



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union to Switzerland and Liechtenstein

Europe Day address by EU Ambassador Petros Mavromichalis

Europe Day in Bern, 6.5.2024

Liebe Staatsekretärinnen und Staatssekretäre,

Mitglieder der Eidgenössischen Räte sowie kantonaler Exekutiven und Parlamente,

Excellencies,

Liebe Freunde, chers amis, cari amici, chars amis, dear friends of Europe,

Today we celebrate Europe Day, we celebrate a project that, for the past 74 years has brought unprecedented peace and prosperity to our continent. A project from which our neighbour and friend Switzerland has also benefited.

We do this under difficult circumstances. Since our last gathering in these premises a year ago, the global outlook has only worsened.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine continues unabated.

We have also witnessed the horrific murders and abductions of Israeli citizens followed by the systematic destruction of everything that can sustain life in Gaza, causing tens of thousands of casualties, mostly civilians, women and children as well as the massive displacement of the population, which is now on the brink of starvation. If there ever was a case to say “two wrongs don’t make a right” this certainly is one.

Civil wars rage in other parts of the world such as in Sudan, causing untold suffering amongst the population of this vulnerable country.

Faced with these tremendous challenges, the EU has stood firm and remained united. We have continued to impose sanctions on the aggressor and to support our candidate country Ukraine. Thirteen sanctions



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packages have been adopted thus far. Our provided and committed collective support to Ukraine, political, military, economic, humanitarian, amounts to 143 billion € and is second to none!

As I have said many times, we are not taking sides. We are defending the UN Charter, international peace and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

We have shown solidarity with Israel when it was under attack whilst also calling on it to respect international humanitarian law. And we have provided the people of Gaza much needed humanitarian relief, to the tune of 700M €.

At the International Humanitarian Conference for Sudan in mid-April, EU institutions and Member States have collectively pledged 900 M€ for the civilian population suffering under the war.

We are grateful to our partner Switzerland for standing by our side in defending international peace by adopting sanctions against the aggressor, welcoming refugees, preparing the reconstruction of Ukraine, and organising a high-level conference on peace in Ukraine next month.

I would also like to recall that a few days ago we celebrated 20 years since the biggest ever enlargement of the EU, which saw the accession of ten members from the East and South of our continent.

This made us stronger collectively. In the light of geopolitical shifts and the resurgence of Russia's neoimperialism, EU enlargement was not just right. It was vital.

Durch die Erweiterung wurden auch die Vorteile des EU-Binnenmarktes und die EU-Kohäsionspolitik auf die neuen Mitgliedstaaten ausgedehnt.

In diesem Zusammenhang habe ich letzte Woche mit Interesse in der NZZ eine Kolumne gelesen, in der die ökonomischen Vor- und Nachteile der EU-Erweiterung analysiert wurden.



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Zu den einzigen Nachteilen für die neuen Mitgliedstaaten erwähnt der Autor den Verlust von Arbeitskräften, die in die alten Mitgliedstaaten in Westeuropa gezogen sind und dort das Wirtschaftswachstum angekurbelt haben.

Die Personenfreizügigkeit war also ein ökonomischer Gewinn für die Empfängerstaaten von Arbeitskräften, nicht für die Staaten, aus denen diese abgewandert sind.

Angesichts der alternden Bevölkerung in allen Staaten Europas, auch in der Schweiz, gilt heute umso mehr: Junge und qualifizierte Arbeitskräfte werden immer mehr eine knappe Ressource.

Ich wage zu hoffen, dass dieser Artikel auch von jenen in der Schweiz gelesen wurde, die ständig gegen die Personenfreizügigkeit wettern.

By that, let me come to EU-Swiss relations:

I would like to recall that the EU, its Member States and Switzerland are all democracies and that we hold the same political values.

However, democracy and European values are under threat like never before.

The threat comes both from autocracies but also from non-state actors who attempt to misinform and manipulate our public opinions.

Against this background, the unity of democracies, in particular European democracies, is more than ever necessary to defend the international legal order, including international law and international humanitarian law.

The value of multilateralism and the rules-based order is being questioned just when we most need it.

Under these dire circumstances, it is even more necessary that Switzerland and the EU resolve their outstanding issues regarding the participation in the EU internal market in order to consolidate this important partnership.



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Dazu gibt es jetzt eine Chance! Wir haben 18 Monate lang Sondierungsgespräche geführt, die zu einer gemeinsamen Verständigung über Ziele und Landezonen des geplanten Vertragspaketes geführt haben.

Am 18. März haben wir auf der Grundlage unserer jeweiligen Mandate Verhandlungen aufgenommen, die zurzeit sehr intensiv geführt werden.

Unser gemeinsames Ziel ist es, diese Verhandlungen bis Ende des Jahres abzuschliessen. Dem wird die innerstaatliche Ratifizierung folgen.

Dans le cas de la Suisse, ceci impliquera la tenue d'un vote populaire qui sera, à n'en pas douter semé d'embûches. Je suis convaincu que le Conseil Fédéral et les forces politiques pro européennes du pays sauront trouver les bons arguments pour convaincre une majorité de citoyens.

Ce qui nous divise est infiniment mineur par rapport à l'importance de nos relations politiques, économiques, commerciales, culturelles, sans oublier nos valeurs communes : démocratie, état de droit, droits de l'homme, économie de marché.

La tâche sera à n'en pas douter difficile mais certainement pas impossible. Comme disait Corneille, « à vaincre sans péril on triomphe sans gloire ».

Finally, a reminder to all EU citizens: Between 6-9 June, voters throughout our 27 MS as well as those living in third countries will be called upon to elect their representatives to the European Parliament.

This is the largest democratic exercise on our continent and I hope that the rate of participation will be high, including that of EU citizens living in Switzerland.

Please: Use your vote - Votez ! - Nutzen Sie Ihre Stimme - Usate il vostro voto

Thank you very much, danke für ihre Aufmerksamkeit, merci, grazie !



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Toast à l'unité de l'Europe, paix et prospérité

Auf die Freundschaft EU-Schweiz

And to an independent, democratic and free Ukraine!