



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**

**Prague, 23 February 2011
PCE 048/11**

**Statement by
Herman Van Rompuy,
President of the European Council,
on the developments
in the EU's Southern neighbourhood**

We are witnessing historic change in our Southern neighbourhood. During the last few weeks we all saw images of peaceful and dignified expression by the people of their legitimate, democratic, economic and social aspirations. But we also saw terrible pictures of brutal aggression and violence against civilians, peaceful demonstrators, journalists and human rights defenders.

I particularly abhor the violence that is being committed against people who stand for freedom and justice in Libya. I have seen horrible crimes that are unacceptable and must not remain without consequences. I condemn the violence, aggression and intimidation against demonstrators in Libya, and call for an immediate end to the use of force. All citizens should have the right to demonstrate freely and peacefully.

The will of the people in Libya must be respected and human dignity is of the utmost importance. Libya needs change - political and social reforms, full respect to the freedom of expression, including through the Internet, as well as other fundamental freedoms. The legitimate aspirations and demands of the people for reform must be addressed through open, inclusive and meaningful Libyan-led dialogue.

The European Union should not be patronising, but should also not shy away from using its political and moral responsibility. The EU is interested in sustainable stability, based on respect of democratic values, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The decisions on the future of the countries in our Southern neighbourhood must be made by their citizens. Our responsibility is to help. The EU will adapt its "neighbourhood" policy in order to develop and strengthen democratic institutions, giving civil society every opportunity to strengthen the economy, reduce poverty, and address social injustices. We will lend our full support to the transition processes towards democratic governance, pluralism, improved opportunities for economic prosperity and social inclusion, and strengthened regional stability.

P R E S S

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Dirk De Backer - Spokesperson of the President - ☎ +32 (0)2 281 9768 - +32 (0)497 59 99 19
Jesús Carmona - Deputy Spokesperson of the President ☎ +32 (0)2 281 9548 / 6319 - +32 (0)475 65 32 15
e-mail: press.president@consilium.europa.eu - internet: www.consilium.europa.eu/vanrompuy

EN