

**Future of Europe – speakings for inauguration of Kreab's new office,  
Commissioner Malmström, 29 March 2017.**

- Congratulations to the team of Kreab to your new office! Thank you for inviting me to speak at this celebration!
- Last weekend, we celebrated the EU - 60 years since the Treaty of Rome. 60 years is still quite young for a union, don't you think?
- To put 60 years in perspective, which might seem like a long time, let's look half way back:

The EU grew very fast the last 30 years; from 12 members in 1987 to 28 today. We welcomed many new democracies, and the policy expanded to cover a much broader spectrum of issues...

30 years ago, Greece, Spain and Portugal had been democracies for not much more than a decade...

30 years ago, the Single European Act was passed by the European Community.

- 60 years is a quite young union, but the world is changing fast. 30 years ago, during a visit to Berlin, Reagan challenged Gorbachev to "tear down that wall". 30 years ago, the world's population reached 5 billion.

- Expectations on the EU to deliver results were always high, and increased with the years; Peace, democracy, human rights, equality, growth, innovation, rule based trade, a stable neighbourhood, functional internal market, clean air, soil, and water, stopping climate change, stopping terrorism and organised crime, help migrants vs. stopping migrants, help developing countries, help people in humanitarian crises...
- We are all aware of our challenges around us today; Brexit, terrorism, nationalism, protectionism, populism, lack of solidarity with migrants and each other, legacy of the economic crises, ageing population, Russia, Turkey, rule of law in Poland and Hungary, fake news/ propaganda... I won't dwell in that.
- Because we live in dramatic times, together we are stronger. After very turbulent years 2015-2016, I think we needed some months to gather our strength and to find out way back to believing in the future. Some of the challenges I mentioned might actually unite us instead of ripping us apart.
- Actually, if you ask the citizens, the support for membership in the Union is as high as 65-70 %. Each weekend we see new gatherings with people standing up for the EU, a movement which started in Germany but now spread to cities in other MS. Maybe Brexit was the wake-up call we needed to realise what is at stake and for us not to sleepwalk into a dark future of disintegration and nationalism.

- The EU makes our nations bigger. Not even Germany, France or the UK are big countries in the world considering the challenges ahead. But 500 million citizens united – 27 nations, is something different. The EU is the world's biggest market... the biggest exporter... the biggest importer and investor. The strength lies in our Unity.

### **The role of the Union and all its representatives:**

- At a time when the world is facing increasing uncertainty and intolerance, we need to continue to emphasize that, the complex phenomenon of human migration is fundamentally a phenomenon about people... about the essential needs of surviving... It is all about the safeguarding of the universality of our fundamental human rights. I want a Union defending freedom, democracy and the rule of law within the Union and in the world.
- We need holistic strategies, and not fall into the trap of simplifying the communication around them. For example; an ambitious climate goal must go hand in hand with investments in green technology and research, for the EU to stay ahead of the development of green alternatives, but also regulations which push our industry to develop sustainable technologies. For some energy labelling on consumer goods might be seen as a too small issue for the EU to regulate, but "every little helps" and for the citizen, it is not a detail since it makes a difference when the electricity bill comes.

- Our rule based trade policy also contributes to our goals in Europe – to jobs and growth with a sustainable development. The nationalist policy of Trump creates an opportunity for the EU. Our role is the counterweight to protectionism around the world. We can show leadership internationally. Busy negotiating agenda this year: Japan conclusion; ongoing negotiations in Asia and Latin America; launching new negotiations.
- Our European resources not unlimited. The EU need to focus our efforts to where it makes a difference together.
- And we need to continue with what we are doing (internal market, environmental legislation, investment... etc.) in parallel to the Brexit negotiations, but also in parallel discuss the future of Europe together. In our white paper we have described five scenarios to inspire the discussion, but of course these five are not the answer.

**Because it is for you to reflect upon the future and discuss,**

- What future Union do we want? What should we use the cooperation to? Do we want more or less Europe? Should we focus on other issues? Do more on some and totally disengage in others?
- Do you want a Union where some member states can go ahead with further integration? What works today and what are the real problems in the EU today?
- These questions, and many more, are for us to discuss so that we form our future together.

\*\*\*