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**Political Foundations in Democracy
Promotion, Development Cooperation and
Political Dialogue**

**European Network of Political Foundations
Brussels, 13 November 2008**

Dear chairman Vogel, dear excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Let me thank you for the invitation from the European Network of Political Foundations for taking part in this debate on democracy, development and political dialogue. You will understand in a pre-election year – I mean pre-election for the European Parliament - that I think you are very wise to draw on major contributions from distinguished representatives from political forces across the European democratic spectrum.

And this is indeed a subject that is very dear, very close to my heart namely the promotion and consolidation of democracy. I will come back later to these personal experiences I had also with some of the political foundations represented here.

But you will forgive me if I begin with some fundamentals. Democracy is the central concept in political thought in Europe. It is the expression of will. It cannot be imposed. It must be gained. And active efforts are needed to deepen it and to maintain democracy.

Democracy lies at the heart of open societies, where all fundamental rights and freedoms are effectively upheld in accordance with the rule of law. Moreover, democracy also goes hand in hand with open economies based on open trade and investment at home and abroad. Democracies are also the political regimes that promote social inclusion and the very idea of social justice and solidarity.

In short, societies and economies that make exchanges with other peoples and cultures are an engine for development and prosperity. And openness has always been a condition of our prosperity and cultural and economic dynamism, and also a factor in Europeans' achievements. It was Europe that gave birth to the very concept of the "open society". The open society is a society of democracy and human rights, a transparent, free and pluralist society.

But when we speak about openness we should also not forget that it is not only about our political regimes but also openness to others, openness to other cultures and other ways of thinking. The Europe of the 21 Century also shall not forget the need to

deepen freedoms in Europe, namely what we call now the fifth freedom, the free movement of knowledge. This is the freedom that we should add to the four freedoms of movement provided for in the Treaty of Rome over 50 years ago.

This openness, I believe, lies at the heart of the European project.

In the last 30 years, democracy has advanced as never before – in southern Europe, in Latin America, in Central-Eastern Europe, in Africa, and last but not least now we see other possibilities for consolidating a global governance.. But there is still a lot of work to be done – in the Middle East, in many parts of Asia and Africa.

Even where democracy has made gains, building democracy and consolidation democracy is a complex business, very complex – holding free and fair elections, developing institutional and legislative reform, establishing human rights, ensuring an independent judiciary and independent media, carrying the fight against corruption. Last but not least educating citizens in the broadest sense about the importance of politics and political systems. Sometimes democracy's greatest advocates are the slowest to realise what a complex and sometime fragile process it is to create a real democracy. Because democracy is above all a matter of political culture. It is not just a question of engineering.

So democracy building is a fundamentally important task, both within a political community, and internationally, to help others benefit from the same right to exercise the rights of citizenship in a framework of pluralism.

What does the European Union bring to this? Since democracy was invented in Athens some 25 centuries ago, our roadmap to democracy in Europe and now in the EU has involved many twists and turns, some dangerous roads, and a few dead-ends. And of course the speed of our European journey has accelerated dramatically over the last 50 years, with the European Community, the European Union acting as a major catalyst for peace and democracy, with fundamental values such as human rights and the rule of law, freedom, solidarity and the respect for diversity established as the building blocks of European integration.

Today we stand, frankly rather proudly, as a Union of citizens, a Union of 27 Member States who have decided together, of their own free will, to build a common future together, based on the rule of law, an internal market, and the gradual abolition of internal borders.

I don't know any other experiment in human history so advanced in terms of political integration and democracy.

Of course, we would also like to go further, in the Lisbon Treaty and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which indeed represents further advances in civil liberties and fundamental rights. I remain hopeful – and determined – that we will secure the Lisbon Treaty before too long.

What we have done for ourselves in terms of bringing democracy to millions and millions of people, we also wish to bring to others. The European Union continues to exert a major force for democratic and economic change in neighbouring countries, not only the candidate countries but also in Eastern Europe and in the Mediterranean area. I am proud to be told, as I travel throughout the world, that the EU is considered a model of economic and political integration. It is indeed a very important inspiring force for democracy in many parts of the world. Many countries, like my own country a few short decades ago, see Europe as opening their own doors to freedom and democracy.

My political generation, in my country - but I think I can say the same for Spain, for Greece and I can say the same for the most recent members of the European Union: We make the equation Democracy and Europe, freedom and Europe. And that was the fundamental reason - the real reason - why we wanted to join Europe. Europe stood for democracy and freedom.

Of course in Europe you should not be arguing that we have a monopoly of democratic virtue or that we can serve as some kind of automatic template. It is true to say nevertheless that Europe is a kind of laboratory based on the rule of law, the pooling of sovereignty, the respect for diversity. Without arrogance, we have to be ready to show the way. Not to impose but to propose to the rest of the world the

values of freedom, solidarity and democracy. And we have indeed a very important – to use a well known expression - transformational power also outside our borders.

But we have to go beyond simply being a relatively good example. That is why the Commission employs a number of instruments to promote democratisation in third countries. And this is indeed a permanent element of our external relations agenda.

- Through political dialogue, we encourage partner countries to integrate human rights and democratic principles as part of the development plans. Indeed, we have "mainstreamed" democratic principles in all our development instruments. It has to be done in an intelligent, articulated way but it should always be done.
- Through our financial and technical assistance programmes, we promote democracy by supporting free and fair elections; In almost all critical political election processes in the world we find a European Union electoral observation mission. And indeed we are setting the standards for free and fair elections in the world. We are also promoting democracy by strengthening the capacities of parliaments; by pushing for an independent and professional media, and by encouraging pluralistic political systems. Indeed, EU financial assistance in this area is growing – in 2006, governance and support for economic and institutional reforms is the single most important area of European Union development cooperation, amounting to nearly 1.5 billion euros.

And I believe that when we are financing democracy beyond our borders we are not only defending our values and promoting these values but we are also defending our interests. By investing in democracy of our neighbours, we are investing in their openness. Their development. Their long term stability. And from a European perspective, we reduce the costs of social problems, the risk of wars, the risk of political or religious radicalisation. The return on investing in democracy comes in the form of a peace dividend.

And finally, what is the policy framework within which we are promoting democracy? In my view, it is dominated by the need to respond to globalization. Thank you chairman Vogel for quoting what I have said on globalisation in an important German newspaper. In fact I believe this is the agenda for the 21 century. And I believe that no one is better prepared to shape globalisation than Europe with its values, with its unique experience of supernational rules and supranational principles. And I think we should be proud of it. When we are welcoming a new American administration we should take into consideration that the good news about this new administration is that they are closer to our European model and our European values. When our American friends now are ready to embrace real commitment to fight climate change - this is exactly what we have been saying and promoting for some time. When our American partners are saying they want to engage more in a multilateral world this is exactly what the European Union has been saying and promoting for some time. When our American partners now are saying they should put some rules in a financially unpredictable and sometimes unregulated market - this is exactly what the European Union has been supporting for some time. We are for free markets but as I said in Camp David some days ago with President Sarkozy: open societies need the rule of law, open markets also need the rules of transparency, integrity and accountability. When our American friends now are saying that they should find ways of promoting public rules and some public systems in terms of social security and public education – this is exactly what we Europeans have been doing at least since the end of the Second World War with the development of a social market economy. So I think we should be proud of the contribution that the European Union, the European experience, the European member states, the European democratic forces have been doing for these values and the example we are setting for the rest of the world. That is why I really believe that we are in a turning point in world's history. This financial crisis is opening minds, is opening minds for the need to come with global solutions. And hopefully those global solutions will not only be about the financial markets but will link the financial markets to the economy as a whole to global prosperity. Global prosperity, it means global trade, the Doha trade and development agenda, it means the Millennium Development Goals. I mean it is unthinkable, it is not possible that world leaders meet to discuss financial markets and they do not think about those people who are starving in the world, who don't have enough food to eat or that do not have enough clean water to drink. And when we think about global

prosperity we have to see the conditions of survival and quality of life on our planet. That is why we need to address the issue of climate change. It is a real threat to the future generations, a real threat to life on our planet, and also the issue of energy security. So we have here a great moment, a defining moment for the world. And with our experience in Europe of supranational institutions, supranational compromises, supranational negotiation setting transnational principles I think we can give a great contribution to this new order. And democracy of course is part of it because democratic societies are better prepared to shape this order if you want this order to be the order for a more decent world.

The final aspect I wanted to touch on concerns your role, the role of political foundations. The importance of foundations such as the ones assembled in the European Network of political Foundations who are doing such a great job in promoting the whole cause of democracy.

Let me make a personal remark. As you have said – chairman Vogel, in my generation we had the privilege to see the coming down of a totalitarian regime that had lasted for 48 years. And my generation was the first generation – I was 18 at that moment – when democracy was born. It is the best political course you can have in life. Because it was after 48 years of dictatorship the task of creating a democracy. And in that task and I want to say it because I never forget it and I say it very often: the German political foundations had a very important role. And in Portugal we will never forget it. The different political foundations from different political parties were so important in shaping the future political system of Portugal. And I know to some extent the same role was performed in Spain and in Greece. There are some scholarly works about it that say that the support of Germany to the transition to democracy in Southern Europe was with Ostpolitik the most important foreign policy of Germany after the World War. So it should be recognised. That is why I know by experience the importance of the role of your foundations, the political foundations, to promote the emergence of democracies and their consolidation : of course in Europe, in some countries in Europe that are not yet democracies but also in the Mediterranean area, in Latin America, in Africa, in Asia. So it is indeed a huge task you have. And I consider the political foundations, the European Political Foundations part of the soft power of Europe. And Europe has this soft power. By its

own example it can help the consolidation of democracy. According to another American scholar – not the one who created the concept of soft power – according to another one it was precisely this third wave of democratisation in Southern Europe that had a major impact in the transformation of Latin America. The old Latin America of military rule was inspired by the transitions to democracy in Spain and Portugal. And it had afterwards a very important feedback effect also in other parts of the world, not at least in Central Eastern Europe. So I think we could be confident in the future of our action regarding the promotion of democracy. Of course the promotion of democracies requires the construction of a political society. Democracies can not function without political parties. Parties moreover are ready to compete for office – whilst accepting the ultimate judgement of the electorate. But modern pluralism is more complicated these days. It is now clear that civil society, including particularly NGOs, is an essential conduit for channelling political interest and political energy. So it is about political parties but not only political parties. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that the vitality of civil society is the best single guarantor of the stability of democracy. And democracy means creating diverse mechanisms for both promoting diversity of opinions, but also for mediating between different interests. The development of civil society in short has meant the creation of a dynamic public space that complements the traditional political structures.

This is the reason why we need you, the political foundations. For 50 years – as long as the European Union has existed – you have played an extremely active and effective role in promoting and consolidating democracy in Europe and in the world. As transnational structures that also have deep national and local roots, platforms like ENoP can be very effective in mobilising citizens around common objectives. This is a way of strengthening the cohesion of civil society within a pluralistic framework. The political foundations represented here share the values of openness and dialogue that characterise the debate about ideas. The ENOP, as a structure for cooperation among more than 50 political foundations from a large number of European countries, is particularly well placed to promote open societies and economies that are in step with the globalised world in which we live.

Actively working in Europe and more than a hundred countries to promote democracy and development cooperation, ENoP members open the path not just to democracy and development, but also in policy terms have helped advance the EU agenda.

In conclusion, the great task of peace and reconciliation that gave rise to European construction is today matched by the challenges of globalisation. In the face of such challenges, we need to adapt our political institutions and our sense of democracy almost as much as we need to adapt our policies. The work that you and others do is essential. So once again, let me congratulate you on behalf of the European Commission for your achievements and your cooperation with the European Union. I hope that this cooperation will become ever closer. We count on your experience and your efforts to help the long European tradition of democracy and acceptance of pluralism continue to blossom in Europe and around the world.

Thank you for your attention