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**Remarks
by EU High Representative Javier SOLANA
at the Conference**

"NATIONAL INTERESTS AND EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY"

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I would like to thank the *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* for convening this conference. It follows a good tradition. For many years it has hosted the NATO Review Conference. As NATO General Secretary I valued these intense political brainstormings. It is timely to launch a similar exercise for our Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Next year, it will be ten years since the Kosovo crisis, which played a fundamental role in the creation of the European Security and Defence Policy. The European Security Strategy will see its 5th anniversary in December. So this is a good moment to look back. But even more to think about the future. I hope and expect this conference to contribute to tangible progress in the evolution of Europe's global role.

At the request of the organisers, my intervention will focus on the question of national interests and how they relate to building a common European foreign policy. This is not an easy topic. These days, when debating foreign policy, the concept of "national interest" can seem outmoded and unattractive. In both public opinion and specialist circles, we tend to associate the idea with the cynical pursuit of self-interest.

Take historical figures like Machiavelli: "it is far safer to be feared than loved". Or Lord Palmerston: "my country has no permanent friends, only permanent interests". We like to think diplomats have moved beyond that kind of thinking in the twenty-first century.

In the European context this feeling becomes stronger. European integration has been built on compromises. So a ruthless pursuit of national interests sits ill with the European method of consensus-building. But are national interests and European foreign policy therefore incompatible?

It would be tempting to say yes. But that would miss an important point. For I think the relationship is more complex. Properly defined, national interests have a place in European policy-making. What has changed in Europe is how people define their interests and, even more, the structure in which they pursue them.

The point is not that we have abolished national interests in the European Union. Rather, the point is that we agree that the best way to safeguard these interests is by working together. Moreover, working together helps to create and identify common European interests. So, it is a two-way street. This is a fundamental truth, which bears repeating.

To avoid any misunderstanding: values matter as much as interests. A foreign policy which is not informed by our values is neither possible nor acceptable. This very much applies to the European Union. Values are at the core of our external actions and an expression of our collective identity. We promote them because of who we are. But also because it is in our interest to do so.

This explains why the European approach to international relations is characterised by the primacy of international law; the search for consensual solutions; and a commitment to making multilateral institutions effective. This is the European way. What we do abroad is shaped by who we are. Not only is this approach right. It is also very effective, as the history of Europe over the last fifty years demonstrates.

There is another aspect to all this. The very concept of national interest has changed in our globalised world. In a nutshell: interests have gone global. We face common problems. You all know the list: terrorism, climate change and energy security, proliferation, organised crime, failing states. These are complex and interconnected problems. They defy simple solutions.

No country acting alone can solve them. So, national and collective interests are linked. You cannot pursue one at the expense of the other. Of course there will always be differences of emphasis, based on history, geography and the electoral cycle. We should be aware of these differences - and discuss how they can be overcome. But the collective, common interest is clear. Global and complex issues require global answers.

So much for the theory. How to do it in practice, in a Union of 27 member-states? By working hard every day. I believe it is possible, because there is such a thing as common European interests. Let me try to explain.

First, I believe it is an interest in itself for the 27 Member states to build unity. Unity is the best way to be heard in a globalised world. Unity is a precondition for Europe to be effective. In turn, being effective helps with creating unity, as the Balkan and Georgia conflicts have shown.

Second, there is the inter-connected nature of the threats that we face, as I mentioned earlier. We have a common interest in addressing complex threats, diplomatically and through collective action on the ground. What is stated in principle must be demonstrated in practice. And Europe is doing just that, tackling crises in our neighbourhood and beyond.

Let me mention some examples which seem of special relevance.

The Iran nuclear issue is a case in point. The importance of the Iranian issue cannot be over-stated. At stake is nothing less than the treaty-based system of non-proliferation. Europe's role has been central. We have been at the forefront of international efforts to solve this sensitive and complex issue, working through the multilateral system. It is consistent with the objectives, interests and values we uphold. We hope for success, but know that it will require cooperation of many actors, first of all Iran.

Or take the Western Balkans. The scale of the EU commitment to putting that region on a path of sustainable peace, reconciliation and growth is unprecedented. From Bosnia Herzegovina to Kosovo, from Serbia to FYROM Europe is seen as an indispensable anchor of stability and development.

Europe is committed to the Balkans for good reasons. This is an area of strategic importance. And our engagement has made the difference, even in very sensitive issues like relations with Kosovo and Serbia. I do not deny or downplay the challenge that was posed by Kosovo's independence - including among EU Member States. But we delivered.

The Union agreed on a common interest in ensuring stability and security in Kosovo, and deployed the EULEX mission to achieve that aim. We were right. Since February, we have seen positive trends in both Kosovo and Serbia, with the EULEX mission gradually deploying and a pro-European political constellation in Belgrade.

All this would have been impossible without the impulse and political initiative from the European Union - and especially the incentive of the European perspective. Compare this situation to the mid-1990s. The progress we have made is remarkable.

Then there is Georgia. The initiatives taken by the European Union, under the leadership of the French Presidency, were key to preventing further dangerous escalation. It is too early for final judgements at this stage. But over the last two months the EU has been crucial to establishing a path through the crisis, and providing the means, with the EU Monitoring Mission to doing so.

Let me conclude. National interests and European foreign policy have to be linked. But it should be clear that in a globalised world, national interests can best be achieved through collective action.

European foreign policy is work in progress. We all know that we can and should improve the efficiency of our decision-making and the effectiveness of our actions. But perhaps paradoxically, the Georgian crisis gives me hope. It showed that strong political will and good co-ordination between the institutions and Member States is critical. And that it can be forthcoming when we need it.

Now we need to ensure that the same conditions will be there in the future. The Treaty of Lisbon will be a central part of delivering that. A swift entry into force of that Treaty is clearly in our common interest.

Dear friends,

The world today is more complex and interconnected. Our approach of bringing together member states into collective positions which are stronger than the sum of their parts, is the only realistic response. It is in our interest to continue on this path.

Thank you very much.
