



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**

**Madrid, 8 January 2010
PCE 03/10**

**Remarks by
Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council
at the press conference**

**Launch of the Spanish Presidency
Madrid, 8 January 2010**

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Herman Van ROMPUY, President of the European Council, visited Madrid today to attend a meeting with Mr Jose Luis RODRIGUEZ ZAPATERO, Prime Minister of Spain and Mr Jose Manuel DURAO BARROSO, President of the European Commission, in the context of the launching of the Spanish presidency of the Council. The following is a summary of his remarks made to journalists at the end of the meeting:

- § Our meeting today marks the launch of the Spanish Presidency. It also marks the beginning of a very close cooperation between José Luis ZAPATERO, as Head of the Government responsible for the work of the Council, José Manuel BARROSO, President of the Commission, and myself, as President of the European Council. Only by working very closely together, at all levels, will we be able to deliver on the many challenges facing us.
- § And this will indeed be a challenging six months for all of us. We will see concrete changes in the functioning of the EU, with the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. Together with the Spanish Presidency and the Commission, we are committed to making the best out of it. We will fully cooperate, in the spirit of the Treaty, to enable Europe to operate in a more coherent and efficient way.

P R E S S

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- § There are in particular two very big challenges facing us, which will require the full engagement of the EU at the highest level if we are to be successful: tackling the economic crisis and responding to the climate change. This is why I took the initiative, after consultation with PM Zapatero and President Barroso, to convene a meeting of EU Heads of State or Government, on 11 February, to examine these two issues. I have just had a first discussion on both topics with José Luis Zapatero and José Manuel Barroso and I look forward to working further with them.
- § The first objective is to secure full recovery in the EU after the financial and economic crisis that hit us and the world very hard last year. We must overcome the short-term challenges linked to this crisis and at the same time press ahead with the structural changes that we had embarked on under the Lisbon Strategy for jobs and growth. We need more economic growth now and in the future in order to finance on a lasting and sound basis our social model, to preserve what I call our "European Way of Life". This is a matter of survival, and we will succeed.
- § We now need a renewed economic Strategy, with stronger ownership at the highest level, i.e. the European Council. I find it crucial that Heads of State or Government be clearly associated, from the onset, with this work. This will ensure their engagement and thus their commitment to implement what we agree.
- § That is why I plan to have an in-depth discussion at the informal meeting of the Heads of State or Government on 11 February. Later on, at the Spring European Council, we will have a more structured discussion, in the light of our February brainstorming and of the forthcoming Commission communication. The objective will be to approve the new Strategy at the June European Council.
- § I want us to look together at the challenges ahead and the best way to tackle them. We know what our objectives are, we know what we lack, too low Research and Development, or insufficient mobilisation of talents, for instance. We also know that there are bottlenecks constraining economic growth within our countries, such as insufficient mobility, too little risk-capital and problems in the labour markets. What I want us to concentrate on is how we can overcome both our general handicaps and the bottlenecks and what is needed at the various levels of political responsibility. The EU - as a whole - needs to be engaged in this; that means the institutions but also the Member States, their governments, as well as their regions. It must be a collective effort! I also want us to have a close look at a better correlation between our overall objectives and the use of EU instruments over the coming years. We need tighter governance and a better control of the process. I will make concrete proposals in that respect.
- § My next point concerns climate change. The EU must continue to be a driving force in this field. There has been a lot of criticism of the outcome of Copenhagen. But let us be clear: without the EU, the outcome in Copenhagen would have been much less.

- § We as EU would have liked to go further. But there are enough elements to build on and to achieve positive and lasting results for the good of our climate and our future. This is a complicated process and we are in for the long haul. And we will play our part. That is why I took the initiative to discuss at the informal meeting of February the follow up to Copenhagen, both in terms of climate change as such and in terms of the strategic consequences arising out of the action of the various key players.
- § I want the European Union to bring in all its influence in future negotiations and to be both heard and respected. The EU has done much, in terms of its commitments for emission reductions, but also in terms of the financial assistance it is prepared to bring to others, both in the short and long term. It is time to recall that globalisation may give rights to all global actors, but also responsibilities. Within a few weeks, we will know the quantitative goals of the various actors in terms of CO² reductions. We will then know the distance between the pledges made in Copenhagen and what is still needed to reach the objective of limiting the rise in temperature to a maximum of 2°C. Everyone will have to face up to their responsibilities.
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