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THE EU AS A GLOBAL ACTOR

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- ES GILT DAS GESPROCHENE WORT -

*Das Forum Constitutionis Europae ist eine gemeinsame Veranstaltung des
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Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

let me first express my gratitude to Mr. Pernice for his very warm welcome at this magnificent university. Education, innovation, and research – that means university. And to have such an important audience here today in Berlin is so much more, I would say, moving for me, coming directly from Brussels. But let me start with some very short comments on the relationship between the family of Humboldt and Spain. I mean the two brothers were very much connected with Spain as both, Wilhelm and Alexander, dealt intensively with Spanish geography, thereby also fighting for biodiversity. Today this is a very interesting issue. In addition they had a global perspective on the world. So both brothers, Wilhelm and Alexander, can be seen as predecessors of a European approach, which is supposed to deal with current as well as future challenges by joint European action.

But lets go back to the title of this speech: What is the role of this new European Union in the 21st century? Are we going to be an important actor or a subsidiary actor? My answer to this is, that Europe will be what the Europeans, we all together, want to it be. It is a question of internal decisions of all of us Europeans. What is what you want to be? A declining power in the world with a good welfare state model and a comfortable life? Do we want to be a museum?

These are tough questions, and we are all concerned by them.

Finally, after a process that nearly took a decade, we got the Lisbon treaty being ratified not least owed to the intensive efforts by of Germany and Portugal. Now we have new institutions, we have new personalities and of course we have a new role for national presidencies. That does not mean that the work and the responsibilities of the national presidencies are going to diminish. Instead, they are going to be different.

But you know, people and media most of the times concentrate on, I would say, the conflicting and confusing superficial elements. They ask how to arrange the work of the high representatives and the president? And what does the treaty say in this respect?

Well, according to the treaty there is a new permanent president of the council, that is Mr. Herman van Rompuy and there is a new high representative vice president of the commission, baroness Lady Catherine Ashton. And finally there is the national rotating presidency. People have to support the new institutions in order to get them working and to speak with a single unifying voice. And of today, on the 18th of January 2010, we prove that the Lisbon treaty is working. After a humanitarian catastrophe struck Haiti, Europeans were able to demonstrate and to respond in a united manner. We thereby provided solidarity and assistance to the people of Haiti. Of course everything can be put into perspective but today, in Brussels, we announced to implement the first EU humanitarian mission. It is the first time that we pool all economic and financial resources, all military capabilities, as well as all mechanisms for consular affairs. On this background the European Union should be proud of the implementation of the Lisbon treaty. We were on the ground in Haiti, and the Spanish

embassy, as all European embassies, had been built in Port au Prince. Our ambassador was injured and had to be transferred Guantanamo. However other Spanish diplomats have taken care of the whole consular affairs thereby also protecting and supporting European citizen. In the same time we announced the provision of more than 100 Million Euros to the UN for immediate and urgent humanitarian assistance. But we are also working for the reconstruction of Haiti, rebuilding civil and police capabilities. This is an example how the new Lisbon treaty is working in the case of Haiti.

But that is not the end of what is supposed to be the new foreign policy of the European Union. I am sure that you have heard many times about the saying of Henry Kissinger. He was always asking, “To whom I should call in Europe? Which telephone number?”

By the way, whenever the Americans want Europeans to pay or to send troops, they find as many telephone numbers as they want. They don't need only one. Nonetheless the slogan of the *not existing single telephone in Europe* has remained.

But by now, with this new treaty, there is a president of council and a high representative to take up the phone and to response. And that is good. We now have personalities, and we now have institutions. But tonight, my dear friends, we are at a university. And the task of universities is to look further ahead.

It will be not enough to have a single telephone number or to have the institution or personalities. No. Instead the best solution will be to have an unified answer ready when the phone call comes. Because if Lady Ashton receives a phone call but she doesn't know what to reply because there are 27 positions among the 27 EU members, what would the EU foreign policy make any sense for?

And this is a real challenge to the European Union and its global role. I know that is quite difficult because foreign policy in countries like Spain and Germany, UK, France and all the important European countries – with all my respect to all 27 – is though. Foreign policy plays a central role in the concept of sovereignty. It is very difficult to abstract foreign policy from Spain or from Germany but that doesn't mean that we cannot work and create a common foreign security policy of the European Union. That doesn't mean the European Union cannot have a clear strategy towards Russia, China, Latin America, Africa or in the Middle East. Why we are not able to have this common European position in areas that are vital for the defense of our interests?

I think this is the real challenge of Mr. van Rompuy and Mrs. Ashton.

So what are our priorities to work on during the Spanish presidency in the six first months of 2010? The first is very clear. It relates to the European family. How can we construct an area of stability and prosperity? The way Europe has been working during the last decades seems to expand and to enlarge the European Union. So enlargement is the first priority we all have to have in order to create an area of stability and security among ourselves. And this impacts on the negotiations with Turkey as well as on negotiation with Croatia, the western Balkans as a whole area, that we all know, will sooner or later become EU member states and that is,

finally concerning Island, a candidate country. So enlargement is going to be the first priority of the Spanish presidency. But this will be not enough to guarantee the future of our European house. Normally the European Union has had a neighborhood policy, trying to engage with the main and immediate neighbors, all in the east or in the south or in the west. Well, the United States is not a neighbor, it is more than that. It is a partner, it is a real partner of the European Union. In this respect the transatlantic agenda should be revisited. Now, in today's world after the Copenhagen summit we have discovered that the relation between the European Union and United States has to change strategically. We are talking about the G2. Well, that it correct. The two main actors in the world should have their own platform. But if we want to preserve values, principles for which we have been fighting for many decades and centuries, the US Americans should approach us as real partners.

How we are going to engage in trade, in the fight against climate change, terrorism or illegal emigration issues without having an interconnected strategy with the United States?

For the moment there seems to be only limited interest in that. We Europeans seem a bit shy, and beset with complexes.

But in what way we should engage and become part of the G2? We have to come with a sense of modesty but at the same time with a sense of pride.

What have been the successes of the European Union during all these decades?

We have our social economic welfare state. That is a real model for everybody. Everybody would like to have the social rights we have in the European Union. Everybody dreams of the universities and research laboratories as they are found in European Union. Everybody would like to have the sense of culture, which we share in the European Union. Despite all these facts we sometimes consider ourselves as a second-class actor.

We thereby forget that we are the first power in trade and economic relations and we are the first actor and super power in solidarity in helping the third world and the developing countries.

So why should we be so shy towards our American friends? They need us as much as we need them and we have to translate this fact of equal relationship into a realistic approach in the near future.

So that will be the Transatlantic Agenda.

And of course, going to the East or to the South, there is the eastern partnership, as a new dimension of this new European Union.

Some of the countries concerned will in the future be a member state of the European Union.

But they will have to share the same space for the industry, the economy, the liberalization of visa and the free movement of people.

Concerning the South, you know that we Spaniards are especially aware of the threads and challenges in North Africa and all Mediterranean riparian states. There is also the Middle East's peace process pending. Things can be moved towards a two state solution in 2010 and I am sure we can succeed.

But that is neighborhood. And then there is another relevant actor in the international community: Latin America with which we have an important relationship. Already Alexander von Humboldt was looking to Latin America as an area of common interest. And why should Europeans be so distant with our Latin American friends when they have the same, I would say, values, principles and the same code of conduct as we Europeans? But they are far away. There have been no significant crisis or threads of terrorism. So we did not take them seriously. Only by now, because of climate change we now look towards Brazil in order to deal with the topic of forest protection. But what real policy we have developed with Latin America, apart from the traditional efforts of Spain? This efforts are important but not sufficient. Therefore Latin America will be a continent of privileged relationship with European Union in the future.

And of course Africa. A lot of people talk about new neighborhood. And Spain is only 14 km away from Africa. We have been suffering and threatened by the permanent flow of boats arriving from West Africa, more than 4,000 km on the sea to reach the so called paradise in Europe. And we don't have any sense of urgency?

9 Million people are dying every year of hunger. You think we can continue this lack of relationship? So we need to have a total different relationship towards the African continent. We need to engage the European Union in its appeal for solidarity as well as its work against poverty. And that, for sure, is going to be one of the main elements of the Spanish presidency. And of course there is Asia with China. What is the strategy of European Union towards China? Obviously human rights, have to be addressed. But apart from that, what are the tremendous challenges in trade issues? We are going to construct and maintain a new relationship with China, because the most important thing is to have a dialog.

We now have the new Lisbon treaty. As I said in the beginning that means that we have new personalities as well as new institutions. However, what is more important is to have a new foreign policy and that will only be possible if member states help Lady Ashton or President van Rompuy to develop this new foreign policy. It is up to countries like Spain, Germany- the big motor engine of the European Union- to support this approach for a unified foreign policy. So these are the challenges of the European Union faces as a global actor. I appreciate the opportunity present my views here at the university tonight, because this also allows me receive questions, commentaries and criticism, what is always needed to define and improve political positions. Thank you again for your attention and I am very happy to be here with all of you. Thank you.