



European Union
Rome

Eminenze,

Eccellenze,

Colleghi Ambasciatori,

Signora Corina Crețu, Commissaria europea alla Politica Regionale,

Monsignori,

Cari amici,

Mia moglie Agnieszka, il mio team ed io siamo felici di avervi stasera qui con noi.

In quest'anno europeo del Patrimonio culturale, non si poteva scegliere miglior luogo per la festa dell'Europa. Lo abbiamo scelto innanzi tutto per il magnifico panorama.

La città eterna e i suoi gioielli, oggi, più bagnati del solito, si offrono ai vostri occhi.

Please enjoy !

Last year we commemorated the 60th Anniversary of the Rome Treaties, the founding act for the European Union as we know it today. Sixty years could be considered a moderately short period in the lifespan of a political entity. From a human point of view, 60 years encompass in general the whole active part of life.

"Yet, unlike human beings, the European Union does not face an inevitable old age, but the possibility of a new youthfulness" – as stated His Holiness Pope Francis during the memorable meeting with Heads of State of the European Union on the 24th of March

2017. *Papa Bergoglio* called upon leaders to "blaze the path of a " "new European humanism" " made from ideas and concrete actions".

As the Pope said, the centrality of men, effective solidarity, openness to the world and to the future, the pursuit of peace and development, are all essential for the new European humanism. The European Citizens and the International Partners, both from the neighbourhood and from farther horizons, expect the same. In a world of uncertainty and new tensions, stability and predictability become precious commodities; and the European Union is a factor of such stability more than ever.

Moreover, looking from a broader perspective, the Union possesses undeniable attractiveness. The willingness of several neighbouring countries to attain membership proves it. It is more than of symbolic importance that further countries from the Western Balkans have been provided with clear membership prospects during the first ever Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Countries from other parts of the world are looking upon the European Union as an anchor for multilateral governance and for mutually beneficial trade arrangements. Japan, Mexico and the countries of Mercosur should soon be linked with the Union by Free Trade Agreements, thus boosting the opportunities for economic development.

Millions of people from parts of the world, where violence, famine and poverty are everyday reality, look at Europe and at countries of the European Union as safe harbour, where basic humanrights are provided for and protected by the law.

Excellences,

Ladies and gentleman,

For many decades, the European Union, its Member States and its institutions, have been the biggest contributors of development assistance. This sustained commitment very much corresponds with the general understanding of the responsibility of the Union for peace, stability and development worldwide. At this moment I wish to recall some words of the Declaration, pronounced by Robert Schuman on the 9th of May 1950, that we commemorate today as 'Europe Day': .

"World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it."

Mindful about the danger of using key resources for national or nationalistic interests, the French Minister proposed to closely integrate the economies of European countries, as a means towards lasting peace, stability and economic development. His far-reaching vision also went well beyond the limits of Europe. With financial instruments adopted recently and fully conscious of the interconnectivity of the today's world, the Union steps up its commitment to assist other countries and regions.

A world willing to eradicate hunger, with institutions able to settle peacefully divergences and conflicts of interests, a world in which people have a chance to make full use of all their individual potential and skills, may draw many lessons from decades of European integration. After centuries of internal conflicts and wars, often destabilising other continents and regions, Europe has progressively become a factor of stability and long-term predictability.

Dear friends,

Politics is an art of shaping the future today, educated by all the wisdom of the past. However, it is still appealing to observe the dividing power of history that impacts on collective emotions and shapes the perception of the world.

Past dividing lines still mark the European continent in various dimensions and could easily be turned into new conflicts. The hundred year anniversary of the end of World War I gives us a good opportunity to reflect on the need to invest more in integrating a 'European memory' in different parts of our continent as a means to reduce the space for subjective accounts of wounds and sufferings that may once again compromise the fragile reconciliation between nations.

This year, 2018, has been declared the Year of European Heritage. You see around you photos illustrating examples of the material, spiritual and non-material heritage, just to show some bits of the European common past. I'm very happy to welcome among us Ms Corina Crețu, European Commissioner in charge of Regional Policy and of the European Structural and Investment Funds. With the use of these funds, the European Union committed to reconstruct the Basilica of Saint Benedict in Norcia, which was so heavily damaged by the earthquake two years ago. Saint Benedict was declared by Paul VI the principal Patron of all Europe in recognition of his role as "Messenger of peace, builder of unity, master of civilization, and above all herald of Christianity and founder of Western monasticism".

Today, by engaging collectively as 28 Member States to rebuild the Basilica at the birthplace of Saint Benedict, the European Union points sources and aspects of its own identity out.

The six months' presidency of Bulgaria brings to the forefront two other emblematic Saint Patrons of Europe, Saints Cyril and Methodius, Apostles to the Slavic People. Their work on the dialogue between East and West, the invention of a new alphabet for a better understanding of their Christian teaching, their role as bridge builders between ancient Mediterranean culture and national entities emerging on the territory between Byzantium and Carolingian Empire has shaped Europe for ever. "Eastern and Western lungs" are inseparable parts of "unity in diversity" on our continent.

It belongs to common ground that music is the most universal of all arts. The *Ode to Joy* - from the ninth Symphony of Ludwig van Beethoven - counts among the most beautiful and inspiring pieces of European and world heritage – I invite you to listen to the European anthem and wish you a warm welcome to 'Europe Day'.

*Delivered by Jan Tombiński
9 May 2018*