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Il Trattato di Lisbona e il futuro dell'Unione Europea

Riunione congiunta delle Commissioni Esteri e Politiche dell'UE di Camera e Senato
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Presidente,

Onorevoli parlamentari,

È con grande onore che mi rivolgo oggi alle commissioni "Politiche dell'Unione Europea" e "Affari esteri" del Senato e della Camera dei Deputati. Mi rallegro dell'occasione e sono grato di poter apportare un contributo diretto al dibattito sul trattato di Lisbona e sul futuro dell'Unione Europea in un contesto quanto mai appropriato: al cospetto dei rappresentanti eletti del popolo italiano.

È un grande piacere, poi, pronunciare questo discorso in Italia, un paese che ammiro profondamente, specie per il suo ruolo guida nelle politiche europee. Il Primo Ministro italiano Alcide De Gasperi, è giustamente considerato uno dei padri fondatori dell'integrazione europea. Per tutta la sua vita politica ha visto nell'integrazione europea la via verso la pace, la democrazia e la prosperità in Europa, ben sapendo di operare per l'interesse superiore anche degli Italiani.

In Italia si sono celebrati momenti cruciali della creazione della Comunità europea. A Messina, i sei membri fondatori hanno superato la crisi del 1953-1954 e si sono avviati sul cammino verso Roma. Lo "spirito di Messina" - la capacità cioè di far della crisi un'opportunità - è uno dei segreti dell'integrazione europea. Sono stato in questa città, nel 2005, proprio per celebrare il cinquantesimo anniversario della dichiarazione di Messina. E ovviamente a Roma, capitale italiana, nel 1957 è nata la Comunità europea. Da allora si sono succeduti molti trattati, ma il trattato di Roma resta la nostra pietra angolare. Mi sia concesso: è la nostra "costituzione" originaria. La storia dell'integrazione europea e la storia italiana sono quindi intimamente legate.

L'Italia è uno degli Stati membri più pro-europei e da sempre sostiene un'Unione Europea più forte. In quanto Presidente della Commissione sono grato al vostro paese e so di poter contare sull'Italia nei momenti in cui l'Unione affronta sfide perigliose. È in periodi come questi che i più strenui sostenitori della causa europea hanno tanto da dare.

La Commissione, ed io in particolare, abbiamo da sempre ottimi rapporti con le autorità italiane. Ieri ho avuto un eccellente scambio con il Presidente della Repubblica Giorgio Napolitano, che una volta di più mi ha confermato quanto sia ancora vigorosa la lunga tradizione italiana di sostegno all'integrazione europea. Quest'oggi ho incontrato anche il Presidente della Camera, con il quale ho avuto una conversazione molto proficua, specie

sulla cooperazione fra la Commissione europea e i parlamenti nazionali. È mia ferma intenzione lavorare a stretto contatto con il governo italiano, in particolare con il Primo Ministro Silvio Berlusconi, per preparare l'Unione ad affrontare con successo le nostre sfide comuni, sul piano interno e esterno.

Colgo l'occasione inoltre per dare risalto all'impegno e al sostegno del Commissario italiano – il vicepresidente Tajani, incaricato dell'importante portafoglio dei trasporti – che non più di una settimana fa già presentava proposte su una grossa problematica, rendere più ecologici i trasporti europei.

Permettetemi di menzionare il grande contributo del Ministro Franco Frattini, predecessore del Vice-Presidente Tajani, per le sue realizzazioni e il suo impegno come Commissario responsabile per la Giustizia, la Libertà e la Sicurezza.

You kindly invited me to discuss the Treaty of Lisbon. I will give you three reasons why we need this Treaty.

The first reason is that the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and its successful implementation will pave the way for a more democratic and more transparent Union. We will be more accountable and responsive to our citizens. And they will be better able to exercise their rights under the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Charter reinforces our Union of law.

Moreover, with the new Treaty, both the European Parliament and national parliaments will have a stronger role. The European Parliament will substantially increase its legislative powers, making European politics more democratic.

National parliaments will also see their rights increased. This will reinforce accountability and also help us to ensure that subsidiarity is well applied. It is clear to me that the Treaty of Lisbon reinforces the parliamentary dimension of European politics. Such an evolution is very much welcome by the Commission.

This Commission has been strongly committed to talking and working with national parliaments. I have had the privilege of visiting national parliaments in two thirds of the Member States.

This Commission also welcomed a greater role for national parliaments in European politics. As proof of this, we implemented measures to closer associate national parliaments to the European political process. In May 2006, I announced that we would transmit all new proposals and consultation papers to the national parliaments, inviting them to react and help us in the process of policy formulation. Since September 2006, this new Commission mechanism has been working in a smooth way. In less than two years, the Commission has already received and responded to 231 (two hundred thirty one) opinions from national parliaments.

Our analysis of the results is very positive. Our contacts with national parliaments suggest that they have found the new mechanism useful in three ways:

it provides an opportunity for them to take a more pro-active attitude about European issues;

it reinforces their right to information;

and it allows them to better scrutinize their own governments.

The interest of national parliaments in using this new mechanism is also proof of their commitment to the European Union.

Secondly, the Treaty of Lisbon reinforces Union's capacity to act, particularly by increasing majority voting in the Council. In an enlarged Union, we need the right rules. We cannot build a Union for the future with yesterday's tools.

A more efficient Union will be more able to tackle the issues that are a priority to European citizens. Europeans expect the Union to act in areas such as immigration, energy, climate change, security, economic growth, poverty, social justice; and to act quickly and efficiently. We need the Treaty of Lisbon to fulfil their aspirations.

Thirdly, the Treaty of Lisbon will provide the Union with greater external coherence. Only a stable institutional framework will enable us to take on the new challenges facing Europe in the context of globalisation. Have no doubts: no European country can resolve global problems such as immigration, energy, climate change or international terrorism on its own.

The challenges and the problems of the world are too big to be dealt with by European states in an autonomous way. Only together, can we be successful. Since we signed the Nice Treaty, the world has changed.

Globalisation and economic competition have become more than ever the motor for our prosperity.

We face new external threats to our security.

And we have new global challenges such as climate change, the financial crisis, and the rise of fuel and food prices.

While all this happened we spent a great part of our political capital discussing institutional issues. We cannot go on like this. We need to solve the institutional question and to focus on policies to improve the life of our citizens.

Over the last 50 years, Europe has fully overcome the enormous challenges it has faced at continental level. It is now a continent that shares peace, freedom, prosperity and democracy from the Mediterranean to the Baltic Sea, and from the Atlantic to the Black Sea.

Over the next 50 years, we shall have to tackle the new challenges now facing us, which are no longer on a continental, but on a global scale. In the 21st Century, we need a united Europe to face globalization with confidence and success.

I was in the G8 meeting last week, and again I saw what Europe can achieve when we act together. I witnessed not only what our partners expect from us, but also how Europe can play a central role in addressing global challenges such as fighting climate change and world poverty. Today, Europe is an indispensable global partner.

When other leaders were expecting European leaders to present proposals and to lead the discussions, I must confess that a sad irony crossed my mind: sometimes, the main doubts about the positive influence of a united Europe come from Europeans themselves, and the main expectations come from other parts of the world. It should not be that way. A stronger European influence at the world stage benefits, above all, European countries and European citizens.

We all know that the Irish no represents a setback. The immediate point to note is that the challenges that the Treaty seeks to tackle have not gone away. A no vote is not a solution. We could use today the words that Paul-Henri Spaak used regarding the opposition to European integration in the early 1950s: "if a quarter of the energy spent in saying no were used to say yes to something positive, we should not be in the state we are in today". We need positive strategies and policies, not negative coalitions and a passive acceptance of the lowest common denominator.

Despite the Irish negative vote, ratifications should go ahead. As I said, I expect those Member States that did not ratify the Treaty of Lisbon to continue their own ratification process. All countries have the right to express their position. Ratifications of Treaties are national processes and no Member State makes a choice for the others. It is not for any of us to say that a decision in one country should prevent other Member States from having their opinion.

But it is not only a matter of right. It is also a question of obligation. When a government signs a Treaty, it has the responsibility to do all its efforts to ratify it. It is a political obligation towards all the other countries that also signed the Treaty. Bona Fide is one of the oldest principles of European Public Law, a legacy of the Roman Law, of the *ius gentium*, so close to you, and a central legacy of our common European civilization.

This is why I strongly welcome the Italian ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and why it is a matter of principle for me to be here with you today. By ratifying the Treaty, Italy honours not only our common historical legacy but also your special place in the history of European integration.

I would like to take this opportunity to stress the democratic legitimacy of parliamentary ratifications. Some people argue that a referendum is more democratic than a parliamentary approval. This is wrong. Both methods have the same democratic legitimacy. So far, there have been 23 democratic decisions: 22 in favour of the Treaty and 1 against (and today, the Spanish Senate finalizes the parliamentary approval of the

Treaty, which will take to 23 Member States that approved the Treaty of Lisbon). It is important to set the record straight.

We need to defend parliamentary democracy, not to undermine it. I do not accept that parliamentary democracy is in some way a "second class" democracy. I will continue to defend representative democracy as a central principle of European politics.

It goes without saying that we must respect the result of the Irish Referendum. We have to give time to the Irish government to analyse the result of the referendum and then to propose a way forward. I do not think that we can rush into a premature decision. It could have unfortunate results. We need to take time to see what is possible for Ireland. On the other hand, we should not take too long. There are important decisions in the near future that require clarity on the way forward.

During the next months, it will be crucial to work in a close partnership with the Irish government to move ahead. It would be a major mistake to try to isolate Ireland. This is the time to be serious about European solidarity. 27 Member States sign the Treaty. We must make every effort to be sure that 27 Member States will ratify it.

I would also like to emphasise that the no vote is not a reason for the Union to fall into the trap of institutional navel-gazing. We have made important progresses during the last years, to deliver policies in the interests of European citizens. At a time when we face serious challenges, we cannot afford to abandon the path of concrete policies and answering the concerns of Europeans. Paralysis is not a solution. Until the end of the year, we must deal with crucial issues such as climate change and energy, immigration, security and the global fuel and food crisis. We cannot be distracted from offering positive results.

We need to work hard to conclude the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon. But we should not believe that the Treaty will solve all our problems. Nothing replaces political will and political determination. To tackle unexpected and many different challenges, we need leadership. I invite all national leaders to behave also as European leaders. A Head of State, a Head of Government is not only a national leader. She or He is also a European leader. As all MPs of national parliaments are also European politicians. Europe is not 'Brussels'. Europe is Rome, Lisbon, Athens, Riga, Dublin and so on. We are all Europeans.

We cannot fall into the temptation of blaming European institutions for all European problems and difficulties. Politically, it is not a responsible approach. I have no problem with discussions and disagreements. On the contrary, I welcome them and I am always ready for a political debate. But let's debate the policies, not look for scapegoats.

Without strong institutions, a strong European Union is impossible.

Without a strong Union, all of us lose.

The gap between praising Europe in theory and attacking it in practice is very harmful for European construction. It is not possible to "love" Europe in general and then attack its institutions.

Permettetemi di ricordarvi le idee di un uomo politico italiano di altissimo livello, Altiero Spinelli, che ha difeso strenuamente il ruolo guida e costruttivo delle istituzioni europee. Ritengo che una delle maggiori lezioni del suo pensiero sia che senza istituzioni forti non è possibile avere politiche comuni e difendere l'interesse europeo.

Spetta ai membri di entrambe le vostre camere spiegare agli Italiani le problematiche dell'Europa, e far capire che promuovendo l'interesse dell'Europa si difendono anche gli interessi dell'Italia.

L'Unione Europea è prima di tutto una costruzione basata sulla volontà. Nell'Europa del XXI secolo, i paesi veramente grandi sono quelli che hanno il coraggio di agire nel rispetto delle responsabilità europee. Per questo l'Italia è stata, è e continuerà ad essere uno dei grandi paesi dell'Unione Europea.

Grazie.