

# YES, WE ARE EUROPEAN!

Jacques Delors, Enrico Letta, Pascal Lamy, Yves Bertoncini and the participants in the meeting of our 2016 European Steering Committee

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**T**his Tribune is based on the debate between the [participants](#) of our European Steering Committee on 7 October 2016.

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We are European, like the hundreds of millions of our compatriots, because we think Europe is our destiny, our project and our hope.

We are European because we want our countries to fully assert their sovereignty in the face of challenges such as climate change, tax evasion, Islamist terrorism, or Russian aggressiveness. We believe that it is in sharing our national sovereignties that we can provide a more effective defence of our common interests, by fostering cooperation and solidarity rather than by the division of our strengths in a world that continental states are trying to shape.

We acknowledge the wishes of our British friends to choose a solitary path and to begin the divorce proceedings, while wishing to maintain close relations with the United Kingdom, today and also in the future. We call on the national and European authorities to focus, without delay, on the numerous other challenges that the EU must urgently address, all the while underlining why we are stronger together.

We are European because we are connected by the values of democracy, the rule of law, gender equality, the protection of minorities, as well as our non-use of the death penalty. We should be proud of these principles, as it is rare to find them applied with such intensity as on our continent.

We do not consider asylum-seekers as threats, but as victims. We commend the efforts for the effective control of our external borders which enable consideration of their applications in a more organised manner, while strengthening our security.

Our Union acts as a community of values which have been affirmed by our treaties and for which compliance is non-negotiable—it could not function with only

a selective form of solidarity. We are concerned by the refusal of some Member States to apply decisions commonly adopted on refugees and by the political shifts observed in countries such as Poland and Hungary.

We are European because we are united by a development model with the capacity to produce around one quarter of global wealth while seeking to limit its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We are pleased that the EU successfully encouraged world leaders to sign the Paris Agreement, the global climate deal negotiated at the COP21 conference. The EU is planting a “green flag” rather than a blue one for many citizens of the world, which we can also be proud of!

We are attached to our social market economy, which strives to combine economic efficiency with social cohesion, like no other region in the world. We are aware of the constant efforts required in terms of innovation and competitiveness which must be made to reconcile these two cardinal objectives, which to us are inseparable.

We are European, because our long history of war has taught us that disputes must be settled peacefully whenever possible. We do not send ununiformed soldiers to be killed in neighbouring states, or enlist young people to blow themselves up in public places.

Yet we know that the world is not at peace and how our neighbourhood is unstable in the Ukraine and Russia, Syria and Iraq, in Libya and in the Sahel. In order to face these threats, we must stand together, stand united for our defence and develop our capacity to cooperate militarily without relying solely on our American ally.

We are European, even when we lament that our endless crises of co-owners sap so much of our energy,

on the survival of our monetary union or in the refugee crisis. Yet we acknowledge that these crises have brought about new, more welcome initiatives, such as the European Stability Mechanism, the Banking Union, the European Border Control Corps and the European Solidarity Corps, which confirm our ability to deepen our Union, even though it is a painful process.

The desire to breathe new life into our unprecedented “union in diversity” was once again acknowledged by the twenty-seven EU member countries during the recent Bratislava Summit. This Summit effectively established avenues for shared action, in

particular with regard to police and judicial cooperation, defence and investment.

It is now up to all authorities and citizens to promote a positive vision of the European Union as a source of opportunities and as a protection against threats, thereby giving it new impetus as we approach the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

We believe, now more than ever, that there is strength in unity and that unity is a struggle we are firmly resolved to pursue. Yes, we are European, and we will be even more European in the future!

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