

**Professor Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, at the Brussels Roundtable of the Community of Democracies. 16 November 2009.**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

I would like to first of all thank the Lithuanian government for organizing this very important event.

I am very happy to be able to address you this morning. I feel particularly proud of the achievements of the Community of Democracies as it was initiated in Warsaw under my government. My only regret is that Bronislaw Geremek who was one of the co-founders, is no longer with us today to see how far we have come.

Last week we have celebrated the symbolic end of the Cold War and the reunification of Europe, but the world we are currently living in is just as dangerous as it was twenty years ago, and in some parts of the world, just as undemocratic.

All I have to point to is: Iran, North Korea, Burma and Belarus and we all have the image of what kind of states those are, and whether or not their system fits into the world we believe in.

Dear Colleagues,

Let me make a few personal remarks as to the future of the Community of Democracies in light of the new global governance that is currently emerging.

The recent economic crisis has reconfirmed a global power shift. The importance of the G20, rather than G7 or G8, and the end of unilateralism are examples of this shift.

Without the G20 agreement in Pittsburgh would we have managed to tackle what is now known as the "Great Recession"?

However, what we can achieve in terms of financial solidarity in times of crisis, we must achieve in terms of political solidarity.

The European Union is a community of twenty-seven member states that is not just about the single market and the four freedoms, but rather it is about the glue that keeps those states bound together – the values of democracy, freedom and solidarity.

It works in the EU. But the same has to apply when it comes to global governance.

The new governance cannot just be about trade, regulatory supervision, and financial markets. True global governance is political as well – it has to be about development, institutional building, human rights and democratization.

It is in all our interests to promote good governance and support democracy because without this, we cannot achieve poverty reduction, long-term development, stability and peace.

I believe that the development of genuine regional initiatives and structures, which cover all areas - economic, political, and legal, should be considered. Good examples can be found all over the world: African Union, ASEAN, Andean Community.

The Community of Democracies has a role to play as a network linking more and more democracies, and through working together, we may be able to bring political solidarity to the new global governance.

Dear Friends,

Democratization is not just about elections, it is about empowering internal political actors at all levels of society: whether community based organizations, trade unions, economic associations, legitimate democratic institutions, and of course, Parliaments.

Without solid representative institutions, empowered and capable of expressing the will of the people by legislating and overseeing government action, democracy will remain fragile and incomplete.

Institution building remains an essential element in transforming the rhetoric of democracy and human rights into practical reality.

Excellencies,

I would like to conclude by saying that I am optimistic. Twenty years ago, nobody would believe that a Pole will be President of the European Parliament and that Lithuania has the Presidency of the Community of Democracies.

I believe that the recently ratified Lisbon Treaty will give new instruments and more coherence to Europe's external actions.

We in the Parliament have always underlined that human rights clauses have to be contained in EU agreements. We believe that the Commission has to systematically outline the state of democracy and human rights in its country reports. With the new external action service, we have to speak with one voice on democracy support, and human rights, using all the instruments at our disposal.

Moreover, increased contacts between the European Parliament and the national parliaments, citizens' initiatives, Question Hour with the Commission and online streaming of the Committee meetings should help bring our activities closer to the citizens.

We must also look at how we can support the work of NGO's and that of civil society in third countries. On our continent I have in mind Belarus, but also Russia and Azerbaijan. I believe we must revisit the lessons of the 1980's, and remember how democracies were able to support Solidarity in Poland and other opposition movements across Central and Eastern Europe. Those lessons are still valid today.

It is important that the Community of Democracies works closely with the European Parliament and the European Commission. There has to be as much synergy as possible between all institutions which promote democracy so that we are as effective as possible.

Our common work towards democracy is in the best interest of our citizens, who expect from us, political leaders, to ensure that long-term stability and peace prevails in the world.

Thank you.