

*Eurocentrum*

*Praha*

*4<sup>th</sup> October 2007*

*Portuguese Presidency of the European Union*

*A stronger Europe for a better world*

“A stronger Europe for a better world” is the motto of the current Portuguese Presidency.

We wanted to make clear from the start that the Presidency’s first objective is the reinforcement of our common European endeavour – which includes today 27 sovereign States – in order to make a significant contribution for a world of peace and security, prosperity and development, and where our common values are equally shared and valued by other peoples in different continents.

For this aim to be achievable the PP has to pursue internal and external actions, which are clearly interconnected. As a consequence, it is essential – first and foremost – to finalize very quickly the institutional reform and approve a new Treaty that ensures the efficiency of the Union, its internal cohesion and its decision making process, but also its capacity to act externally.

We want the EU to be able to face up to global challenges, build up new bridges of dialogue and speak with one voice – a voice which should be audible and decisive in these times of change and uncertainty.

In a word, we want Europe to adapt as quickly as possible to the new context of today's world.

The Union has a global responsibility to live up to.

And the International Community expects us to act significantly in that respect.

That is why the PP priorities – although complex and diversified – may be very easily understood as they follow always this same logic: we need a stronger Union to face a wide range of fundamental issues: climate change, energy supplies, jobs and sustainable growth, migrations and poverty, as well as organized crime and terrorism.

From a formal point of view, the PP priorities revolve around three main chapters:

- 1- The reform of the Treaties;
- 2- An agenda for a modern and competitive European economy, without losing our social standards;
- 3- And finally the strengthening of EU external relations and its role in the world.

## *2. The reform of the Treaties*

The first priority of the PP is clearly that of picking up the Treaty reform process. Without achieving this main objective, other endeavours are actually impossible to pursue.

Based on the mandate agreed in June by the European Council which is clear and precise (Portugal always considered this a condition to go further) an Inter-governmental Conference was convened in July with the purpose of redrafting the text for the institutional reform.

If agreed – by the informal Council in October – and then adopted – by the European Council in December – this draft will become the European Reform Treaty.

From the outset, we have to recognize a very significant change: the nature of the Treaty to be negotiated is no longer a Constitution for Europe, but an instrument of international law – indeed, the idea of a fundamental text was abandoned and various constitutional elements have been dropped in favour of a return to the tradition of amending existing Treaties.

It is also important to stress other relevant changes that were introduced and provisions that are present in the draft text:

- The previously agreed institutional balance will be maintained, with changes only to the date when the so-called double-majority weighting of votes in the Council comes into force (which is postponed to 2014, with a transition period until 2017);
- The European Union pillar structure will be abolished and a single legal personality will be established (which is a noteworthy simplification and one of the most significant provisions of the treaty);
- The Common Foreign and Security Policy maintains its own decision making process (which means that unanimity remains untouched in matters related to Foreign Affairs). The mechanism of structured co-operation on Defence will continue to be developed on the same grounds as before and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (no longer a Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union) will become Vice President of the European Commission with responsibility to chair the Council of Foreign Ministers (called GAERC);
- In relation to European citizenship, the mandate adopted retains the recognition of the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights as legally binding, with the exception of its jurisdiction in the United Kingdom (by adopting a legally binding Declaration of Fundamental Rights that puts civil and political rights on an equal footing, including economic, social and cultural rights, we are not only strengthening the basis of European citizenship but also reasserting

our civilisational values, which is common to the identity of all Europeans;

- It is also important to highlight a very relevant innovation – which is in part due to Czech proposals and to a firm engagement of a number of other partners: (I'm referring to: ) **the strengthening of the role of National Parliaments in their control of European institutions' respect for the principle of subsidiarity.** This is a preventive mechanism that foresees that when half of National Parliaments raise objections to a Commission initiative on the grounds of violating the principle of subsidiarity, the Council and the European Parliament are obliged to deliberate specifically on the maintenance or withdrawal of this proposal. The National Parliaments will be strengthened by the new treaty.

### ***3. An agenda for a modern European economy and society***

The Reform Treaty is crucial to the EU, as I said, but other important tasks await us. Europe needs to invest much more its human capacities, in the potential of its intelligence, knowledge and innovation.

This is the main purpose of the Lisbon Strategy (launched under the second PP in the year 2000). Of course the Lisbon Strategy did not create millions of jobs as it was hoped and stated in its original agenda; it certainly did not ensure that the European economic block could reach the highest level of competitiveness in the world by the year 2010, as foreseen when the Strategy was launched.

So, probably the Lisbon Strategy deserves all the criticism that is currently thrown at it by the public!

From my part I will recall that the Lisbon Strategy is not a panacea – a universal remedy – for the economic shortages of our times. It is more of a course of action, a lengthy process that will not bear fruit in a couple of years. Any investment needs time to become productive. This principle is even truer when we invest in the human factor, education and innovation, changing mentalities, fighting against the use of bureaucracy and reforming the public administration.

That is why our concern will be centred on preparations for a new cycle of the Lisbon Strategy, to be launched in spring 2008, under the next Presidency. Work is now under way in close coordination with Slovenia which will hold the ultimate responsibility for this exercise.

But as we prepare this new cycle, we will maintain the balance between the three components on that Agenda: economic, social and environmental.

We intend to **give the social dimension of the “Lisbon Strategy” the relevance and visibility it deserves**. Ten years after the launch of the “European Employment Strategy”, the time has come for further debate on the best ways to **coordinate employment policies with a view to fostering the creation of sustainable work posts in the current context of global competition**.

This line of action of the Portuguese presidency will be closely articulated with the qualification of human resources, the conciliation of work and family life, the fight against poverty and also with the debate on the so-called “**flexisecurity**” which is an important part of the European agenda.

This debate should be guided by the search for comprehensive and balanced solutions, translated into general and common principles at European level, which take into account the diversity of the social realities in different member states of the EU.

Furthermore, **we will launch the debate on a new technological action plan regarding energy, focusing especially on energy efficiency.**

We will highlight the role of bio-fuels, in particular in the framework of the relationship we wish to enhance between the European Union and Brazil. Equally, we will go forward with preparations of the EU’s position in the conference to debate the **Post-Kyoto reference framework.**

We shall also place the questions of **water shortage** and **drought** situations on the European agenda and re-launch the debate on the foundations for an effective **European maritime policy.**

The **strengthening of police and judicial cooperation in the fight against terrorism and organized crime** is also on our agenda. But we cannot allow security demands to detract from openness and tolerance in our societies.

We will focus our efforts on border security, asylum and migrations, as managing these issues is a common challenge facing the EU as whole.

The PP will implement a Global Approach to Migration and intends to intensify the partnership between the EU and countries of transit and origin of migratory flows.

Allow me a word of pride on account of a Portuguese proposal – which is also very relevant to Czech citizens and shows the importance my country attaches to the free movement of people in Europe: I am referring to the SISone4ALL project, conceived by a Portuguese company of software and the Foreign and Border Department (Home Affairs) which allows access to the Schengen Information System, enabling the abolition of borders controls in the six new member states that will enter the Schengen Area in January 2008.

#### *4. Strengthening European external relations*

**In the second half of 2007 unavoidable decisions must be taken about delicate questions on the global agenda:** the future of Kosovo and Western Balkans stability, Iran's nuclear dossier; Iraq, the MEPP and Lebanon, the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, human rights concerns in a number of regions, proliferation of WMD... The list could go on indefinitely.

Portugal will also hold, on behalf of the Union, **particularly relevant bilateral Summits with India, China, Russia and the Ukraine.**

**But there are three initiatives in the field of European foreign policy where the Portuguese presidency wants to leave its mark:**

- **The Summit with Brazil**, which took place in Lisbon on July 4;
- **The Mediterranean**, where we consider that the border line between war and peace will lie in the near future;
- **The Summit with Africa**, of great importance after 7 years of absence of formal dialogue.

The PP began with a completely new initiative: **the EU-Brazil summit**.

This Summit will bring greater coherence to Europe's relations with the emerging powers, enriching European foreign policy and fostering a formal relationship with a major player within the MERCOSUL and a region that shares fundamental values with Europe.

Cooperation with the South in the framework of the Barcelona Process and the New Neighbourhood Policy is another of our priorities, through the **EUROMED Conferences** which will emphasize the importance given to **re-launching an in-depth policy debate with our partners on the southern margins of the Mediterranean, in particular on the subject of development and migration**.

Lastly, I would like to draw attention to the EU-Africa Summit – scheduled the 8 and 9 December 2007, in Lisbon. As you know very complex political and protocol issues are still at stake. Europe has not had a structured institutional dialogue with Africa for seven years – an incomprehensible flaw in European foreign policy.

Portugal was already central to the first, and last, Summit in Cairo in the year 2000. We want yet again to be engaged in the foundation for a new

strategic partnership between Europe and Africa, aimed at sustainable development, peace and security on both continents, combating endemic diseases and a balanced and mutually advantageous management of migratory flows.

***5. CONCLUSION: building consensus for the European project to move forward***

We are aware of the fact that we are holding the EU Presidency at a delicate moment in the international sphere and that there have been deadlocks and bottlenecks in Europe for far too long.

Presidencies in themselves do not resolve all the problems. But they can make a difference if they pursue clear goals and if they manage to foster the indispensable consensus between all member states so that the European project can move forward.

We are firmly resolved to do this.

We will be permanently working with the European Parliament and we are counting on close cooperation from the Commission.

No efforts shall be spared to consult regularly with our European partners on all issues and we count on their determination and commitment to move forward.

Consensus is the key word in European business and I am confident that the PP will be successful in fulfilling a significant number of its priorities, for we are following a line of action which should benefit all of us.