



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union to Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein

Head of Delegation

## Europe Day address by Ambassador of the European Union Petros Mavromichalis

### Bern, 9 May 2023

Caro Consigliere Federale Ignazio CASSIS, nostro ospite d'onore questa sera, rappresentando la Confederazione Svizzera. Siamo molto felici e onorati di averla con noi.

Dear Ambassador Iryna VENEDIKTOVA, representing the proud & heroic nation of Ukraine,

Madame l'ancienne Conseillère fédérale, Regierungsräte,  
Mitglieder des Parlaments, Staatssekretärinnen, Excellencies,

Liebe freunde, Chers amis, Cari amici, Chars amis, dear friends,

Il y a 73 ans, Jean Monnet et Robert Schuman, deux hommes visionnaires et courageux ont lancé l'idée de la première Communauté Européenne, la Communauté du Charbon et de l'Acier, jetant les bases de la plus longue période de paix et de prospérité en Europe depuis des siècles.

A l'époque de nombreux observateurs avaient des doutes sur la viabilité de ce projet. Parviendrait-il à surmonter les rivalités ancestrales ? Son caractère novateur, transférant des compétences des Etats à des institutions supra-nationales en interpellait plus d'un.

Mais depuis ce 9 Mai 1950, que de chemin parcouru : Marché intérieur, monnaie unique, Schengen, citoyenneté européenne, politique étrangère et de sécurité commune...

L'UE, qui est passée des 6 membres originaires à 27 aujourd'hui et qui est appelée à s'élargir à l'avenir est aujourd'hui un acteur bien établi sur la scène internationale.

We have also been able to consolidate something equally valuable: democracy, the rule of law, the protection of fundamental rights, including the rights of minorities, all pre-conditions for being part of the European project.

As Churchill once said, "democracy is the worst sort of government, except for all the others that have been tried". This assertion is still as true today as it was then, as events happening at our doorstep remind us.

Without the checks and balances that come with democratic governance there are no boundaries, and those in power enjoy the licence to do as they please!

This is why we must work hard to **strengthen, not weaken**, our democracy & institutions at the national, European and international level!

The Swiss Presidency of the UN Security Council is a good opportunity for our neighbour and friend Switzerland to contribute to reinforcing international peace and governance.

The recent indictment of two Russian citizens for war crimes by the International Criminal Court (ICC) also reminds us of the need for strong multilateral institutions. This is why we warmly welcome the establishment of the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression in The Hague.

I sometimes read or hear criticism of the EU: geopolitically weak, not doing enough on this or that... Let me recall a few facts:

The EU institutions and our Member States are collectively the biggest donor of international aid, providing over € 50 billion a year to help alleviate poverty and advance global development.

The EU and its Member States are also the biggest contributor of humanitarian assistance, the biggest donor and exporter of vaccines, and the biggest climate finance contributor worldwide.

As regards support to UKRAINE, the EU's and Member States' military, economic, humanitarian, assistance and the support to Ukrainian refugees sum up to 68 B€ up to now, certainly nothing to be ashamed of!

And as we speak, Commission President Ursula VON DER LEYEN is returning from Kyiv, where she met President Zelenskyy and reaffirmed the unwavering support of the EU to Ukraine.

**Since today, 9 May is Europe Day also in Ukraine !**

So, whilst having some understanding for those who would like us to do more, it's good to remind ourselves that the EU's contribution in these crucial areas is unrivalled.

In recent years, we have faced a long series of crises: financial, sanitary, security, to name but a few.

There is one safe conclusion to draw from all of these: whatever the problem, the answer is always the same my friends, the answer my friends is MORE EUROPE!

Was das sehr wichtige Verhältnis zu unserem Freund und Nachbarn Schweiz anbelangt, so bleiben wir voll engagiert und einer Lösung der offenen Fragen verpflichtet.

Die EU scheut keine Mühen, um diese für uns zentrale Beziehung auf eine stabile Grundlage zu stellen.

**Unsere Tür ist offen und unsere Hand ausgestreckt!**

Ich weigere mich zu denken, dass unsere einzige Perspektive die langsame Erosion der bilateralen Verträge sein sollte.

Im März kam Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vize-Präsident der Europäischen Kommission, in die Schweiz - nach Freiburg und Bern -, um zusammen mit Bundesrat CASSIS eine Bestandesaufnahme über die Sondierungsgespräche zu machen und den Gesprächen neue Impulse zu geben...

... und um den interessierten Kreisen in der Schweiz, Parlamentariern, Sozialpartnern, Kantonen zuzuhören, Ihre Sorgen besser zu verstehen – und Lösungen zu finden.

Parmi les nombreux liens qui nous unissent le plus important sont nos citoyens!

Les citoyens de l'UE qui vivent et travaillent en Suisse sont un élément incontournable de la prospérité économique et de la richesse culturelle de ce pays. La libre circulation des personnes est souvent accusée à tort d'être la source de nombreux maux. La réalité est toute autre: ceux qui exercent le droit à la mobilité donnent bien plus qu'ils ne reçoivent.

Die Personenfreizügigkeit ist eine unersetzliche Quelle des Wohlstands in der Schweiz und in Europa.

La libera circolazione delle persone è uno dei perni della nostra relazione è anche un'origine di ricchezza culturale oltrechè di forti legami umani e sociali tra la Svizzera e i paesi membri dell'Unione!

Let me finish by bringing back EU-Swiss relations into the broader context.

The challenges we are currently facing remind us of our common values.

One hour's flight from here, a country is being destroyed, its people are being murdered and sexually abused, children are abducted, the cultural heritage of the country destroyed.

**This is no time to look away my friends!**

**This is the time for democracies & all those who cherish freedom & a rules-based order to stand up and be counted!**

**This is not about taking sides. This is about defending the UN Charter, defending international peace and the peaceful resolution of disputes.**

This war has brought us Europeans closer together, including with Switzerland, with which we are profoundly bound by these values.

We greatly value Swiss support.

What unites us is infinitely more important than our limited points of disagreement.

We should spare no effort to bring this relationship to a higher level and I will personally continue to work tirelessly for that.

Thank you very much !

**A toast :**

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

**Auf die Freundschaft EU-Schweiz**

**And to an independent, democratic and free Ukraine !**