



**CONSEIL DE
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LECTURE Paul Henri Spaak
by Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for the CFSP

Mesdames et Messieurs, chers amis,

M'exprimer devant vous, ce soir, dans cette maison, la votre, constitue un honneur autant qu'un plaisir. J'en remercie l'Association des journalistes européens et sa section belge en particulier.

J'ai été invité à parler de l'état du monde et de la situation de l'Union européenne. Parler du monde tel qu'il est aujourd'hui n'est pas une chose facile. Aucun modèle, aucun slogan, aucun paradigme ne résiste aux évolutions de ces dernières années.

Mais les périodes de transition et de grandes altérations sont toujours ainsi: incertaines et fluides; avec des opportunités nouvelles mais aussi des risques plus grands.

De la manipulation de bilans financiers virtuels à l'effondrement d'économies bien réelles. De la crainte de nouvelles pandémies à la difficulté de trouver des parades efficaces à des menaces toujours plus asymétriques. De la bonne ou de la mauvaise utilisation d'Internet ou de Twitter. Nous sommes brutalement entrés dans le XXIème siècle.

And, by now, we know very well that in this Century threats are global. Take the economic crisis. The speed at which it spread from the US to the rest of the world, how quickly it contaminated the whole financial system and then the real economy. It has been a dramatic reminder of the dark side of globalisation. The response can only be global.

That crisis has reminded us, brutally and suddenly, of the eternal contradiction: markets and risks are global, yet political legitimacy continues to be local or national. As well as resources. We need to find a way out of that contradiction. How Europe works, how Europe is, can give us some good clues. I will come back later to this point.

One of the main trends that define the age we live in, is power shift. Within States and between States. Within States to society, to various groups within society, to markets, and even to individuals. Between States, from the West to emerging powers.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:
Spokesperson of the Secretary General, High Representative for CFSP
■ +32 (0)2 281 6467 / 5150 / 5151 ☎ +32 (0)2 281 5694
internet: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/solana>
e-mail: presse.cabinet@consilium.europa.eu

A consequence of that, a second basic trend, is the necessary enlargement of the main international fora. We have to give a proper voice and place to all key players. You cannot expect people to contribute to solutions if they have not been involved in shaping the strategy.

The almost natural way in which the G8 has given way to the G20 in addressing the crisis is a first step. But that is not enough. It cannot be restricted to economic issues. It has to apply to others like regional security issues, climate change or the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

However, we must bear in mind that some of the beneficiaries of this new situation do not share our view of the world. They do not share our guiding values or the principles that inspire us. The coin of our multipolar world, as always, has two faces: opportunity and risk. It is in our hands to make opportunity prevail.

These trends are being accelerated by the economic crisis. But the old agenda is still there to be addressed. Global threats and regional issues we need to tackle.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, is in my view the most important threat. Proliferation follows a perverse rationale of escalation. Absolute security for one means total insecurity for the rest.

Therefore, the solution can only come through international cooperation and a tightening of multilateral mechanisms. That is European Union policy, as is a decisive bid for disarmament.

Until recently we were fairly isolated in those positions. Things have now changed - and for the better. In his speech in Prague, President Obama presented an ambitious programme of action which we do share. He argued for a world without nuclear weapons, although he did point out that he did not expect to see it in his lifetime. I share that ideal. And I want to be more optimistic about the timescale.

The push for disarmament will be the key to the major challenge: application of the Non-proliferation Treaty. The whole non-proliferation system rests on a delicate balance. A quid pro quo in which non-nuclear States agree to forgo nuclear weapons if those who possess them agree to reduce their arsenals significantly. And the third pillar is to ensure transfer of technology for civilian use of nuclear energy. This is our action plan for addressing nuclear proliferation.

Energy security is another factor of risk. I can assure you that Bulgarian families deprived of gas for heating in the middle of freezing temperatures last January are acutely aware of that threat. This is unresolved business for Europe.

We cannot talk about energy security or design strategies in that area without keeping climate change in mind. That it is the first authentically global challenge facing mankind: it threatens every human being without exception and the solution can only come from a worldwide agreement.

And it has an additional feature that makes it exceptional: the solution depends on accepting a figure, the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere, a figure that has a scientific basis. You will agree that that is highly unusual in international relations. The Conference in Copenhagen next December is the key rendez-vous. We all have to work hard to make it a success.

But beyond that, there will be no lasting solution unless we address the developing countries' profound sense of injustice and distrust in this matter. Their question is legitimate: why should they pay for a problem we, in the first world, created?

The answer is equally clear: because we have gone well beyond the point where developed countries can solve the problem. But that is not enough.

Quelques mots sur les conflits régionaux les plus importants du moment.

Le Proche Orient. Le dernier discours du Premier Ministre d'Israël a esquissé une perspective politique avec la reconnaissance de la notion d'Etat palestinien, même limitée. C'est un premier pas. En revanche, la question de l'arrêt de la colonisation des territoires palestiniens n'est pas réglée.

Quelques jours avant, au Caire, le Président Obama a voulu marquer une rupture. Les grands principes qu'il a posés sont les mêmes que les Européens défendent depuis longtemps: la main tendue au monde arabe et musulman, la référence à l'Initiative arabe de paix, l'obligation de créer un Etat palestinien.

Les Palestiniens sont engagés dans un difficile exercice de réconciliation. Unis, ils ont la capacité de construire leur Etat. Nous le savons. Nous continuerons à les aider dans leur entreprise.

Le Liban enfin vient de voter. Le choix de la modération et du pragmatisme l'a emporté. La voie est maintenant ouverte à davantage de stabilité.

En clair une nouvelle dynamique se met en place dans la région. L'Etat palestinien ne sera pas créé par les seuls Israéliens et les seuls Palestiniens. La responsabilité de la communauté internationale et de l'Union européenne est engagée. Nous ne pouvons pas échouer.

L'Afrique maintenant. L'Europe mais aussi le reste du monde ont besoin d'une Afrique stable et prospère.

Premièrement l'Afrique doit être aidée face à la crise économique actuelle. Ne pas le faire serait irresponsable. L'extrême pauvreté, la famine, doivent rester toujours très haut dans nos priorités. Au-delà des questions morales, c'est un impératif politique.

Deuxièmement nous devons poursuivre nos efforts sur les régions-charnières:

- les Grands lacs - l'Union Européenne a lancé quatre opérations ces dernières années;
- le Soudan et le Tchad - là encore, l'Union Européenne s'est physiquement engagée sur le terrain.

Dernier axe d'effort impératif : la Corne de l'Afrique. Il y a bien sûr la lutte contre la piraterie dont l'Union européenne a pris l'initiative. Mais il y aussi la nécessité d'aider la Somalie à sortir du chaos pour éviter qu'elle ne devienne un nouveau foyer du terrorisme international. C'est là d'un intérêt stratégique majeur pour l'Europe.

In Afghanistan we know that there will be no military solution; it has to be a political one. That's why this summer's presidential elections are of such fundamental importance. They must give sufficient democratic legitimacy to the next President, so that he and his government can take over responsibility for governing the country.

The EU has therefore two immediate objectives:

- first, to accompany the election process and ensure it is credible;
- second, to help the Afghan authorities acquire the capacities they need to run their country and provide essential services to the Afghan people - and security is the top concern here.

For that reason, the Union has launched a police mission that trains the Afghan National Police in providing safety to Afghan citizens. It will be impossible to stabilize Afghanistan without a stable Pakistan. Again, the European Union has a fundamental interest in contributing to the international effort.

None of the challenges, global or regional, I have mentioned can be confronted by one country or one group of countries alone. They all require a global response.

For some time, many people thought that increasing interdependence would lead automatically, almost naturally, to international coordination. Now we know that is not the case. But globalisation and interdependence are here to stay. We therefore need to find a compelling principle to underpin such coordination. We need to answer the question of how to organise a globalised world. And we need to do so marrying the contradiction I mentioned before: power is locally legitimised; challenges are global in nature.

The principle of responsible sovereignty may help us find an answer. It is a principle based on one fact that will not change: we live in a world of sovereign States. Coercion is not conceivable except in extreme cases, and then only vis-à-vis one isolated country. The only way out is that States assume responsibility for the external consequences of their acts and the EU has learned this a long time ago.

It will take a long time for that idea to make its way and crystallise into action. But as long as policy is made at national level, legitimacy will be purely local. It is on the basis of that legitimacy that responsible sovereignty will be able to organise a globalised world and respond to the global challenges.

Where is Europe in this big picture? The crisis has been a huge test. And it came at a time of institutional uncertainty.

From the very beginning, the EU was torn between forces of fragmentation driven by national reflexes and a renewed push for collective initiatives. The huge stabilising effect of the European Monetary Union has been fundamental. Without the euro, there would have been chaos on the currency markets.

There are also big problems outside the euro-zone, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Banks, currencies and fiscal positions are all under pressure. Problems are not yet behind. If we are honest, we should also acknowledge the pressure on the single market. There is no doubt that how we shape the reaction matters from an economic point of view.

But there is also a wider issue here. The EU is based on strong rules, independent institutions, the four freedoms and the concepts of solidarity and responsibility. We cannot put all that at risk.

After 1945, there was a paradigm change in Europe. From international politics as a zero sum game to one where people realise they can only be safe, secure and prosperous if their neighbours are too. If we play with these principles, it would be hugely damaging. To Europe itself and to our global standing and influence.

A Europe of bending rules, of fragmentation, is a Europe whose voice will not be heard around the world. In 2030 only one in twelve human beings will be European. We risk losing any meaningful international influence. But it is also clear that when confronted with centrifugal forces and pressures, Member States have re-grouped and pulled together. This has been the case since the Autumn up to the European Council last Friday.

That is a telling example that the European project remains strong. That your hard work, your day-to-day efforts, to build a united Europe produce tangible results. They make our lives better.

The last European Council has also cleared the way for a new referendum in Ireland. I do hope the Lisbon Treaty will be in force by the end of the year. It would have been better to have it four years ago. That will be the most direct, powerful response from Europe to the new shaping of the world. And it will ensure the right place for Europe in it.

I thank you.
