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Scotland's First Minister and Scottish National Party (SNP) leader Alex Salmond

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Confident SNP leader says independent Scotland a lynchpin of EU

Alex Salmond: Scotland 'at the heart of the European project'

by Andy Carling

Alex Salmond will be speaking in the intellectual heart of the EU, at the College of Europe in Bruges, where he will say that "Scotland's vast natural resources and human talent make it one of the lynchpins of the European Union."

According to the Scottish National Party, the speech will set out his case for being a "full and equal" member of the EU.

Salmond is expected to say "Our huge energy reserves, our economic and financial contribution, our fishing grounds, our academic, cultural and social links, and our commitment to the founding values of the European ideal place us at the very heart of the EU."

Energy is top of the agenda in Brussels and there is serious talk of creating an energy union and diversifying supply. Noting the importance of the sector, Salmond will say, "In this area Scotland is blessed. We have a key role to play in providing energy security for Europe, and in developing the low carbon technologies the world will need for the future."

He will elaborate, "Scotland has fully 25% of Europe's offshore wind and tidal potential. We have 10 per cent of the EU's wave potential. We have 60% of the EU's oil reserves."

He is expected to broaden the appeal of Scotland, "As one of the wealthiest countries, Scotland is a net financial contributor to the EU and will remain so as an independent member.

"We have more top universities, per head, than any other member of the EU and our academics collaborate with partners across Europe."

Noting that "We have one of the largest national shares of Europe's total fishing grounds and 12 national fleets fish in our waters," he will warn, "The EU's fisheries policy would unravel without Scotland."

He will remark that 160,000 EU nationals from outside the nation "have chosen to live and work in Scotland."

He will conclude, "Perhaps more than any of this, Scotland shares and promotes the values of solidarity, freedom and democracy that are the heart of the European project."