

The following is the text of the speech delivered by Professor Peter G. Xuereb at the London launch of the book: *European Union: The Next Fifty Years*, published by FT Business.

“Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to make three connected main points in addition to those made in my written contribution to the book and as my contribution to today’s debate.

The first point relates to what it is that we are celebrating at this time. I would ask you to consider that it is not so much Union or Unification. Rather it is Community. The great achievement of Europeans over the last 50 years is encapsulated in the Idea of Europe as Community. The various stages of Community have bequeathed us a legal order that exists side by side in harmony with those of the Member States, a sphere of policy-making and decision-making that exists side by side with their own, an entity with a sovereignty that exists side by side with their own. Europeans have achieved this by devising through their genius the instruments of Community: the Community legal order, the Community Method spearheaded by the independent Commission, co-decision-making by the Council and the European Parliament, and a Court of Justice that dialogues with national courts, and also - wonder of wonders for the rest of the world - majority decision-making made possible by the values and instruments of solidarity and cohesion and the tools of assistance and inclusion. It is the Community method, the Community legal order, the Community mechanisms of solidarity and respect for essential diversity and national identity, all inherent in the idea of European Community, that we celebrate and are most justified in celebrating this year.

My second point at this crucial stage in our history is that much of the Constitutional Treaty that embodies and carries forward this Idea of Europe as Community is to be welcomed. It would advance our cohesion while at the same time enshrining the necessary mechanisms of solidarity, the vital respect for national identity and for the diverse cultures in an ever more diverse Community of states and peoples, and the intercultural dialogue that this absolutely requires. However, this period of reflection has given us time to consider whether the Constitutional Treaty will keep us all fully faithful to what has bound us together for the last fifty years. More politics, more majority-decision-making as needed, more solidarity YES; but ideological politics, national politics writ large, to this many would say No. It appears, from the reactions in some Member States, that if the necessary support for ‘greater Community’ is to be obtained, it needs to be made clear that that is precisely what is intended, and not – now or in the foreseeable future – a United States of Europe or an entity that behaves as such. In my view, the citizen of this European Community will support and defend this vision of the Union, and this vision of his or her ‘second citizenship’.

My third point. The Idea of Europe as Community, the reality of Europe as Community, is the most powerful message of order, peace and promise that the Union can hope to give to its Neighbours, to its Partners and to the World. We celebrate the fact that over the last fifty years the Community (Union) has been a beacon of democracy, of human

rights, and of freedom itself for millions over the globe while demonstrating a capacity for mobilizing change through ‘soft power’ and its emphasis on the pursuit of the general good, practiced internally, and also externally. But Article 3 paragraph 4 of the Constitutional Treaty, that speaks of the Union “upholding and promoting its values *and its interests*” in its relations with the wider world, has already been misinterpreted by some – even though it then speaks of common interests such as peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, the eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, the strict observance and development of international law and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter. We need to make two things clear: the first is that we in Europe consider certain universal values, especially the protection of human rights, to be just that - universal; and, secondly, we need to begin to speak more loudly of common interest, of the Common Good, and develop a new hermeneutics of dialogue that does not speak down to our neighbours and Partners, but rather shows the Community spirit. This means the political will and courage to pursue jointly with our Neighbours our Common Good. This in turn means the full use of the ‘tools of Community’ – maximum cohesion but with solidarity and based on full dialogue. On this basis, the multilateralism that is so badly needed in our dealings with our neighbours in the Mediterranean and all our other Partners, can come about.

Well then: How do we go forward? How do we get over the hump, from the first 50 years to the next fifty years, even so that the next fifty years can at last begin? We do need a new Treaty but most assuredly we need it for the next workable phase of deeper and more open ‘Community’. And if the word ‘Constitutional’ causes confusion, let the word be dropped – the constitutional issues are by now well known and will not be radically advanced by this Treaty. Also surely by now we all know that ‘Union’ means no more (and no less) than a Community of states and peoples with a capital ‘C’, with Unity in Diversity and practical Solidarity. The peoples of Europe will in my view rally around such a Constitutional Treaty for the European Community, for they will understand it. Let us at the same time make it even clearer to our Partners that the next fifty years will not be about fitting a new ‘superpower’ into the current and rather sterile paradigm of international relations, but rather, and infinitely more gloriously and safely, be about carrying the Idea of Community, and its practice, beyond Europe itself – to them – even if membership of the Union be not open to all.

This is the Idea of Europe that, if we hold fast to it, we can share with all. It is Europe’s true vocation and it remains the best hope for us all. Thank you.”