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THE PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER GUYVERHOFSTADT
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THE NEW WORLD ORDER SINCE 11 SEPTEMBER

Mr Rector,
Mr Assistant Rector,
Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure for me to be able to speak to you here today in my capacity as President-in-Office of the European Council, at this special ceremony marking the beginning of the academic year in the capital of the largest of the 12 countries with which the European Union is currently negotiating membership. I have taken this opportunity to find out more about the teaching project set up here by the College of Europe in 1992, one more indication of the College's unwavering faith in the European cause that was first expressed when it was founded in Bruges in 1948.

For me it is therefore a great honour to be able to give the opening speech in this magnificent building so steeped in history. My predecessors, in Bruges at least,

have included François Mitterrand, Richard von Weizsacker, King Juan Carlos of Spain, Mario Soares, Ruud Lubbers and Jacques Delors. Meanwhile, ask any British politician what the word Bruges conjures up for him and he will tell you of the famous anti-European speech that Margaret Thatcher gave at the opening ceremony in 1988. Each of the guest speakers, driven by the fact that they were addressing a young audience, sought to present their own in-depth vision of the future of Europe. I will try to do likewise.

I have chosen to entitle my speech: "The New World Order since 11 September". Barely six weeks have passed since the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, so it is undeniably not an easy subject to tackle. These attacks were the first ever massacres that we were able to witness live and in full on television. It is hard to rationalize such massive events, but the one thing that really stands out is the striking contrast between the small number of attackers and the huge impact of their actions.

The 11 September attacks can legitimately be described as military attacks. Six or seven thousand people, all of them civilians, died in the space of 90 minutes in New York and in Washington, in the heart of the United States. The attacks claimed more victims than Pearl Harbor. In fact, since the end of the Civil War in 1865, never had so many people died in an attack on American soil. The shock waves were enormous. The American economy – which was already slowing down – suffered an additional blow and world growth immediately slowed by several tenths of a percent. The world's most powerful government, the sole surviving superpower, was forced to radically review its foreign policy in the days and weeks that followed the attacks, and was subsequently driven to go to war in an unknown and inaccessible region. No American general or

politician would have dared to suggest such a military operation before 11 September.

Previously we had thought that only another superpower – the Soviet Union prior to 1989, or perhaps China in a few generations' time – would have been capable of threatening the United States. But nothing could be further from the truth. It took just 40 men, around a dozen of whom were prepared to meet their death. Certainly they were fanatics, but they were also men who had easily succeeded in melting unobtrusively into the community for the previous year. If they were here in this room today, they would probably not stand out from the rest of us. Forty men and one evil leader, Osama bin Laden, an extremist with a considerable fortune who, according to American intelligence sources, succeeded in buying the support of the government of one of the poorest nations in the world, Afghanistan, with just a 100 million dollars.

How many people in the world have 100 million dollars? Several thousand, surely. Then there are businessmen, banks, drug barons and sects who can all mobilize such sums of money. We can only continue hoping that Osama bin Laden – with his wealth, his fanaticism and his tendency to engage in irrational violence – will turn out to be one of a kind, But never again will we be totally sure.

We are now entering uncharted territory. Look at the strategy used in the war currently being waged in Afghanistan. The days of the Taliban regime are numbered. No government in the world can now ignore the clear message: anyone who makes use of terrorism will effectively outlaw their own regime. But will we be able to capture the terrorists, too? Won't we be obliged to hunt them down for years to come? Will we have to endure several years of increased vigilance? Or will the indignation simply die down once the Taliban have gone,

leaving people to carry on their lives as before in the naive hope that we will not see a repeat of the events of 11 September?

Whatever the outcome of the current conflict, we will have to face up to the consequences of the attacks perpetrated in New York and Washington. National borders are continuing to become less and less relevant. Of course, countries remain responsible for what goes on inside their borders, but weak or impoverished states can easily become bases for or even fall into the hands of extremists and terrorist organisations. As a result, we need to establish a police and intelligence network which, in some countries, will be better informed of what is going on than the local authorities. The events of 11 September have made policing and security an urgent domestic policy issue for the entire world.

The same logic applies to military affairs. States that want to overpower or go to war against a neighbouring country have now become few and far between. And yet the violence continues unabated. Since the last conventional war, the war waged against Saddam Hussein, the world has had to deal with excessively complex intra-national wars, from Somalia to Rwanda, Congo, Sierra Leone and Yugoslavia. Now an enemy has struck with extreme violence in the heart of two cities in the West. This enemy respects no national borders, does not dig in and doesn't even claim responsibility for its own actions. This kind of conflict increasingly requires the commitment of smaller military units that combine flexibility with high mobility. Armies too are becoming the instruments of internal missions at world level. It all looks uncomfortably like another Cold War, but one waged against an enemy that we rarely see and who often remains out of reach.

Osama bin Laden is not a spokesman for the poor nations of the world. He is not a spokesman for the Arab world. He is not poor or oppressed. He is quite simply

a murderer. However, the support he receives from certain quarters must give us pause for thought. It is too easy to fall into the trap of thinking that our Western civilisations serve as a model for the rest of the world, that our values are universal and are recognized by all. On the contrary, we are not nearly as appreciated as we would like to think. We will need to work on that.

The first major conclusion we can draw in this context is that nobody can simply ignore what is going on in the rest of the world. This is certainly a lesson for the United States which, in recent times, has shown signs of wanting to go it alone and become more introspective. And yet it was George Bush senior who, in 1991, two years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and shortly after the victory against Saddam Hussein, issued a call for a New World Order. America's involvement in Somalia, in the Middle East peace process, in Bosnia and in Kosovo went above and beyond what was necessary if it were merely defending its own interests. However, it has to be said that its external aid remained limited. It was too much even for a superpower to take on. A New World Order built or protected by the United States alone turned out to be an illusion. In Afghanistan and Kashmir, in Gaza and on the West Bank, in Congo and now in New York and Washington, too...

And yet, we now need a New World Order more than ever before. A world order in which American leadership will of course remain a key element, if only because it will remain the only country with a global military force until such time as Europe develops a defence capability of its own. But the other continents, and especially Europe, must make a major contribution to building this New World Order, too. They must take greater responsibility, and make a greater commitment. Nobody – least of all the European Union – wants to see a continuation of recent events, where the poorest countries in Africa, Latin America and the Balkans have been torn apart and become a haven for criminals

and modern-day pirates capable of striking out in whatever manner they choose, wherever and whenever they want.

The old world order that took shape during the Cold War along a line separating East from West, collapsed in 1989. Since then new front lines have gradually taken shape, dividing the North from the South. Various conflicts have been fought along these lines. The key question now is how we can repair these splits. How can we create a New World Order that is not one-dimensional and is not based solely on bipolar opposition? How can we find an alternative to a system in which the United States takes all the decisions by itself and acts as a consequence? How can we find a stronger and more effective alternative to a system based on the United Nations with its 189 formally sovereign states? We need to find a new path, a middle way.

Flows of trade and migration, diplomatic conflicts and cultural exchange are all essentially regional or continental. So why not take these as our starting point? We could order the world on the basis of existing regional cooperation organisations: the European Union, ASEAN, Mercosur, NAFTA, the African Union, the Arab League and SAARC in southern Asia. In this context, we should also include countries like China, Russia and Japan, and the whole of Oceania. We need to take a first step down the path towards a global form of federalism, a structure where the reality of an increasingly interactive world is finally made a political reality too. In fact, a structure of this kind was already planned when the United Nations was created in 1945, but was never implemented after the Cold War.

The New World Order could lead to a new G8, G9 or G10, with regular meetings between the delegates of the world's continents. I am not denying that there are risks involved. In the worst-case scenario we could see civilisations

clash in the way described by Samuel Huntington. If we institutionalise relations between the Arab world and the West will we not be simply underscoring their differences? I don't think so. At critical moments during the Cold War it was precisely the fact that there was someone to speak to that helped prevent the situation from escalating. I am convinced that the institutionalisation of relations helps to channel opposition and thereby attenuates any risks to world peace.

Moreover, would this new multi-polar world order not provide a response to the many questions being asked by the anti-globalists? To be frank, I don't really like the term "anti-globalist". It implies that globalisation is a political choice and that there is therefore some form of "anti-globalist" solution to the world's problems. That is not true. Globalisation is the product of technological renewal, of communication, of free trade. The anti-globalists are right to criticize poverty, injustice and the damage being done to the environment. But the question is not how we can stop the process of globalisation; it is rather how we can correct it. How can we prevent globalisation from leading to poverty, injustice and environmental damage? We need a global political vision, a political counterweight capable of reining in uncontrolled forces, be they market forces or ideological forces.

The European Union is the model which shows this is possible. I know that the word "model" might sound presumptuous when you consider the day-to-day goings-on in the EU. We hear and read about excessive bureaucracy, endless negotiations, thousands of details, all-night meetings, rivalry between the European Parliament, the national governments and the Commission and - constantly - of how national interests always come to the fore the minute things start to go wrong. Sometimes the European Union looks more like the Hapsburg Empire in decline.

But let's also look at what *has* been achieved. The European Union has made peace between the traditional enemies France and Germany. It has modernized and stabilized agriculture. It has liberalized its markets, scrapped customs controls on its internal borders, and created a single currency, the euro. And now it is seeking to create a single army and a common justice policy. It enables young people to go and study at foreign universities. In short, Europe has risen from the ashes of 1945 to build the European Union and a new future for itself.

Of course, it is only natural to compare our situation with that of the United States of America. In Washington there is a clear Administration, a Constitution, a President, a Congress. Brussels has a Byzantine structure by comparison. But the United States grew up as a new country, with none of the baggage of history. Today's Europe, on the other hand, was built on the ruins of centuries of hate, rivalry, misunderstandings, distrust, and linguistic, cultural and religious diversity. Any institution called upon to take all of these things into account is bound to have a somewhat complex structure. This is a fact that our impatient Anglo-Saxon friends sometimes fail to grasp in its entirety.

ASEAN, Mercosur, the African Union... all claim to have drawn their inspiration from Europe. They, too, want to build peace and cooperation after centuries of war and aggression. In this way, the European Union has become a model for regional cooperation agreements worldwide; a source of inspiration for the structures of a new world yet to be created.

But structures can become paralysed. And while we might hold Europe up as an example, we must also ask ourselves whether the European Union isn't starting to look a bit cumbersome. The institutional discussions that have been going on almost uninterrupted for 10 years now – from Maastricht to Amsterdam and Nice – sometimes give us the feeling that Europe is losing sight of what is

important and its ability to work towards it. The imminent "Laeken Declaration" devoted to the future of Europe seeks to make this objective occupy centre-stage once again.

We must never lose sight of the fact that the central project of the European Union is a project undertaken on an unprecedented scale. An organisation of 15 Member States is looking to expand over the next decade to embrace 13 new members. The significance of this decision is severely underestimated both within and outside the EU. It is a major risk. The arrival on the scene of so many new Member States could push the European Union down any number of paths. Some people think that the very scale of this operation could quite simply paralyse the Union. But it is a risk we must take. The collapse of post-Communist Albania in 1997, the immigration of tens of thousands of Roma leaving Vladimir Meciar's Slovakia, and the aggressive policy of the Serb leadership all remind us of the risks of having an unstable, impoverished and marginalised Central and Eastern Europe.

Of course, own interests are a major driving force. But the enlargement of the EU is also by far the most grandiose and ambitious political project our generation has ever seen. For what political ambition can be stronger than the desire to bring the underprivileged Romanians together, under one roof, and in the space of just 10 years, with the Germans, Danes and Dutch? The average income of the citizens of these Member States is six to seven times that of Romanians. In fact, the average income of a Romanian is more or less the same as that of a Filipino, Indonesian or Paraguayan and only a little more than that of an Egyptian or a Bolivian. Consequently, EU enlargement is an ambitious plan seeking – at least at European level – to bridge the divide between a wealthy North and an impoverished South.

We have already gained some experience in this domain, albeit on a smaller scale. In the 1970s, having just thrown off the yoke of too many years of dictatorship, Spain, Greece and Portugal trailed the rest of the continent economically. The gulf between them and Western Europe was so wide that tens of thousands of people left those countries in search of employment in France, Germany, Great Britain and the Benelux. And once those countries had seen off their dictators, the European Union was eager to embrace them. At the time, the democratic world stopped at the barbed wire of the Iron Curtain and at the foot of the Pyrenees. Now, 25 years later, Spain, Greece and Portugal have made up much of the economic ground they had lost. They have gone from being countries of emigration to countries of immigration.

And we can succeed again, with Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland and all the candidate countries. However, Romania trails a lot further behind than Spain ever did. The pessimists maintain that we have set our sights too high. Well, perhaps we have. But we can still expect the opening up of the borders, the enlargement of the European free trade zone, more and more intense cooperation and the stabilisation of the governments of Central and Eastern Europe to have a remarkably positive economic effect. For this is what the European Union has proved time and time again: the organisation of free trade and the free cooperation of economic forces exceeds all expectations.

Nowhere is cooperation between nation states as important as it is in Europe. Nowhere have greater efforts been made to bridge the divide between rich and poor regions. Surely we can say outright that if a New World Order is being sought, the European Union can indeed be held up as a model?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the project to which your country, Poland, is committed. Now, I know you are experiencing difficulties in your membership negotiations. But look at the bigger picture. Of all the 13 candidate countries, yours is one of the best placed to enter the European fold I mentioned earlier and live alongside the Germans, the Danes and the Dutch. The Polish people have managed to revive their country after 120 years of German and Russian oppression. During the Cold War, the Poles stubbornly made it clearer than anyone else that they did not agree with an East-West divide. I do not see how a people that inherited such a past can fail to take its place in the European Union. On the contrary, I expect to find a partner boasting equal amounts of self-confidence and voluntarism, a partner prepared to cooperate to the full whilst also ensuring that its specific characteristics are respected and recognised.

Mr Rector,

Mr Assistant Rector,

I am sure I do not have to lecture members of the College of Europe about Europe's ambitions. Long before Poland becomes an official member of the European Union, here you are with a campus intended to train people for Europe. Were it not for people who believe wholeheartedly in Europe, the European Union would not exist. What I have tried to do today is to prove that the European Union is the most generous political project on our continent, a project that can be held up as an example for a New World Order that will truly begin to close the gap between rich and poor. Now, as we stand on the threshold of the 21st century, I find it hard to imagine a greater political ambition. To all of you who are preparing for a European career I say that I hope, one day, we will achieve this goal together.