



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT**

Brussels, 11 December 2009

**Statement by Mr Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council,  
following the dinner of Heads of State or of Government on 10 December 2009**

After the dinner of Heads of State or of Government the President of the European Council, Mr Herman Van Rompuy, made the following statement:

*"I have spoken to the European Council as permanent President for the first time, although I shall not officially take up that office until 1 January 2010.*

*I started by referring to the organisation of our proceedings and the taking of decisions within the Council. I stressed the composition of the European Council. The Heads of State or of Government are the principal members of the Council. They may, if appropriate, be accompanied, but they remain the decision-taking nucleus of the European Council. We must form a group, a circle, that agrees with itself and works for the same cause, the European Union.*

*Secondly, we must lay more emphasis on the political decisions that go beyond our traditional conclusions. We must send the public a clear and visible message; we have already worked on that, and we shall continue to do so.*

## **P R E S S E**

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*Thirdly, we must attack the major issues systematically. I believe the most important issue during my term of office and during that of the Commission will be the economy. It will not be sufficient to increase the rate of our economic growth by 1 %; we must at least double it if our social system is to be financed adequately. We set great store by that system, it is the "European Way of Life", and it is our social model thanks to an economic base and an economic infrastructure that support it and finance it. That is the most important issue, the Commission is working on it and the Council will work on it too. Various formal and also informal meetings will concentrate on it in order to define a clear economic strategy within six months.*

*There are, of course, other issues. Energy is another major subject. The European Council will also have to give its attention to certain major conflicts going on in the world regarding which everyone may have an opinion but which have not yet been discussed sufficiently within the Council.*

*It is therefore with a political programme that the Council must take the initiative. The Treaty has given us the mission of defining the major guidelines for the European Union. We shall shoulder that responsibility fully; that is what I was elected for. I therefore accept those tasks with conviction and enthusiasm."*

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***The video record of the occasion may be viewed on and downloaded as a "broadcast" (MPEG4) from the following website: <http://vloghvr.consilium.europa.eu/>***