



EUROPEAN UNION

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

Michael Matthiessen, Ambassador of the Europäischen Union in Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein

Speech at Europe Day 2018 in Switzerland

Rathaus Bern, 9.5.2018

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

Guten Abend, Bon soir, Buonasera, Bainvegni, Good evening

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Signor Segretario di Stato Balzaretto,

Liebe Freunde Europas.

Wir feiern heute in der ganzen Europäischen Union den Europatag.

Damit gedenken wir der Rede des Französischen Aussenministers

Robert Schuman vom 9. Mai 1950. Schuman präsentierte seinen Plan

einer europäischen Aufsicht über die Kohle- und Stahlproduktion,

welche als Start der Europäischen Integration gilt. Diese trägt dazu bei,

dass wir seit über 70 Jahren Frieden in Europa haben und in Freiheit

und Wohlstand leben.

La Journée de l'Europe n'est pas célébrée seulement à l'intérieur de

l'Union européenne, mais dans le monde entier – par les 140

délégations du Service Européen d'Action Extérieure. Avec mon

épouse, mes collègues de la Délégation à Berne et les 23

Ambassadeurs des Pays Membres qui résident à Berne je me réjouis

de célébrer cette Journée en Suisse également. La Suisse est un pays

profondément européen. Merci d'être venus si nombreux!

Sono molto contento di essere in Svizzera. Tra molte altre cose ne apprezzo la multilingualità. 'Uniti nella diversità' - 'United in diversity' è uno slogan che vale sia per la Svizzera che per l'Unione Europea.

You have seen in the video that the European Union is currently in movement. The challenges we have overcome in the last decade have awakened us. Not least the decision of one of our Member States, the UK, to leave the Union. We regret this decision by the British people, but we respect it. That's democracy.

As you may have noticed, these developments triggered a broad debate about the Future of the EU – and in a larger sense the Future of Europe – in the institutions, the Member States and all over the civil society.

The first message I would like to pass on tonight: The European Union is now shaping its future!

At last year's Europe Day we looked back and celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties. This year we look forward to the Future of Europe and the Road to Sibiu.

In the Rome Declaration of March last year, the leaders of the EU27 pledged to work towards a Europe that protects, empowers and invests.

In his State-of-the-Union speech at the European Parliament last September, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker gave his vision of a more united, stronger and more democratic Union. A Union big on

big issues and small on small issues, that is to strengthen subsidiarity – (the current Commission reduced the number of new European legislative proposals from over 100 to less than 25 per year.)

Last week the European Commission proposed an ambitious budget for the period 2021-2027, which reflects these objectives: A European Union which invests in the future.

Leaders of EU Member States are equally presenting their visions and ideas for reforming EU institutions before the European Parliament and in other fora. Many dialogues with citizens have also started and will intensify in the months to come, both face-to-face and on social media.

This process will culminate in a Special Summit of the EU27 under Romanian Presidency in the city of Sibiu exactly in one year, on 9 May 2019. This is the moment where EU leaders will come together to take decisions on how the EU27 will shape its future.

At the same time, in May 2019 the elections for the European Parliament will take place. This will be an opportunity for political groups to debate on Europe's future during the campaign - and for citizens to express their opinions at the ballot box.

As we discuss Europe's future, we have to listen to the youth. It's the young people's future! And even though Switzerland is not a member of the European Union, this concerns this country and its youth, too. Switzerland is an integral part of Europe and a deeply European nation.

This is why I invited two young Swiss, Mr Lars Kieni and Ms Aijan Muktar, both from the Swiss section of the European Youth Parliament, to address us tonight in their mother language on their vision of Europe's future. They will take the floor after State Secretary Roberto Balzaretto, who kindly agreed to speak on behalf of the Swiss Confederation.

Ladies and Gentlemen. The debate on the future of Europe takes place in a context which is different from a couple of years ago.

1) The world is changing fast. We are confronted with crises in Europe's neighbourhood and a transatlantic partnership under pressure by dissent on trade policy and other issues. The EU deeply regrets yesterday's decision by President Trump to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal.

The European Union is more indispensable than ever to defend European values, but also free trade and multilateralism, on the world stage.

2) Europe's economy has recovered. The economic crisis is over. Since 2014, the EU is on a stable growth path of 2% per year, with forecasts remaining good. Unemployment is coming down. Sovereign debt is back under control; this year the 3% deficit criterion will be matched by all states of the Eurozone.

And there is international demand for the EU as trading partner. We have recently concluded comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with Canada,

Japan, Singapore and Vietnam. In the negotiations with Mexico we have just had a breakthrough; with MERCOSUR we are in the final stages.

My second key message therefore is: The European Union is Back!

And when the EU does well, this also benefits Switzerland:

- The positive development of the economy in EU Member States is boosting Swiss exports.
- This is also made easier by the appreciation of the Euro against the Swiss franc, which also brings back EU tourists to this country.

Indeed, the European Union and Switzerland are interdependent.

You know the figures:

- The EU is Switzerland's largest trade partner, Switzerland the EU's third;
- 1 billion Euro of trade exchanges per working day
- 1.4 million EU citizens live and work in Switzerland, almost 500.000 Swiss reside in EU Member States
- Related to this: about 40% of new marriages in Switzerland are bi-national. And in case you don't know: Italian men and German women are the favourite foreign spouses of the Swiss.

These interactions in fact take place between Switzerland and the 28 Member States. Therefore, let me thank my colleagues EU Ambassadors for being here today.

The European Union and Switzerland are definitively more than business partners! We share geography, history, languages and values. At the global level, we pull in the same direction on issues such as climate policy, development cooperation or the promotion of peace, democracy and the rule of law.

This leads me to my third message:

It is time to give a solid fundament to EU-Swiss bilateral relations!

You will remember that the EU-Swiss bilateral agreements were conceived in the 1990's as a replacement to the EEA, which the Swiss people rejected. They were originally thought to be provisional, as Switzerland had applied to start negotiations on EU accession.

In the meantime, EU or EEA accession is off the table. The EU knows that and respects it. Again, that's democracy.

To ensure Switzerland's continued direct access to the EU Single Market and to extend participation to new sectors of this market, we need rules governing the relationship. We need them to make the bilateral agreements fit for the future and exploit their full potential.

This is in the interest of both Switzerland and the European Union, both for citizens and economic operators.

Since March, the negotiations on the institutional framework agreement are progressing well. Not least the new approach of an arbitration tribunal, which Commission President Juncker put forward during his visit last November, has been helpful.

We share the optimism of Foreign Minister Cassis that an agreement is within our reach. There is a window of opportunity in 2018.

I am convinced that we need to look at EU-Swiss relations also in the global context. European values and interests are under pressure. The more stable our relations among Europeans are, the better we can defend these values and interests worldwide.

**My last message on this Europe Day in Switzerland therefore is:
Placing EU-Swiss relations on solid fundamentals will contribute to a stronger Europe!**

Thank You very much!

Ho adesso l'onore di invitare il Segretario di Stato Roberto Balzaretti a prendere la parola a nome della Confederazione Svizzera.