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

**Academic conference on the future of the EEA Internal Market in view of current geopolitical and global economic challenges**

Closing remarks by H.E. Ambassador Petros Mavromichalis  
*Vaduz, 14 May 2025*

*Check against delivery*

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished speakers & members of the audience,

It is an honour to join such an eminent group on the 30th anniversary of Liechtenstein's EEA membership.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to say a few closing remarks, Dr. Baur. I must say that the focus on geopolitics has become even timelier in the months since we first received invitations to this conference!

It feels especially opportune to speak here just days after we marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, which paved the way for an unprecedented era of prosperity, peace, democracy and cooperation in Europe.

These two important anniversaries provide a good opportunity to reflect on how the EU and our closest like-minded partners - namely the EEA states - are responding to an increasingly challenging geopolitical landscape.

As President of the European Commission von der Leyen underscored last month, the European single market - the largest one in the world - remains our safe harbour in tumultuous times.

Indeed: since its creation over 30 years ago, the EEA has served as a factor of political and economic stability, as well as prosperity and security on the European continent.

Besides allowing over 440 million Europeans to enjoy the four freedoms of the internal market, the EEA Agreement guarantees equal treatment, legal certainty and predictable conditions for citizens and businesses alike.

Also, let us not forget the new opportunities for education and research, investment and employment, which have been created for so many Europeans.

If there is an upside to all the geopolitical turbulence we've seen over the past few months, it is that we have re-discovered the importance of European unity.

This means standing together, and standing up for each other.



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We should recall that tariffs are just one of the challenges currently facing Europe. Others include climate change, and risks stemming from supply chain dependencies in strategic sectors.

Now more than ever, this challenging geopolitical situation makes it important to strengthen ties with like-minded partners.

When we speak of geopolitics & the future of the EEA, it is impossible to overlook the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on Europe's security architecture, as well as the international rules-based order.

The unprovoked and illegal war of aggression that the Kremlin has been waging for over three years now is an affront to universal values based on the UN Charter, as well as fundamental European principles such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

As the EU, we deeply appreciate the solidarity that EEA states - including Liechtenstein - have demonstrated with Ukraine.

We remain resolute in our support for comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, recognising the importance of putting Ukraine in a position of strength so that it will be able to choose its future.

The consistent alignment of EEA States with EU declarations and sanctions against Russia's military aggression exemplifies our excellent and close partnership.

We know that especially for a small country like Liechtenstein, taking over EU sanctions packages entails a significant administrative endeavour.

At the same time, we share the awareness that the stakes are high - not just for peace in Europe, but also for global security and the upholding of international law. As they say - extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures.

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As EU HR/VP Kaja Kallas recently said, "the challenges we face may feel existential, but this is the nature of a new era".

There is simply no excuse to be unprepared in this important moment for European - and indeed global - security.

In order to effectively promote peace through strength, we know that we need to reinforce our defence capabilities and resilience. This also means following through on the new White Paper for European Defence presented this spring.

We - EU institutions and Member States - should see this as an opportunity for more engagement, more proactiveness, and more creativity in our external action.



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Partnerships are in the EU's DNA. It is therefore not surprising that the European Commission has already proposed that strengthening cooperation with EEA/EFTA states should be part of our efforts to ensure defence readiness by 2030.

The premise is simple: we are stronger when we work together with partners. This is key to tackling fragmentation, as well as ensuring economies of scale, and greater predictability for our defence industries.

Obviously, all this will acquire an even greater significance as we double-down on efforts to develop European capabilities, foster innovation, and boost our competitiveness.

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Already now, it is clear that EU efforts to reinforce defence capabilities & address market fragmentation are going to add a new dimension to the rich and multifaceted cooperation which exists between the EU and EEA/EFTA states.

As has been the case over the past 30 years of the EEA Agreement, we should strive to address new challenges through a shared sense of pragmatism, and in a spirit of neighbourly cooperation.

Increasingly, this also means considering the EEA relationship in a strategic manner.

This means going beyond the internal market, and considering how we (the EU) can respond to global challenges together with partners who are most closely aligned to our values & interests.

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The challenges we face shouldn't be underestimated.

Nevertheless, we should recall how robust, flexible and adaptable the EEA Agreement has proven to be over the past 30 years.

A case in point is that even the successive enlargements of the EU and the broadening of the single market for all participants (e.g. through the "Big Bang" of 2004) happened smoothly.

The EEA Agreement remains one of the best proofs that challenges are easier to address through cooperation and dialogue rather than short-term transactionalism or power politics.

30 years into Liechtenstein's EEA membership, the vast majority of citizens (+80%) consider that this has been beneficial for the country's prosperity and international status.

The same goes for EU membership: according to the latest Eurobarometer poll, an unprecedented share of our citizens believe that EU membership is beneficial for their countries (74%).

Clearly, Europeans see the EU and the single market as anchors of stability, places of opportunity & security.



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It is precisely this trust which should serve as a strong mandate to double-down on efforts to boost European competitiveness, strengthen our own defence capabilities, while upholding the fundamental values that our citizens care about.

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We appreciate the foreign policy cooperation that we have maintained with EEA countries over the past two decades on the basis of the joint declaration signed in 1994.

One of the reasons why our cooperation has continued expanding in the two subsequent decades is precisely because we (the EU) take into account the interests and policy priorities of our partners.

Building on this, we look forward to further strengthening our relations with Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland in the next three decades & beyond.

For now, however, allow me to stop here, and to thank you for your attention. Allow me to also express my appreciation to all those who contributed to making today's conference such a success.

I hope to see many of you in Schaan tomorrow, at the public ceremony co-organised with the government of Liechtenstein to mark the 30th anniversary of the country's EEA membership, and our very own Europe Day.

Thank you.