

Speech by Silvio Berlusconi at the signing of the Constitutional Treaty (Rome, 29 October 2004)

Caption: On 29 October 2004, at the ceremonial signing of the Treaty in Rome of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Silvio Berlusconi, Italian Prime Minister, gives an address in which he summarises the evolution of the European integration process since the signing of the Rome Treaties on 25 March 1957, emphasising the present and future implications for the European Union.

Source: Speech by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi at the ceremony for the signing of a Constitution for Europe (Rome, 29 October 2004). [ON-LINE]. [Brussels]: Council of the European Union, [25.05.2007]. Disponible sur <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/EN%20Berlusconi%20REV.pdf>.

Copyright: (c) European Union, 1995-2012

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/speech_by_silvio_berlusconi_at_the_signing_of_the_constitutional_treaty_rome_29_october_2004-en-a5b174d2-1d67-4659-83eb-efbbdcebb6c9.html

Publication date: 07/09/2012

Speech by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi at the ceremony for the signing of a Constitution for Europe (Rome, 29 October 2004)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two dates:

Rome, 25 March 1957. Rome, 29 October 2004.

Nearly half a century has passed between those two dates.

The room in which we will shortly be signing the Constitutional Treaty is the same one in which the six forerunner countries signed the Treaties of Rome. Europe was split in two. Our peoples were still divided – in need of external aid, and engaged in a difficult process of economic and political reconstruction that was to go on for years.

But there were some who were already beginning to think ahead with foresight and courage to the Europe of the future, and to lay the foundations for reunification.

The process of European integration that arose from this basis, amidst considerable scepticism and doubt, has proved to be the most fruitful and enduring vision of the period after the Second World War. It was seen, in the words of Erasmus of Rotterdam, as "far-sighted and visionary madness". But the seeming madness of our founding fathers had become a splendid reality, to which a new fundamental chapter is being added today.

Through these two dates – from 1957 to 2004 – there runs the thread of our identities, which at first were broken up, crushed and trampled upon in many countries by an evil totalitarianism, but which have now been finally rediscovered around a common ideal of liberty, democracy, justice and prosperity.

The Europe that strengthens its ties on the institutional level has arrived at this goal by successive steps forward taken with patience and tenacity, without ever having abandoned the consensus-building method: an economic area without internal barriers, the single currency, a policy of freedom and security, and an increasingly shared view in external relations and external policy.

Again in Rome, on 4 October 2003, we opened the Intergovernmental Conference. This was a time of great hope, but also great uncertainty. We were taking on heavy responsibilities towards our citizens. Failure was absolutely not an option. I said then that we were being called on to accomplish not simply an act of faith but an act of will, that the Conference should be a Conference of the European will.

Today, little more than a year after that momentous occasion, we have achieved our goal and honoured our commitment.

Never in history have we seen an example of nations voluntarily deciding to exercise their sovereign powers jointly in the exclusive interest of their peoples, thus overcoming age-old impulses of rivalry and distrust.

Never in history have the fundamental values of freedom and democracy had such an important role in securing the destiny of hundreds of millions of people.

Today's proceedings thus mark a historic date: Europe has at last acquired a Constitution based on the twofold and indivisible consensus of the citizens and the Member States.

In signing this Constitution we must keep firmly in mind that no constitution, no political institution, no legal institution is self-sustaining. The constitutional momentum of the united Europe will always depend on the continued affirmation of the desire of the peoples and nations of Europe to integrate still further at the political, social and economic level and to act together in a number of areas that are essential to their future.

The Constitution that we are signing today will therefore need to be backed up by a continually renewed commitment on the part of both citizens and governments.

The united Europe is – and will increasingly be – a matter of daily consensus.

My friends,

today sees the start of the process of ratification of the Constitutional Treaty by the Member States. We shall commit ourselves to ensuring that Italy ratifies the new Treaty without delay. The Europeanist sentiment is part of our history as Italians: it is unshaken, it is enthusiastic, and I hope it can also be infectious.

It is my firm belief, even more than it is my fervent hope, that all the peoples, parliaments and governments of the Member States will give their consent because they profoundly believe that their destiny of freedom, peace and prosperity is identical with that of the united Europe, that Europe which, here in this *urbs urbium*, this "city of cities", is today taking a historic step forward.