

Speech by Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament at the special meeting of the European Council – 16 July 2014

Ladies and gentlemen,

Democracy is constantly evolving. It is not static. Democracy needs to reflect developments in society, institutionally as well as in other ways. In recent decades, people have felt ever more strongly that their wishes should meet with a visible response at EU level, including when it comes to the institutions' policies on appointments to offices. In particular, they consider that decisions on the filling of executive posts should be taken not in secret but openly: that is, decisions on posts which give the holder the opportunity to directly influence the political life of society and the lives of individuals, for example appointments to the Commission. Within Parliament, in the political parties at European level, therefore, a process has been set in train – with your support at the congresses of your party alliances – a process which admittedly has been controversial but which nonetheless yesterday concluded with **the European Parliament's election of Jean-Claude Juncker as President of the Commission**. We believe this to be a historic process that will bolster parliamentarism in Europe and change the EU.

Jean-Claude Juncker has received a strong mandate from Parliament, in addition to the broad support which he already enjoyed here in the European Council. He now has backing in a form which has not been given to any previous President of the Commission. That can and must – and I am convinced that it also will – put him in a stronger position to meet the serious challenges which lie ahead of us. You now have it within your power to remove the first major barrier facing the new President of the Commission.

In the autumn, the **Commissioners-designate** will be required to present themselves for a **public hearing at Parliament to verify their suitability for their posts**. As in the past, we shall carefully check the candidates' technical competence. From discussions with the chairs of the political groups, I know that one critical point which will influence Parliament's approval of the college is the **gender balance**. Parliament is very concerned that at present virtually all the potential candidates whose names are circulating are men.

Well now, ladies and gentlemen, of course you may look across to your neighbours and think 'It's up to everyone else except me'. In that case, however, the end-result of the individual decisions might be one that no one wishes to see: a Commission in which women are not appropriately represented and which Parliament consequently cannot endorse. I therefore call on each and every one of you: send women to Brussels to become Commissioners. Parliament will not accept a gentlemen's club. Please help the new President of the Commission to resolve this issue.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The election of Jean-Claude Juncker as President of the Commission is a milestone, but it certainly should not end the debate on European democracy. When I talk about further

democratising Europe, I am less concerned about institutional debates than I am about concrete political results. We seek to enhance Parliament's role so that we can carry out our responsibilities to our electorates.

People are becoming increasingly alienated from the European Institutions, too often they feel ignored and they are losing their belief in the ability of the political system to solve problems. We shall therefore do everything in our power to **regain people's confidence**. We shall listen to people, take their concerns seriously and work to improve their lives. That is precisely what politics is for: to make people's lives better.

And during this parliamentary term we face **enormous challenges**. The European Parliament aims to tackle these challenges on the basis of the Community method and in partnership with the new Commission and with you. Allow me to briefly outline a few of these points.

Measures to tackle the appallingly high levels of youth unemployment must be our first priority. The opportunities of young people to build their lives must not be destroyed in order to pay for a crisis which they did not cause. We, as the generation of politicians who have it in our power to act, must do everything in our power to help these young people. That is why we created the Youth Guarantee scheme, which needs to be implemented more rapidly and also expanded. We therefore find it incomprehensible that the funding allocated to the Youth Guarantee is being drawn upon too hesitantly. We have made the funds available – now it is up to you: use the money in a worthwhile manner and create new opportunities to give young people a future!

In the **negotiations with the USA on a free trade agreement**, we wish to ensure transparency and good results. Negotiations behind closed doors will not gain the confidence either of the people or of parliamentarians. We shall therefore keep a close watch on the negotiations. Only in that way can we fulfil the duty given to us by the electorate, which is maintaining our high standards and protecting our fundamental rights. It is also important to prevent the establishment of a parallel jurisdiction which is not needed and which serves no useful purpose.

We shall play a full part in the discussions on **completing the banking union and the internal market**. The banking union constitutes the right approach. It must now be banks – and not, as hitherto, the taxpayer – which support banks. We want banks to become safe again and we wish to see an end to the credit squeeze. Europe needs fresh growth and new jobs. For a good while, therefore, the European Parliament has also been backing **the Digital Agenda and the reindustrialisation** of our continent. Our competitiveness will partly be determined by whether we succeed in incorporating digital innovations into industrial processes and production.

In our societies, lively debates are taking place to determine what role we Europeans should play in the digital world. I am firmly convinced that Europe can find a better way forward into the digital age by means of greater data protection, increased data security and by preventing digital cartels and monopolies.

In order for Europe to be a world leader, a **sustainable investment strategy** is needed. Otherwise, there is a risk that Europe will fall even further behind because of the investment gap which we know already exists. Running on the spot means stagnation; investment is a bridge to

the future and, above all, to new jobs. The decisions concerning the Growth and Stability Pact which were taken at the last summit were therefore strongly welcomed within Parliament. So was the intention which Jean-Claude Juncker announced yesterday of mobilising an extra EUR 300 billion in the next three years for public and private investment in the real economy.

The **massive tax evasion and tax avoidance** which go on are a scandal that endangers the European Union. Each year we are losing billions! That is money which we need for our children and older people, money that we want to invest in our infrastructure and research, schools and hospitals. The same principles must apply to large multinationals as to hardworking families and small businesses that pay their taxes honestly. That is only fair. We therefore welcome the proposal by Jean-Claude Juncker to introduce a consolidated tax base for corporation tax. That is a step in the right direction. And, together with the financial transaction tax, it sends the important message that Europe does things in an equitable manner.

We shall continue to fight energy dependence and energy poverty with determination by developing a **common energy policy**. This particularly applies to infrastructure and interconnectivity. Energy efficiency is also a key instrument in reducing our dependence on energy imports from third countries.

Open borders, the right to work and study anywhere in Europe, **freedom of movement for all EU citizens** represent one of the greatest achievements of the European Union. We shall defend this right! At the same time we wish to prevent this right from being abused, either by individuals applying for benefit payments to which they are not entitled or by firms exploiting workers and engaging in social dumping. In order to put an end to such chicanery, we wish to revise the Directive on posted workers. Everywhere in Europe the principle must apply that people in the same place should receive equal pay for equal work.

Again and again we hear horrific reports of boats full of refugees capsizing in the Mediterranean. It is a scandal that people are drowning wretchedly off our coasts in search of a better life. We must finally face the truth: Europe is a continent whose destiny it is to receive migrants. One of the things that Europe therefore needs is a **legal immigration system with clear criteria**. Only then can we save lives, destroy the business model of criminal people-smugglers cashing in on despair and misery, and welcome those migrants that we need for our labour market and our ageing society. Europe must continue to offer protection to political refugees and refugees from civil wars. Let us do that in a spirit of solidarity. A **comprehensive and humane migration policy** must therefore be one of the key objectives of this parliamentary term.

The natural resource base must be protected and we must continue to pursue an ambitious policy on climate change. Europe must find ways of its own to help **defuse conflicts in the world**, thus guaranteeing greater security. The persistent violence in Gaza and the situation in Ukraine, which continues to give cause for concern, show us clearly that we face challenges outside our own borders as well. We welcome the fact that you intend to broach these foreign-policy issues at the very outset during your meeting.

All these tasks can only be carried out at European level. To do so we need the Community spirit embodied in the Community method. If we are successful, confidence in the EU as a centre of democracy, freedom and justice will be restored.

Thank you