

Speech by Professor Jerzy Buzek

Full speech by Professor Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, at the European Council Meeting Brussels - 16/09/2010

Dear Presidents,
Dear Chancellors,
Dear Prime Ministers,
Dear Colleagues,

The EU's External Relations and Relations with Global Partners

As we are discussing Europe's external relations, I would like to say a few words about the European Parliament's engagement with our global partners.

I have just returned from the G8 Speakers' conference in Ottawa, and one of the Vice Presidents of the European Parliament was at the G20 meeting there a week before. We were the only Parliament which was invited to attend both events.

Representing the Parliament, I have also visited Russia, China and the United States over the past six months. I discussed sensitive issues such as SWIFT and climate change with our American partners, and human rights, among other issues, with our Russian and Chinese counterparts.

I am convinced that our future lies in a strong Transatlantic relationship which should continue to be an axis of peace, prosperity and democracy - but equally this is no longer sufficient. We need to engage the other global powers to solve many of the world's current problems.

We could not tackle the economic crisis without the G20, but we also cannot face the challenge of climate change without the United States. The Transatlantic partnership is the core which must remain the engine of change in the future.

We are convinced that the parliamentary dimension of foreign policy needs to be strengthened. This is why the G8 Speakers' forum was invented. We also decided to extend the dialogue to representatives of the emerging economies, on a case by case basis, depending on the subject for discussion.

Involving parliaments in major international fora, especially when tough economic choices need to be discussed, will allow for greater transparency and accountability, and should facilitate the implementation of difficult decisions. Major public debates should take place on the parliamentary floor, rather than on the streets of Seattle or Genoa.

Second, now that the Lisbon Treaty has made the European Parliament a genuine co-legislator, the time has come for us to give both multilateral and bilateral conferences and summits a proper parliamentary dimension. I am thinking, for instance, of the up-coming UN review Conference on the Millennium Development Goals.

We could consider holding parliamentary pre-summits with our global partners. I would ask for your help in encouraging our international partners at government level - some of whom are not always keen on elected representatives being present at meetings - to enable such pre-summits to be organised. I feel that it is in our collective interest, and will only help strengthen the European Union if all the EU institutions can be involved in the dialogue - and of course, speak with one voice.

My third point relates to the new European External Action Service. I hope that the two remaining legislative proposals - to amend the EU's staff and financial regulations - will be passed in Parliament by the end of October at the very latest. This will allow the service to be operational one year after the Lisbon Treaty came into effect.

In fact, decision-making about the EEAS has been a great success. There are still some outstanding issues, of course, but I believe that the emerging compromise is a very good outcome for the service and for Europe.

However, the Parliament hopes that in the future we will create mechanisms that will ensure not only that the 'best and the brightest' are hired by the EEAS, as Lady Ashton says, but that the best will also display a proper gender and geographic balance. This is an issue that we will be monitoring over the years to come.

Dear Friends,

Let me turn briefly to another important issue. As we discuss European economic governance, we cannot forget our international obligations in the fight against climate change.

At Copenhagen, we set out both the figures and the tools we need to intensify the fight. We now need to start using those weapons. Unfortunately, some countries seem to be distancing themselves from the accord.

We only need to look at the difficulties encountered in the US Senate on the draft law on energy and climate change. This is not a good sign for any binding global agreement. But I hope the short time between the US mid-term elections and the Cancun summit can be used to overcome these difficulties.

It is crucial that we secure concrete decisions on some of the key elements in Cancun, to regain trust in the negotiating process. We cannot do this alone in Europe, since we will never convince the public that we should shoulder all the costs.

It is clear from the latest data that a 15% to 30% reduction compared to business as usual will be needed to meet the 'two-degree' objective that we have agreed upon.

The Parliament will express its views on Cancun in a resolution in November.

Economic Governance

Dear Colleagues,

In last week's "State of the Union" debate with President Barroso, the overwhelming majority of Members of the European Parliament argued in favour of maintaining the 'Community method' in decision-making, and for using Union instruments to foster economic governance in Europe.

We are all in agreement that the current economic and financial crisis has demonstrated that a stronger measure of economic governance is necessary. Today, more than ever, we need a true economic union.

The 4% drop in GDP, falling industrial production, and more than 23 million unemployed continue to represent an important social and economic challenge.

But this challenge will not be solved by national strategies alone. We have to coordinate our efforts to build up more strength. That is what the EU 2020 strategy stands for. Today, we need more and not less Europe. I agree with President Barroso that at all levels of government, we need to think European.

Therefore, we support the idea of creating some form of new own resources for the Union and bringing the multiannual financial perspectives in line with the five-year mandate of the Commission and Parliament. We found the Commission President's proposal, made in last week's State of the Union speech, of a ten-year financial perspective, with a five-year review, very interesting. We shall certainly want to look at it.

We also expect the European Commission to produce concrete proposals to re-launch and complete the single market, and close the 150 gaps or bottle-necks that still exist in its operation. This is the most sustainable way for us to create new employment in Europe.

We look forward to the package of proposals to be presented by the Commission at the end of this month to beef-up economic governance.

We have to create an effective European financial supervision system, so that our economies are not undermined by insolvent banks. The European Parliament should give its agreement to the existing package of proposals next Wednesday.

We eagerly await the conclusions of the Task Force on European Economic Governance, chaired by President Van Rompuy, due in a few weeks. The Parliament will be passing a resolution on economic governance in early October.

We hope that the Task Force will take our views properly into account. It is important to ensure democratic and political accountability. The European Parliament will need to be involved.

Dear Friends,

The Parliament is now discussing the draft EU Budget for 2011. The new budgetary provisions of the Lisbon Treaty will be in operation for the first time. Our policies can only be credible if they are adequately funded. We cannot have more Europe with less money.

Europe has not run up a deficit, indeed until recently EU spending was falling in real terms. The Council of Ministers has already made excessive cuts to the 2011 draft Budget.

The debate on the future Multiannual Financial Framework has started. Our Special Committee on Policy Challenges has met for the first time, and we expect the Commission to come forward with an ambitious proposal next year - one that can rise to the challenges we all face.

We do understand that, in today's economic climate, we have to be creative with our funding and that we need to explore the possibilities of better pooling resources, better savings, and better financial management.

The next budget has to be about competitiveness and modernisation. It has to find a balance between the needs of the single market, infrastructure, agriculture, and a knowledge-based economy.

Dear Colleagues,

These past months have demonstrated that our European states need, now more than ever, to show solidarity with one another. We need to be a Union of 27 which speaks with one voice and finds European solutions - both in the way we manage our economy, and in the way we handle our external relations.

On a different note, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am deeply concerned that the failure to integrate those excluded from our societies will negatively affect not only the fabric of life in Europe, but the prospects for European integration and our image abroad. This is the European Year for the fight against poverty and social exclusion. We owe it our citizens, to use this year to find European solutions to help the less fortunate in our societies.

The European Parliament looks forward to working actively and positively with you, in pursuit of all of these important goals in the months ahead.

Thank you.