

EMBARGO UNTIL DELIVERY (3 October 1996, 17.00 hours)

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

opening address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, H.E. **Mr** Wim Kok, to mark the start of the **College: of Europe's 47th** academic year.

Your excellencies ladies and gentlemen,

It is both a true honour and a great pleasure to deliver the opening address at the start of **the 47th academic year** of the College of **Europe**. The new Rector of the College, Mr Otta von der Gablentz, whom we in the Netherlands are fortunate to count as one of our best friends, has just devoted a few words to Alexis **de** Tocqueville, the distinguished Patron for the coming year. I should therefore like to congratulate the College on **two** counts - on their choice of Patron and on the appointment of **Mr von dex** Gablentzas the new Rector!

Not only did Alexis de Tocqueville exert a considerable influence on **European political** thought **in** the nineteenth **century**, he also **left** a body of work that is still of topical **interest**.

The accuracy of his prophesies and predictions about the evolution of society continues to impress, to this very day. De Tocqueville's critical analyses of democracy still constitute a source of inspiration, not only for the organisation of our national states but also - and more importantly - for democracy in Europe, i.e. the European Union. His prescience is especially striking since the observations which he made in his celebrated masterpiece on America date from about 1831. In other words, not only did they predate the American Civil War, they were also written well before the period in which Abraham Lincoln welded the United States into a close-knit union, that is to say at a time when the Union could in no way be described as firmly established. De Tocqueville realised full well that the further development of the United States as a Union was by no means a foregone conclusion. He described the Union as having come into being in exceptional circumstances (i.e. the War of Independence), and said that it would exist only for as long as circumstances permitted. The Union, in his view, was a legal structure which could be dismantled all over again.

In this regard a certain parallel with the European Union forces itself upon us. The process of European integration goes back some forty years; the role played by the Cold War during this period was somewhat similar to that played in the eighteenth century by the American War of Independence on the other side of the Atlantic.

Moreover, as in the united States in 1830 when there was resistance to further federalisation, **we** in Europe have now entered a phase in which the achievements of integration are by no means regarded as irreversible. To put it more emphatically, there are forces at work which do not find the further development of the European Union in the least desirable. If, however, in the spirit of De Tocqueville, I pronounce upon what is likely rather than what is desirable, then there is one lesson to be learnt from his writings: it is impossible to forge lasting unity without democracy. Without firm democratic roots, the European Union has no long-term future. The further democratisation of Europe is therefore vital.

However, democracy alone is not enough. A union of sovereign states suffers from one inherent weakness which it cannot conceal. De Tocqueville wrote that the federal government **was** far removed from the citizenry. It watched over the public interest but had little direct influence on everyday life. The states concerned themselves with matters which, although perhaps less wide-ranging, were more closely connected with the wellbeing of the individual citizen. For the citizen the Union was an abstract concept. The states, on the other hand, were associated with the home town, with property, and with the family.

De Tocqueville would not have known **it**, but he **was** referring to a principle which we who are gathered here in Bruges **all** recognise, namely subsidiarity.

Democracy and subsidiarity were the two themes which preoccupied him. They also occupy an important **place** at **the** Intergovernmental Conference convened to review the Maastricht **Treaty**.

What is **the** purpose of convening this **IGC**? What is **it** about? The answer is: to **prepare** the European Union for **the** 21st century, nothing more and nothing **less**. In **the** next few **years** **we** are faced with having to make two crucial. **decisions**. One concerns the transition to the third phase of Monetary Union. The other relates to the preparation of the accession of new Member States from Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean region. The IGC does not stand alone: **it** must be viewed in the light of these two great challenges. Five **years** ago in maastricht we produced the blueprint for the European edifice. That edifice rests on three pillars.

European Monetary Union forms part of the first, and **its** **construction** is almost complete. However, **it** remains vital that we do not depart from the architects¹ plans. Both the timetable for completion **and** the convergence criteria **must** be adhered to **in** full.

It is essential that discipline be maintained, even once the third phase has commenced. A stability pact intended to guarantee its maintenance is in preparation.

It goes without saying that agreements must also be reached between participants and non-participants, in order to ensure that Member States which do not yet fulfil the criteria do not miss the boat.

I have every confidence that these endeavours will succeed. The recent informal meeting of finance ministers in Dublin made visible progress on all these points. I do not accept for a moment that EMU will cause disunity in Europe, as some would have us believe. Those who take that stance lay themselves open to the suspicion that they themselves wish to sow the seeds of discord. As far as EMU is concerned, we are still on schedule. This is also important as regards the internal market, of which Monetary Union forms the final chapter, as it were. We must pay constant attention to ensure that the internal market functions properly. An efficient internal market is vital to our competitiveness. All in all, the prospects as far as the first pillar is concerned are not at all bad. However, the second and third pillars, which cover common foreign and security policy and cooperation in the fields of justice and home affairs respectively, do not provide the structure with sufficient support.

Cooperation in these areas **is** not producing the expected results. **We** shall therefore have to effect thorough **repairs** to **these** two pillars to prevent the European Edifice from **subsiding**. That is the **first** task facing the **IGC**.

The enlargement of the **European** Union is the other major challenge. One of the basic principles of **the** Union is that **membership is** open to every European country. The Union **is** not a closed community. The collapse of communism in 1989 presented the prospect of countries from which we **were** politically divided but with which we have historical **and** cultural **ties** rejoining the Western framework of nations. **The** Wall that **divided** us **has** been demolished. The essential thing now is that these countries are able to accede to the Union. They **are** at present making preparations to do so, and **it** is costing **them** considerable effort. **If** these countries are not to find themselves left out in **the** cold in the not too distant future, the Union must also undertake thorough preparations for enlargement. **Thus**, once the **IGC** has **been** concluded, we must effect the necessary policy changes - I am referring in particular to the Union's financing system and the Common Agricultural Policy. Prior to that stage, however, while the **IGC** is **still taking** place, **it** means deepening the Union and implementing institutional reforms.

After all, the Europe we built **was** not intended to house so many. Extending the accommodation currently available is the second task of the IGC. The two watchwords are therefore repair and renovation!

A look at the **IGC** against the background I have just described provides us with a guideline, not only for the substance of the Conference but also for its timetable. The end of 1997 will herald final decisions about the start of the third phase of EMU one year later. The accession negotiations begin **six** months after the end of the **IGC**. From the end of next year, therefore, the European agenda will be quite full! If matters are to be properly managed, we must avoid confusing the important issues. **This** means that **we** must make every possible use of the first half of 1997, so during the Dutch Presidency, for the IGC.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The day after tomorrow will witness an informal meeting of heads of state and government, foreign ministers and **the** Commission President, convened to exchange views on **the IGC**. We **must** use this meeting as an opportunity to give the IGC a boost, to ensure that it can indeed be concluded on time and successfully.

Naturally, **we** all have our own priorities and ideas. However, if I had to summarise the IGC programme in the light of the scenario I have just outlined, it would comprise the following five points:

- a comprehensible Europe
- a democratic Europe
- a social, safe and secure Europe
- an effective Europe, and
- a flexible Europe.

These are the objectives we are responsible for achieving. Let me explain what I mean.

I. A comprehensible Europe

- ✓ Creating a comprehensible Europe means giving substance to the principle of subsidiarity, or to put it more simply: "**who** does **what** and why?" **It** also entails creating more openness. The citizens of Europe must have access to information about the goings on in the Union. How can **they** have confidence in it if documents are kept secret? Could there be something to hide? **X** therefore take the **view** that the Council, in its capacity as legislative body, should make **its** decision-making process public. What parliament meets behind closed doors when it enacts laws?

finally, we must simplify the Maastricht Treaty and make it more legible, so that it is accessible and comprehensible to everyone.

That **is** what I mean by a comprehensible Europe!

2. A democratic Europe

Creating a democratic Europe means first and foremost that we must incorporate the principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Union Treaty. How can **we** transform the Union from a cooperative framework that is purely economic into a more political union unless it is based on the principles that are most fundamental to our society? **How** can we expect the candidate members in Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean Region to actively observe democratic principles before acceding to the Union if those principles are not firmly established in the Union itself?

A democratic Europe also entails strengthening the legitimacy of the Union's institutions. In the short term, therefore, the European Parliament's right of co-decision must be extended. In the long run, however, I think that more has to be done. After all, the democratic deficit does not in fact lie in the Parliament's lack of formal powers but in the absence of real legitimacy. In the final analysis, we shall be forced to improve the situation.

The guiding principle must be that legitimacy comes from below, i.e. from the Parliament, not from above, i.e. the European council.

Finally, let us not forget that, in the third pillar, the provision of information to both the European Parliament and the national parliaments must be improved. otherwise how can they exercise their supervisory function properly? In short, we must ensure that the Union's democratic foundation is strengthened, on pain of weakening the Union. That is what I mean by a democratic Union!

3. A social, safe and secure Europe

One of the government's primary responsibilities is to ensure the safety of the public. However, **safety** no longer faces the same threats as, for example, ten years ago.

- What are these threats? What do members of the public feel threatened by? Unemployment, illegal immigration, international crime and instability on Europe's borders. The Member States can no longer fight these dangers on their own. It is therefore certainly not further European integration which threatens the public or the nation-state. It is, to be precise, a lack of cooperation. Let me briefly deal with some of the points in more detail.

Employment

The scale and nature of unemployment in Europe, still lying at around **11%**, gives cause for concern. Two thirds of this unemployment is of a structural nature. The proportion of long-term unemployed is high and affects socially vulnerable groups in the lower echelons of the labour market. That is why the European Union, in addition to the endeavours undertaken by the individual Member States, is making intensive efforts to combat unemployment. At the Essen European Council we drew up a five-point priority action programme based on the White Paper by Jacques Delors. The five points were as follows: investment in vocational training, more labour-intensive growth, a reduction in indirect labour costs, an effective labour market policy and measures to help disadvantaged groups on the labour market. The Essen European Council advised the Member States to convert these measures into national multi-annual programmes. In addition, there is the recently published European Confidence Pact for Employment, Growth and stability, by commissionPresident Jacques Santer.

As you can see, therefore, the Union has not exactly been idle. Nevertheless, I think that employment should be given a higher profile in the Treaty.

Why? Certainly not in order to imply a contradiction with EMU, because there is no contradiction. economic and Monetary Union is aimed partly at promoting balanced economic growth and a high level of employment.

There is every reason to correct the misunderstanding that prevails in some quarters that EMU will lead to fewer jobs. We in the Netherlands have been pursuing a policy geared to the EMU criteria for quite some time. It has occasionally proved painful and troublesome. It **has** also necessitated sacrifices. Now, however, we are beginning to reap **the** rewards in many areas, including employment. The number of jobs is expected to rise by **100,000** in both **1996** and 1997, a sign of the continuing trend whereby employment in the Netherlands is growing faster than in neighbouring countries. In percentage terms, unemployment is set to fall this year from the 1995 figure of **8.3% to 7.75%**. According to current estimates, the percentage will decline even further to 7% in 1997.

Job creation is not, therefore, at odds with EMU. Why, then, do we need to incorporate a provision concerning employment in the Treaty? precisely in order to make it clear that the contradiction does not exist, and, of course, to underline that the **EU** does have a role to play in **this** field.

Codifying the Essen agreement would be an appropriate way of reflecting the coordinated approach to the employment problem, as advocated in the confidence Pact.

Illegal immigration

The pressure of migration flows in recent years and the disappearance of internal frontiers have made it impossible for individual Member States to control illegal immigration. If we nonetheless wish to guarantee **the** free movement of persons, an essential element of the single market, the Union must work together to develop a coherent policy in the sphere of visas, asylum and immigration. That **implies** the establishment **of** a common external border, with uniform rules on admission and residence for citizens of third countries. The development of such a policy has many implications. It is no easy task, but it is an urgent one. I therefore take the view that the IGC must not pass up the opportunity to adopt a community approach to the three issues I mentioned a moment ago: visas, asylum and immigration. This means devising a coherent policy using the community method which has yielded so much benefit to the Union in the past. The method is as follows: the initiative rests with the Commission, the decisions are taken in the council and the Parliament, and the power of review is vested in the Court of Justice.

If all the Member States are not prepared to take this step, **it** is regrettable, but it is not the end of the story. In my opinion, we must create scope for strengthened cooperation within the Union for those who want to proceed further along that path. That scope exists within the framework of Schengen. I should like to see such strengthened cooperation accommodated within the Treaty

International crime

Illegal drug trafficking, child abuse - a matter which has unfortunately recently been brought to our attention in an extremely distressing way - and other types of crime acknowledge no boundaries. **If** I raise the subject of , drugs, it is to state quite clearly that **we** in the Netherlands are fully aware of the international implications of our drugs policy. That is why we recently drew up a robust plan of action to combat the production of and trade in ecstasy. Furthermore, we are curbing border crossing drugs tourism, by reducing to five grams the amount of cannabis that may be sold to each customer and taking steps to reduce the number of coffee shops, particularly in border areas.

Nevertheless, the prime requirement for an effective campaign against the international drug trade and related crime is closer cooperation between the police, the judicial authorities and the customs authorities. We are actively working towards concrete agreements with neighbouring countries and with France, in the framework of Schengen and the European Union. In conclusion, I would like to see strengthened European cooperation in the fight against international crime. Of course, Europol has a very important role to play here.

Instability at the frontiers

Since 1989, the external security of the union has not been exposed to the same dangers as before. Its territorial integrity is no longer under threat. However, the situation at the Union's external frontiers has become more unstable- NATO, which continues to provide as our life insurance, has now adapted to these new developments. Since the agreements reached at the North Atlantic Council meeting in Berlin, provision has been made for a more independent role for Europe. We must build on these developments in our efforts to shape Europe's defence identity. What does this imply? It means that Europe must assume more responsibility for its own security.

That will not separate us from the United States, but it will ensure that the USA is more willing to lend a helping hand if necessary. Weakness and division in Europe encourage the USA to keep its distance. If Europe accepts responsibility, **for** example in the event of a peace operation, I believe that the political decisions should be taken in the European Union but the implementation should rest with the WEU, which in many cases will ultimately depend on NATO. The IGC should agree on the best possible relationship between the three organisations - the EU, the WEU and NATO. In that way Europe can - and must - play a distinctive role in the context of the atlantic alliance.

That is what I mean by a social, safe and secure Europe!

4. An effective Europe

The European Union's institutions and decision-making mechanisms were devised for the Europe of the Six. When the number of Member States doubled, they were only just able to continue functioning. Now, in a fifteen-strong Europe, the machinery is beginning to creak. The prospective accession of new Member States - which is a historical necessity - means that institutional reform can be postponed no longer.

What are the implications of this? First, we shall have to free ourselves of the tyranny of the veto. In the **1980s**, when Europe was preparing for the accession of Spain and Portugal and facing up to the task of completing the internal market, the Single European **Act** substituted qualified majority voting for the unanimity requirement in a number of areas. This proved very successful. At that time there were **to** be two additional Member States, now there are twelve countries for which accession is a prospect. We therefore have every reason to take this matter seriously if the union is to avoid paralysis.

The second implication is a strong Commission. The more Member States the Union has, the more essential will be the role of the Commission in preserving unity. That is why a powerful commission is called for. One factor making for a strong Commission is an ability to function. I doubt whether a Commission with more than 25 members will be able to do so. **A** practical approach to membership, which combines representativeness with efficiency, will therefore have to be found. On the other hand, a powerful commission must be able to fulfil its task of serving as the driving force of the Union. I shall therefore oppose any attempt in the IGC to undermine its exclusive right of initiative.

thirdly, the union must be in a position to operate effectively in the field of foreign relations. Unfortunately, however, effectiveness in foreign policy matters is still in short supply. Changes must be made in foreign policy preparation, decision-making and implementation. Preparation could be improved by establishing a planning and analysis unit, in which the commission should play a substantial role. decision-making should become more flexible, without impinging on Member States essential interests. depending on the nature of the **issue** involved, implementation should be placed in the hands **of** the commission, the Presidency or a special representative of the Union. By special representative **I** mean an envoy charged with a particular mission on the basis **of** a clear mandate from the council. This would enable the Union to operate effectively in diplomatic matters. However, I am not in favour of appointing a general Mr or **MS** CFSP. Such a move would only lead to further bureaucracy and disputes over competence with the Commission, a development which would weaken rather than strengthen the Union. In the field of external economic relations, we must ensure that the Union will still be able to stand up for its interests. The important role hitherto played by the Commission in trade policy - a role which has been of benefit to the Union - must not be eroded.

Just **as it did** at the GATT talks, **the** Union must **speak** with one voice in the WTO, which will **be** meeting at ministerial level for the first time in Singapore in December.

This **is what I** mean by an effective Europe!

Lastly: a flexible Europe

After the introduction of Monetary Union, the accession of new Member States is, as I said a moment ago, one of the most important tasks facing the European Union in the years to come. **Enlargement** along these lines will bring about fundamental changes in the Union. Above all **it** will become **more** heterogeneous. **It** will therefore no longer be **possible** for every Member State to participate fully **at** all times in the **further** integration which will become necessary. Scope will therefore have to be **created** for such **Member States** as wish to do so to reach agreement on closer cooperation. However, arrangements of this kind will have to **satisfy** certain essential conditions. **For** instance, **they** will have to be open to all the **Member States**. countries which are unwilling or unable to **take** part must not prevent others from going further, and **the** unity of **the** Community institutions should be preserved.

That is what I mean by **a** flexible Europe!

I have set out my five objectives for the IGC. They are not five separate subjects, rather they are very closely related, and should be seen in the Light of EMU **and** enlargement. Without **a** democratic Europe there cannot be a comprehensible Europe; without an effective **Europe** there cannot be a secure Europe and without flexibility Europe cannot be effective.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I opened my address today with a reference to **De** Tocqueville, and I should like to close by paraphrasing his words once again. In reviewing the various subjects he had discussed, De Tocqueville said that he felt fear and expectation at one and the same time, **He saw dangers** ahead, but believed that they could be averted. He had no faith in doctrines that would deny individuals the power to determine their own future. People, in De Tocqueville's opinion, were created neither as fully autonomous beings nor as slaves. It is not within their power to forestall progress towards greater equality; but it is up **to** mankind to decide whether that equality will lead to freedom or slavery, to enlightenment or barbarism, to wealth or poverty.

Thank you.