

Speech by Dr Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and President of the European Council, at the official ceremony to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome



Presidents, Prime Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome. The venue of our celebrations today could hardly be more symbolic. For we are celebrating in Berlin. A city that until 18 years ago was divided by a Wall, by barbed wire, by soldiers with orders to shoot. In which people paid with their lives for seeking to escape to freedom.

I grew up east of this city, in the German Democratic Republic. When the Treaties of Rome were concluded I was just three years old. I was seven years old when the Wall was built. It divided also my own family. I did not believe I would ever be able to travel to the West until I was a pensioner. Only a few metres from here was the point where any walk I took would be at an end. But then the Wall collapsed after all. That was a defining moment for me: I realized that nothing ever has to stay the way it is.

That is a source of immense hope for all those who are not ready to countenance the injustices of our world. It is a source of immense hope, too, by the way, for all those in Europe who still endure oppression – like the people of Belarus. Today they are celebrating their independence day. Our thoughts are also with them today and our message to them is: Human rights are indivisible! Europe is with you!

Ladies and gentlemen, the reason we can celebrate this special anniversary here in Berlin of all places is because half a century ago a number of Europe's political leaders set about building a European peace project the like of which had never been seen before.

For let us be honest: 50 years of the Treaties of Rome – in the context of history that is hardly more than the blinking of an eye. And whether it will one day be more than that, whether on 25 March 2057 the centenary of the Treaties of Rome will be celebrated in a Europe of peace and freedom, democracy and the rule of law? We do not know.

None of all this can be taken for granted. All of it must be repeatedly strengthened and defended anew. Stagnation means regression. Building trust takes decades. And overnight it can be undermined. Any cleavage will soon have Europe out of step - sooner than some might think. In short, European unification must be striven for and secured time and time again. That is our guiding mission for the future. That is what is at the heart of today's anniversary celebrations.

Certainly the world today is not the same as the world 50 years ago. The six founding members are now 27 Member States. What started with freedom from tariffs has now progressed into a common currency. A world dominated by two blocs is today a world with a number of different power

centres.

In such a world we must ask ever anew what holds Europe together also in this century, what the essence of its identity is. For me the answer is clear. The source of Europe's identity are our shared, fundamental values. They are what holds Europe together.

Let us not forget: For centuries Europe had been an idea, no more than a hope of peace and understanding. Today we, the citizens of Europe, know that hope has been fulfilled.

It has been fulfilled because the founding fathers of Europe were thinking in terms well beyond their own generation. They were thinking in terms well beyond their own time. They were thinking in terms also well beyond purely economic freedoms.

Three years before the signing of the Treaties of Rome the European Defence Community had foundered. But that was not the end of Europe. Despite that disappointment the preamble of the Treaty establishing the European Community began with a statement of determination – I quote – "to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe..." - end of quote.

The founding fathers of Europe knew that in the long run the economic and the political could not be kept separate.

Fifty years of the Treaties of Rome – that means for me, to put it in a nutshell, a dream has come true!

This dream could come true because we citizens of Europe have learned over the past 50 years to make the most of our identities and diverse traditions, the lively variety of our languages, cultures and regions.

This dream could come true because we let ourselves be guided by that quality which for me gives Europe its true soul, that quality which made the Treaties of Rome possible.

That quality is tolerance. We have taken centuries to learn this. On the way to tolerance we had to endure cataclysms. We persecuted and destroyed one another. We ravaged our homeland. We jeopardized the things we revered. Not even one generation has passed since the worst period of hate, devastation and destruction.

Today, however, ladies and gentlemen, we live together as was never possible before.

Each Member State has helped to unite Europe and strengthen democracy and the rule of law. Thanks to the yearning for freedom of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe, the unnatural division of Europe is now consigned to the past.

One of the men who signed the Treaties of Rome in 1957, Maurice Faure, is amongst us today, as I said earlier. Today, exactly 50 years later, we can assure Maurice Faure and his comrades, in the words of our Berlin Declaration, that "we have a unique way of living and working together in the European Union. We, the citizens of the European Union, have united for the better."

United for the better – how can we preserve, strengthen and deepen what we have achieved so that it stands the test of the next 50 years at least ?

We can do it, I believe, by concentrating on what is our greatest strength - the power of freedom, freedom in all its manifestations:

- The freedom to express our opinions freely, even when others do not like them.
- The freedom to believe or not to believe.
- The freedom of enterprise.
- The freedom of artists to create their work as they see fit.
- The freedom of the individual in his responsibility for the whole community.

When we count on the power of freedom, we are counting on the individual. The individual is paramount. His dignity is inviolable. And if I may make a personal comment, I would add that this

view of the individual is for me also part and parcel of Europe's Jewish-Christian heritage.

This view of the power of freedom and the dignity of the individual was already implicit in the European Coal and Steel Community established before the Treaties of Rome. With the signing of the Treaties of Rome in 1957, for the first time in Europe's history the peoples of Europe came together of their own free will to create a common project with common rules.

That is why today in Berlin we can reaffirm our commitment to a Europe of equal rights for all Member States, both large and small, old and new.

On its own every European country is too weak to successfully tackle the global challenges we face. That is why there can only be one answer: we must not act alone but together in a united Europe.

The age of globalization makes one thing increasingly clear to us: the decision in favour of Europe is also a decision in favour of a certain way of life. It was and remains a decision in favour of our European model. It combines economic success and social responsibility. Only together can we continue to preserve our ideal of European society in future.

Only together can we ensure economic and social standards also internationally.

For we should not deceive ourselves: the world will not wait for Europe. Other regions of the world are developing at a breathtaking pace.

Europe therefore needs one thing above all else: it needs to be dynamic. For if it is not dynamic there can be no prosperity in Europe. And if it is not dynamic, solidarity within Europe will diminish. A dynamic Europe is a Europe of dynamic growth. That creates jobs. That rewards achievement. That will help tackle bureaucracy.

That strengthens Europe's strengths. They lie in the knowledge and ability of Europe's citizens, in education, research and innovation. That is the key to growth, employment and social cohesion.

Europe must also lead the way in renewable energies, energy efficiency and protection of our climate. We adopted an Action Plan on this at the European Council in early March. We want to make our contribution to averting the global threat of climate change. But for that we need allies throughout the world.

For Europe will be increasingly compelled to deal with external influences in future anyway due to globalization.

A common Foreign and Security Policy in Europe is therefore absolutely vital. But, of course, this policy should not be isolationist but must be based on cooperation with partners outside Europe. I firmly believe that close, amicable relations with the United States of America and a strong NATO are and will remain in Europe's fundamental interest.

This is not at odds with enhanced intensification of European cooperation. Rather, it is the other side of the same coin.

A comprehensive strategic partnership with Russia is just as important to Europe. We need both a strategic partnership with Russia and the transatlantic alliance. They are most certainly not mutually exclusive. After all, it is Europe which has developed a modern understanding of integration: embedded institutional structures instead of "them against us" attitudes, the formation of axes and go-it-alone policies. Europe must never divide, or allow itself to be divided, over any issue.

Only if Europe stands together will we be able to successfully fight terrorism, organized crime and illegal immigration. Only then will we be able to successfully defend liberties and civil rights, also in the struggle against those who oppose them. Then racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia will never again stand a chance.

Then we can work towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the world and ensure that people do not become victims of war, terrorism and violence, that poverty, hunger and diseases such as AIDS are driven back. We want to promote freedom and development in the world.

In our Berlin Declaration we expressly state our commitment to continue promoting democracy, stability and prosperity beyond the borders of the European Union.

The importance of this commitment cannot be overestimated. And it quickly becomes very tangible. For instance, on a day like today we also think of people in Zimbabwe and Darfur. The suffering there is unbearable. We want to take this opportunity to call upon Sudan's President Bashir to finally comply with the UN resolutions. I want to state frankly that we have to consider stronger sanctions.

With this – as well as with the new UN resolution on Iran adopted yesterday – we demonstrate our commitment to shouldering global responsibility together with our allies and partners.

However, ladies and gentlemen, even on a festive occasion such as this we should not fool ourselves. If we are to safeguard the European way of life and assume global responsibility, Europe needs to be able to act, to act more effectively than it can at present.

For we know that the European Union will continue to thrive both on openness and on the will of its Member States to consolidate the Union's internal development.

The internal structures must be adapted to an enlarged Union with 27 Member States. What has to be done here? My answer is clear: the European Union needs more and it needs better defined competences than it has at present: in energy policy, in foreign policy, in justice and home affairs.

It has to determine more clearly for what the Member States are responsible and for what the Community is responsible.

It must concentrate on core tasks and preserve the unique features of the Member States wherever possible.

It must ensure that even with 27 or more Member States its institutions function efficiently, democratically and in a way which citizens understand. Much is at stake.

It is true that anyone who hoped that 50 years after the Treaties of Rome we would have a Constitutional Treaty will be disappointed.

But it is also true that anyone who hoped that Europe would be aware of the need to strengthen its institutional make-up will find that our Berlin Declaration points the way forward. For we know that we must always renew the political shape of Europe in keeping with the times.

It is therefore both important and necessary that today here in Berlin, 50 years after the signing of the Treaties of Rome, we are united in our aim of placing the European Union on a renewed common basis before the European Parliament elections in 2009.

I am working to ensure that a roadmap for this can be adopted at the close of Germany's EU Presidency, and I am counting on your support.

I am certain that it is not only in the interests of Europe, but also of the individual Member States and the citizens of Europe, that this process be brought to a successful conclusion.

Not to do so would be an historic failure. What we decide will have an impact for a long time to come, for better or for worse.

But, ladies and gentlemen, there is really no need to talk about failure. Europe has overcome major obstacles so many times. The negotiations on the Treaties whose 50th anniversary we are celebrating today is a prime example of this.

I read that one delegation member – I believe it was a British diplomat – is supposed to have said at the time, and I quote: "The future treaty you are discussing has no chance of being agreed; if it was agreed, it would have no chance of being ratified; and if it was ratified, it would have no chance of being applied" - end of quote. I wonder, ladies and gentlemen, what this negotiator would have said about today's celebrations.

But he was not the only one who was less than enthusiastic about the treaty. One rather prominent French politician is reported as saying at the time that - and I quote: "Treaties, you see, are like girls and roses; they last while they last". Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the rose tree has grown considerably since 1957 and today an admittedly not so young girl is even among the signatories of the Berlin Declaration.

And, finally, a Belgian newspaper, *La libre Belgique*, wrote at the time of the negotiations on the Treaties of Rome that the Germans were all important doctors and well-organized; the French were well bred, loved plans and theories. The Italians wore wonderful ties and stockings and even statistics exploded like fireworks in their country.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, we are all of this and much, much more. That is Europe. Scepticism, contradictions, diversity, even some much loved clichés, but not least – courage. Europe is all of that.

Europe is much more than dairy cows and the Chemicals Directive. Just look around – people from 27 European states are gathered here today. There are pupils and students from the ERASMUS programme. There are musicians from the Youth Orchestra of the European Union playing for us conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Sometimes I think that if we are so much preoccupied with extending and renewing our shared European house, we could easily overlook its greatness and uniqueness in the midst of all the construction work.

For after all the wars and boundless suffering, something very special has emerged.

We, the citizens of Europe, have united for the better. For we know, Europe is our common future.

That was a dream for many generations. Our history reminds us that we must protect this for the good of future generations.

And so I hope that the citizens of Europe will say in 50 years' time:

Back then in Berlin, the united Europe set the right course.

Back then in Berlin, the European Union embarked upon the right path towards a bright future. It went on to renew its foundations so that it could make its contribution here in Europe, this old continent, as well as globally, in this one large yet small world we live in.

For a better world. For people everywhere. That is our mission for the future.

Thank you.