

*Intervento del Presidente della Repubblica Italiana
Giorgio Napolitano
alla Commissione Europea*

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Sono qui, in un ambiente che mi è familiare per i molti anni trascorsi nella partecipazione, a vario titolo, alla vita delle istituzioni europee: ed è per me un privilegio essere qui in un momento solenne, quello che segna l'adozione del primo atto altamente impegnativo della nuova Commissione, cioè della comunicazione della Strategia 2020 dell'Unione Europea.

I thank President Barroso and all of you for giving me the opportunity, first of all, to better understand and appreciate the view point of the Commission on the main problems of the Union in this crucial passage, and, at the same time, to reaffirm the continuity of Italy's historical commitment to the cause of European integration.

I am referring to the crucial passage represented by the entry into force – at last! – of the Lisbon Treaty, and by its implementation or, as I prefer to say, the full development of its potential.

Of course, I don't ignore that our central common concern is related to the state of the European economy – about 2 years after the burst out of the global financial crisis – and to the perspective of its competitive growth.

In these days, the general attention, in Europe and not only in Europe, is focused on the Greek emergency. I will not enter and I will not ask for details on this specific subject, but my question is : the difficulties the Union is facing, and in particular Euro is facing, vis à vis the fiscal crisis and the liquidity and confidence crisis hitting Greece, do not suggest the necessity of mechanisms now lacking to prevent and keep under control similar emergencies, to sustain member countries in extraordinary difficulties but conditioning more severely their fiscal policies, that means also their political behaviours?

Doesn't more generally not only the imperative to face possible dangers for the whole Euro zone, but a new strategy like the "Europe 2020" you are just adopting, require a strong determination to reinforce the Union's capacity of common decision and action?

Even in order to re-launch a fundamental pillar of the Economic Union and of the European construction as

such, that is to say to re-launch the Single Market, it is indispensable – as Mario Monti pointed out in his recent intervention at the ECOFIN council – to fully re-establish its rules against temptations of economic nationalism, as well as to extend the Single Market in areas where it does not yet exist in a sufficient degree ; and it is indispensable also to adopt accompanying policies in various sectors including sectors of social policies. And I don't need to recall the importance of an open discussion of tax policy issues aiming not at a tax harmonization but definitely at a tax coordination.

Well, don't you think that all this means we badly need more market integration and economic governance besides monetary integration, we badly need, in a wider sense, more unity and more integration?

Europe needs it – I'm deeply convinced – if it wants to avoid decline or fatal irrelevance in the emerging global world, where the centre of gravity of international economic and political relations is shifting far away from Europe and the Atlantic. No one of us, big and less big Member States, will escape the fate of irrelevance just relying only on its own forces or on a simple, loose system of intergovernmental entente and compromises.

I am referring to the role of Europe in competing both on the economic and on the political world scene.

And the main question is : can the innovations introduced by the Lisbon Treaty guarantee effective instruments to raise the level of common decisions and actions of the Union? I specially think of : the extension of qualified majority decisions area in the Council ; the new emphasis on tighter, “ever tighter” coordination of the economic policies of the Eurozone and on the role of the Eurogroup ; the strengthening of the authority of the European Council and of the powers of the European Parliament ; the creation of a new figure of High Representative for the Foreign and Security Common Policy and the establishment of a European Service for the External Action ; the prevision of a Permanent Structured Cooperation in the field of Defence. I am particularly interested in having an idea about the implementation of these dispositions, which represent an important part of the potential impulse the integration process can receive from the Lisbon Treaty.

It is necessary to move in all the directions I mentioned – and in others I cannot now specify, like the next financial perspectives and, within this framework,

the renewal, not the weakening of the Cohesion Policy. I just want to observe, with regard to the Regional Policy, that we cannot escape the necessity of a more severe analysis and control for a transparent, effective and productive investment of structural funds within various countries, including Italy and its Southern regions. But a simple cut of the funds destined in particular to Regions of southern Italy could be a serious mistake : because it is a common European interest to promote material and human resources, up to now largely underemployed in Southern Italy, to create conditions for more growth in Italy and Europe, taking into account also the strategic position of those regions in the crucial Mediterranean area.

But in view of the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, and of the new development of several key common policies (among them may I recall the immigration policy?), the decisive factor is represented by a stronger common political will. We cannot surrender to a sort of “integration fatigue”, we have to put forward new pressing motivations for a deeper, bolder coherent integration.

May I repeat the words of Jean Monnet, in which we find the synthesis of his genial intuition and invention? “Un plan qui ne part pas du principe de la délégation de souveraineté ne peut apporter aucune contribution utile à la solution des grands problèmes qui nous assaillent. La coopération entre les nations, si importante soit-elle, ne résout rien. Ce qu’il faut chercher, c’est une fusion des intérêts des peuples européens, et non pas simplement le maintien de l’équilibre de ces intérêts.”

And looking at the future, he wrote also – in the same context of his Memoirs, in 1976 : “Je suis sûr que la suite des saisons nous conduit nécessairement vers une unité plus grande et si ce n’est celle que nous savons organiser, ce sera celle que nous subirons.... Il n’y a plus de place, en tout cas, pour l’action séparée de nos vieilles nations souveraines.”

Italy relies very much, for the re-launch and deepening of integration, on the two truly supranational institutions – the Commission and the Parliament – which cooperate with the Council in guaranteeing the consolidation and the advancement of the Union. And I deeply appreciated the announcement by President Barroso’s “Political guidelines for the next Commission”

of a special Partnership between the European Parliament and the Commission.

We respect all the European Institutions and their democratic collective functioning, which has not to be paralysed by the dogma of unanimity, which can be strongly stimulated by “the willing” for a more determined and coherent European integration, but cannot be identified with the decision-dictating of any more or less restricted “directoire”.

One final word. We appreciate very much the initiative taken by President Barroso attributing a delicate and meaningful mission to Mario Monti. Let me say that nobody could better than Mario witness the attachment of Italy to the European cause and the quality of its contribution to the common effort in facing the problems of yesterday and of today.