bundestag, the Bundesrat and the Government. Even though they are complex, these rules instill the public with confidence.

But did you know that, for the adoption of a decision by the Council and the European Parliament in the European Union, there are nine different procedures, depending on the subject involved? This is a situation which is incomprehensible, both to policy-makers and to the man in the street.

For our Convention, this constitutes a vast area to be cleared.

We shall set about the task with determination, and we are counting on your contribution, Mr Teufel!



I should like to return now to the very important question of the common external policy. Our discussions have shown, and opinion polls confirm it, that there is a widespread expectation that Europe should be not only an economic power but also a political power able to carry on a dialogue with the greatest world powers on equal terms, and with the means to act to assert its values, ensure its security and play an active role in maintaining international peace.

Politically, the Europe of today is too weak. This weakness is not good either for Europe or for the others.

It is too weak to play the role of influential ally. It is too weak to act in the world to secure respect for the principles of humanism and tolerance that appear in its charter of fundamental rights. This has recently been borne out, especially in the Middle East.

It is essential in my opinion that the Convention should lead to a concrete proposal for a common external policy that is clearly perceived by international opinion. In that proposal we shall need to answer three questions:

- What mechanism must be put in place to enable Europe to speak in future with a single voice?

- What arrangement is necessary to enable a common European position to be prepared swiftly and effectively?

- What means of influence and action are the Member States prepared to make available to the Union for this common policy?

In answering these questions, let us not overlook the progress that we have made over the past few years.

The Union has taken important decisions in setting up a rapid reaction force.

The European Union and the Member States are present in all international efforts, including the military efforts in the Balkans. The Union exercises considerable influence there. This has been ascertained over the past few years both in Macedonia and on the question of relations between Serbia and Montenegro. In both cases the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Mr Javier Solana, has played a positive role.

Collectively and individually, the Union and the Member States have considerable means at their disposal. Rarely, however, are they capable of placing all their means, be they diplomatic, economic or military, at the disposal of a coherent and jointly executed policy.

This will take some time, since is it conceivable that, for example, national diplomatic services can be replaced by a single European service? In this matter, as in all the others, we shall need to find imaginative solutions, in

order to pool all of the Member States' existing assets in the service of a European policy.

The decision to produce together a joint military transport 'plane is thus an important step in the right direction. If we cannot combine our efforts, we will spread our resources too thinly and be incapable of meeting current requirements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, I should like to make an appeal to you!

Europe cannot be built without the active, determined and patient participation of the German people.

I believe I know your people well, having shared their culture and language as a young child.

I do not ask you to give up your German identity, any more than we would ask this of the French, the Italians or the Swedes.

But what I ask is that you should feel as much European as German – German by history and culture, European in terms of the Continental dimension and in terms of the future.

In coming to Stuttgart, I have come to seek your support, to ask you all – from the Minister-President down to the ordinary citizens of Baden-Württemberg – to help us build the Europe of our dreams!
