



EUROPÄISCHE UNION

Delegation der Europäischen Union für die Schweiz und das Fürstentum Liechtenstein

Nobel peace prize 2012 to the European Union

**Ambassador
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Berne, December 2012

**Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank each and every one of you for braving the almost Norwegian weather and for joining us this lunchtime to celebrate the award today of the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union. I would just like to say a few personal words to mark the occasion.

I don't think I am betraying a secret when I say that the European Union has been going through something of a bad patch recently. The crisis has fuelled among some a sense of pessimism; of a future Europe with a diminishing share of the world's population, trade, prosperity, and authority. With other, younger powers, other more successful economic blocs, increasingly deciding the big questions facing the world – and increasingly doing so without us.

But the decision by the Norwegian Nobel Committee has helped us to see the wider context for our present difficulties. It has first of all reminded us that we have been in a far worse place before.

I am going to give you a few quotations from a speech given in May 1947 by one of the Founding Fathers of the European integration project – Winston Churchill.

"But what is Europe now? It is a rubble-heap, a charnel-house, a breeding-ground of pestilence and hate. Ancient nationalistic feuds and modern ideological factions distract and infuriate the unhappy, hungry populations. Is there then to be no respite? Has Europe's mission come to an end? Are the States of Europe to continue for ever to squander the first fruits of their toil upon the erection of new barriers, military fortifications and tariff walls and passport networks against each other? Are we all, through our poverty and our quarrels, for ever to be a burden and a danger to the rest of the world?"

He went on to make this call:

"If the people of Europe resolve to come together and work together for mutual advantage, to exchange blessings instead of curses, they still have it in their power to sweep away the horrors and miseries which surround them, and to allow the streams of freedom, happiness and abundance to begin again their healing flow. This is the supreme opportunity, and if it be cast away, no one can predict that it will ever return or what the resulting catastrophe will be."

Such was the Europe of 1947. But, through an act of unparalleled vision and courage, European countries did seize their opportunity and come together, pooling their sovereignty in areas where it made sense to do so, within the integration project that has become today's European Union. I'd like to touch on three main respects in which the European Union has helped overcome the scourges which Winston Churchill described all those years ago.

Firstly, the European Union, together with NATO, has guaranteed the continent's peace and security over the past seven decades. From the outset, through the reconciliation of Germany and France. That role has been assumed again in recent years, as the prospect of EU membership has played a very significant part in bringing stability and a sense of hope to the troubled countries of the Western Balkans.

Secondly, the European Union has made an unparalleled contribution to the consolidation of democracy and the spread of democratic values. It acted as a beacon of hope first for countries of southern Europe in the 1970s, and then for the states of central and eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and helped entrench them on an unwavering path of democracy and freedom.

Thirdly, by overcoming barriers to the free movement of goods, services, capital and people, the European Union has witnessed a period of unsurpassed prosperity and development. These freedoms have also brought citizens and societies closer together, creating unprecedented bonds between them. And this prosperity and integration in turn have underpinned peace and democracy throughout the continent. The elimination of economic barriers, and in the last

two decades, the establishment of a Single Market removing non-tariff barriers, helped ensure that the new democratic states of Europe would never again be embroiled in the insanity of world war.

One final thought. Increasingly, the European Union has turned to promote these values that I've been speaking about – of peace, democracy and economic freedom – on the world stage. A divided continent which was a theatre of war, and an exporter of war, has become an increasingly integrated continent, and an exporter of peace.

I am convinced that Europe will continue to play its full part to ensure that the world as a whole is a better place in which to live. The award today of the Nobel Peace Prize is a huge encouragement to us to do so.