

Address given by Francisco Fernández Ordóñez to mark the laying of the foundation stone of the new Council building (13 June 1989)

Caption: Address given by Francisco Fernández Ordóñez, Spanish Foreign Minister and President-in-Office of the Council, on Tuesday 13 June 1989, to mark the laying of the foundation stone of the new Council building.

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Address given by Mr Francisco Fernández Ordóñez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Spain and President-in-Office of the Council, on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the new Council building on Tuesday 13 June 1989

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's ceremony marks the end of a long road which has seen a whole mountain of files and hundreds and hundreds of hours of meetings by experts from first six, then nine, then ten and finally twelve Member States.

Even as the Council was moving into its current building on the boulevard Charlemagne, plans were already being made for future expansion.

I shall not dwell on the many vicissitudes of the past 15 years. Suffice it to say that I am delighted to see this project coming to fruition. Construction of a building for the Council of the European Communities is a particularly eloquent and very concrete expression of the way in which the twelve states which make up the European Community work together. It was no small matter deciding, firstly, that a new building was needed and, secondly, approving the principle that the Council itself should finance this building which would provide a roof for the shared labours of our Member States.

I would like here to pay tribute to the Belgian Government, whose generosity enabled us to reach a joint decision which is a clear reflection of the undertakings given by each of our Member States.

A second feature of the project being launched today is especially interesting, namely our challenge to the developers to design a 'tailor-made' building, that is to say one built specifically with a view to the tasks to be performed within it.

One cannot fail to mention here the towering figure of the late Mr Joseph Fabbri who, as an official at the General Secretariat of the Council, was the driving force behind this project, coordinating all the planning, research and evaluation work which culminated in final approval of the architect's design. We mourn his untimely passing.

The consultants advising the Council virtually from the moment this undertaking was conceived have shown a much-appreciated rigour and clarity of vision. We thank them for their invaluable contribution.

It would be unforgivable of me not to mention the officials of the Council's General Secretariat and the Belgian Ministry of Public Works. Their workload has been heavy but they have spared no effort in making constant adjustments to the plans in order to accommodate the Council's — initially sometimes uncertain — wishes.

Our colleagues in charge of this project in the Buildings Group have also been severely tested, and I pay tribute to their hard work and dedication too.

Just a few hours ago I wound up the final session of the General Affairs Council held under the Spanish Presidency.

So our Presidency — a temporary affair — is now crowned by the launch of a project to build something that will, we believe, symbolise an ideal which we hope to make permanent.

But the structure we all want to see standing solid, firm and complete, the building which must have no internal partitions but must ensure that it has space for all its inhabitants, that edifice is called Europe.

It must be the work of us all, those who have gone and those who are yet to come. This is the Europe of which Robert Schuman said that it 'will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.'

This idea will give rise to lengthy discussions, lengthy negotiations and decisions, and the building whose foundation stone we are laying today will be witness to them. It will probably be completed just as Europe 1992, which we are all working towards, takes its first steps. For the Spanish Presidency and for myself it is a great honour to be part of this ceremony, which I regard as symbolising my country's firm commitment to the building of Europe.

Just as we shall soon see these walls rising skywards, let us hope that the building of Europe will cement its foundations and take shape in future for the benefit, wellbeing and prosperity of our peoples. Thank you.