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The big question is whether accelerating globalisation means that Europe is no longer politically relevant. Can we imagine each of our nation states dealing with this multipolar world directly without going through Europe? It is a question worthy of debate. Can Europe be a global player, capable of regulating and humanising globalisation, which is about to be turned upside down by the emergence of nation continents, a globalisation that may turn out to be savage, both economically and socially? That is the real question.

You will not be surprised to hear me say: Yes! Europe is more relevant than ever! Three convictions give me this trust in Europe.

Firstly, I believe in the strength of the integrated single market.

I believe in the single market, which has enabled us to benefit from common standards. I believe in the single market, which has enabled our large European airlines - according to the competition, the best in the world - to be successful. I believe in the single market, which is currently allowing us to complete ITER and GALILEO, major technological projects being led by Europe.

But it is also the case that I would like the single market to enable us to guarantee a more secure, cheaper energy supply. If only we had a proper European energy strategy... But unfortunately that is not yet the case.

That is why I believe that we need to put the single market to work over the coming months. Personally, I feel passionately about the many applications of GALILEO, the major European satellite navigation project, and I am going to try to get all the European SMEs interested in it. We also need to solve the problem of patents and intellectual property, to increase the strength of the single market.

My second conviction: European society can still be very attractive, not least to the younger generation.

Why? Well, firstly because European society is an avant-garde society. Look at the issue of the environment and our commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. On social matters, look at the progress that has been made on working conditions, too. We have also made progress on transport.

Europe is in the avant-garde. It offers a harmonious society because it is far removed from both collective and individual violence. This is what I believe European society is about: finding the right balance, for example on tricky issues such as security, which needs to go hand in hand with the protection of autonomy and personal privacy. Finding a balance also, I believe, means having the right conditions to tackle the immigration issue. There needs to be a balanced strategy between fighting illegal immigration, providing development aid and integrating legal immigrants in a way that avoids any discrimination. That is what a harmonious society is about, and you will see how it makes our best young people, who may go off to Asia or the United States to open their horizons, come back to Europe because it is an attractive society.

Next, and this is my third conviction, Europe is destined to become a world player.

Europe is the world's largest donor, giving 50 billion euros to the world's poorest countries.

I would also say that in global crises Europe plays the role of a transformer, so to speak. It provides a means of passing from high voltage to low voltage, precisely because the European institutions are organised so as to move from open conflict to discussion and compromise. This is something of what happened last summer in Lebanon. This is something Europe could do in the Middle East, which is more divided than ever, and in many other regions of the world too.

But it remains the case that Europe, in the field of foreign policy, is still 'the invisible man'... It influences the course of events, without actually being seen. We need to give European foreign policy a higher profile, through the advances put forward in the Constitutional Treaty.

Those are my three convictions.

I think that Europe remains relevant because its single market is a strength, because its society is attractive to the younger generations and because Europe can be a major world player, obviously in partnership with our American friends, but a player in the fullest sense of the term.

For Europe to go forward, progress must be made in three areas. You will excuse me if I go over them very quickly, because they are essential.

The first is institutional reform.

Shouldn't we be ratifying a text focused on the main proposals of the Constitutional Treaty as soon as possible? I am thinking particularly of the extension of qualified majority voting, strengthened codecision, reinforced cooperation, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and so on. In short, we should be equipping ourselves with a base of consensual measures that respects the choice of the parliaments and peoples who have said 'yes'. And then, after the 2009 deadlines, why not start work on another fundamental treaty?

Second area requiring progress: the budget.

The European budget is a budget of investment, a multi-annual budget. Europe needs to invest for the long term and for stability, to encourage private investment. It must not fail in this area. We really need a debate on spending and our resources. Should there be a citizens' contribution? Should Member States' contributions be proportional to their own wealth? How can we get back to a simple system? That is what I am asking.

The third area is political reform.

For the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, we need to revive the spirit of the Community, the pragmatism of Jean Monnet. Jean Monnet often said that he was '*pooling resources to bring peoples together*'.

If we look at a few examples of this approach, we can see that first of all it was the desire for a common interest to take root between Germany and France, over the management of coal and steel. Nobody asked why coal and steel were being managed together. They just were. The result of this was a political dynamic. The euro is the same thing. We began to manage a currency together to prevent the risk of savage devaluation. It was the euro. And the euro, bit by bit, is in the process in turn of generating an economic strategy. I am tempted to say that there could be a third successful enterprise in the near future, which would include our British friends - the exercise of common defence - because I believe, personally, that everything is now in place for us to attempt to pursue a common armaments and armament management policy. It's a waste to have 23 different transport vehicles for carrying troops! You may say: so all Europe is about is managing armaments to achieve economies of scale and catch up on our lack of efficiency. Yes, indeed! In the beginning that may be the case. But by adding diagnosis, strategic analysis, you end up with common diplomacy and joint armed forces. That is what Monnet's method was: pragmatism. You pool resources, you bring peoples together, and you give birth to a common policy.

Just when we are tending to look at Europe in a bad light, I have said everything on my heart. And my heart is full of hope for European integration.

Europe is also, above all, an ideal.

This ideal has inspired my political life. I have become an advocate for Europe, not for a mythical Europe, but for a realistic, practical, concrete Europe.

I am trying to build a mobile Europe. What is a mobile Europe? It is a Europe of exchanges, it is a Europe of intellectual cross-pollination, it is a Europe of cultural diversity, it is a Europe of the dialogue of civilisations, and it is a Europe of reconciled peoples. That is why I enjoy my work at the Commission.

To finish, I am going to read something else Jean Monnet wrote: '*Europe is loitering on the road it has committed itself to. We cannot stop, when the whole world around us is on the move.*' He wrote this in 1967.

And Jean Monnet added, because he was not a blind, fanatical European, something that will please those of you who sometimes think that Europe should not prevent us from seeing the global perspective: '*Have I said clearly enough that the Community we have created is not an end in itself? It is only a stage on the way to the organised world of the future.*'

Yes, by building Europe, we are preparing the world of tomorrow for our children and grandchildren. That is what makes it worth it!