

Remarks by the Right Honourable Kim Campbell
European Parliament at the EU and Democracy Roundtable
Brussels, November 24, 2005

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would like to congratulate Ignacio Salafranca on this meeting. It is interesting to see that it has also come about thanks to two countries that are not European countries. Given that I am a foreigner, since I come from Canada, I must stress the importance of this forum: I believe that the European Union is a very appropriate and important forum in which to debate issues such as democracy.

I am currently the Secretary-General of the Club of Madrid, which is made up of 69 former presidents and prime ministers from around the world. We have taken advantage of all of our political experience to promote democracy in the countries where it is necessary. In March of this year we convened the Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security. We appreciate all of the relationships we have developed with the European Community at the highest level, for example with Parliament and the Council, and it is a pleasure to be able to participate in a forum of this type as we consider such forums to be crucial.

Sixteen years ago this very month, when Europe and democracy were being discussed, emphasis was placed on the vital role Europe played in the integration of countries in which democracy was not possible for many years. I will go back to that in a moment but I would like to continue in this vein a little longer and mention a US historian who has recently published a book about the last 50 years of democracy and about the democracies and social regimes that have risen from the ashes of the Second World War. Indeed, the great achievement of democracy is the creation of the European Union.

The most important thing is that the European countries, which had different origins and which rose from those ashes, did not turn to radicalism, but transformed themselves from individual states into a Community.

Democracy and the equilibrium of those States were vital in fostering the social stability required at that time. We must remember that, because many countries, such as my own, have found themselves somewhere between the European model and the United States model. Canada is a very large country with a very small population and we therefore have very important social objectives to fulfill.

At a global level a great deal of reference is made to us because we are situated close to the United States. In the 1980s and 1990s we tried to evolve as we realized that the private sector could do things better than the public sector. So the public-private issue has already been dealt with and, like Europe, we are paying a great deal of attention to the public health system because we believe that the population may be affected or weakened by poverty and by illnesses.

It has been essential to raise awareness among the people about security and participation in a democratic system. One of the first protocols that the Club of Madrid signed was with the UNDP program for Latin America. It has been shown that 60% of the population of Latin America thinks

that democracy is a good idea yet only half of them (30%) think that it is going to improve their lives. These are interesting figures.

If we look at Europe, we see a high level of creativity within the individual countries. There is a balance between the policies that offer the confidence needed to ensure that the citizens believe in their governments. That has made it possible to create a basis for a community of countries with different traditions, which decided to look beyond the borders and, in spite of the fact that they speak different languages, unite and transform that community into an even better community. I therefore believe that Europe is an important forum in helping us to understand what exactly democracy means.

Europe has a number of constitutional monarchies like Canada. Many countries are now striving to create new forms and models to promote democracy. Perhaps they should take account of the forms that already exist, the traditional forms, because they are a very effective means of making the most of the traditional roots that sit alongside the new modern institutions. In Canada we are trying to make the most of our monarchical system.

For example, Queen Elizabeth is Queen of Canada totally independently of being Queen of England. So I suppose if the British decided to end the monarchy, she could come to Canada, if she could stand the winters! We are a multicultural country that has been built by immigrants, and every province has a representative of the Queen, a Lieutenant Governor in addition to the country's Governor General. We have been able to make use of those positions to integrate all those belonging to minority groups. For example, the current Governor General of Canada is of Haitian origin; we also have had people of Ukrainian, African, Native Indian, Italian and Asian origin in some of the highest posts in the country. They are very senior figures and they do not necessarily represent the majority of Canadians. We have therefore used our monarchical system to make the most of the country's cultural basis and multi-ethnicity.

In this respect, there are many examples of how we can balance indigenous political and social realities with the universal objectives we all hold of tolerance and freedom, which are pillars of democracy. I believe it is important to recognize that such institutions have a role to play in boosting democracy even further. I am thinking, for example, of the Spanish transition, when the King of Spain decided to give up some of his powers. That is an extraordinary story that could teach many lessons to a lot of countries in the world. The Club of Madrid recently held its first meeting outside Madrid in Prague, and we were very happy to learn from the experiences of the Central and Eastern European Countries.

I think that the European Union has been very modest on many occasions in recognizing the fundamental role the institutions have played in terms of the transitions in those countries. I am sure that those involved recognize the crucial role the European Union has played and see that it has been a factor in pushing these changes and transitions forward: without its help the changes and reforms might never have been possible.

We must realize nevertheless that many of these countries in transition continue to need our support to foster stability and democracy. I believe I can safely say that no country is free of corruption. There is corruption in Canada too. Human beings are not perfect and we cannot say that democracy is perfect because it is created by human beings. As a result, it will always have flaws.

We are also concerned about the problems in countries such as Belarus and Uzbekistan and the

lack of freedom in certain countries of the former Soviet Union. It is important when looking at the countries undergoing a transition to democracy to consider at the same time the participation of political parties and civil society, which is becoming the cornerstone of the democratic movement.

It is thus essential to involve these people. In some cases (the) political parties are still considered to be suspect as a result of the role they have played in the past. We welcome the work carried out by the European Parliament's Committee on Human Rights, which will help to promote human rights on a global level; it is an extraordinary political development for democracy and will help to encourage joint action.

Countries that wish to encourage and create democratic political institutions need look no further than the model of the European Parliament, which has naturally decided to support projects to promote democracy. We should seek mechanisms that are much more flexible or appropriate. We welcome, too, the Neighborhood Policy because, in my opinion, it is a very important policy, particularly for the European Union's neighboring countries as it offers them a model to promote democracy.

We hope that other international actors follow the example of the European Parliament and European Union and give greater consideration to the way in which they can help other regions and other countries to implement political changes in favour of democracy.

We cannot invite every country to join the European Union, but if we want to put an end to the democratic deficit, perhaps we can help those countries launching a transition to democracy. There is no doubt that it is difficult: there are always winners and losers when there are changes. However, if we can look to other parts of the world and show them that there are institutions and models that they can imitate and that can help them to move towards democracy, we will already have come a long way.

We must also promote association agreements. I believe that this is possible and that in this respect the history of Europe's commitment to this type of relationship in order to promote democracy is crucial. As a citizen of the world and a member of the Club of Madrid, I must say that I respect, and each of us respects, all of these achievements and I believe that this meeting is an excellent example of the initiatives that should be undertaken in this regard.

Thank you very much.