

Speech delivered by H.E. Ambassador David Daly,
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On the occasion of Europe Day

10 May 2010

At the

Great Hall, Old Parliament House, Canberra

Today we are celebrating Europe Day which commemorates the day, 9 May 1950, on which Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister proposed that the industries of war be pooled under a new supranational control between the countries of Europe. This courageous move led to the EU of today.

It is true that Europe is grappling with the economic crisis, but this is a challenge which we will all come through. The decisions taken by the EU over recent days and hours are clear evidence of the political will to find solutions in a spirit of solidarity.

What does the European Union bring to the world?

Three things stand out: its history, its size, and its values.

History: All countries have their histories. The histories of the countries of the European Union include long, rich, and sometimes complicated, contacts with other countries across the world. It is no surprise therefore that the EU has itself developed special, and more modern, partnerships across the globe.

Size: With its population of over 500 million, 7% of the world's population, the EU accounts for around 22% of global GDP; it is the world's largest trader; it provides some 60% of all world development assistance; some 28% of foreign currency reserves are held in the Euro.

But, the relative importance of Europe does not depend on size or economic weight alone, but rather on how these strengths are used; what values govern how Europe uses these strengths in the world.

The European Union is founded on respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice and solidarity all flow from these values, translating into policies which reflect a balance between a European citizen and his surroundings, and which give Europe a distinctive quality of life.

We believe in the market economy and open markets. We believe in solidarity between rich and poor, between the centre and the periphery.

And it is these values that Europe also brings to its relations with the outside world. These are the values which caused the EU to react quickly on the ground in Haiti, Samoa, Tonga, Chile and elsewhere in the face of natural disasters.

These are the values which put EU soldiers on the ground quickly in Chad to protect Darfurian refugees as a holding operation while the UN force was being prepared; these same values put EU peace monitors in Aceh, together with other partner countries.

These are the values which inspire the EU's work with fragile states, ranging from Europe through to the Pacific, and which lead us to provide 60% of the world's development assistance.

These are the values which mean we care about sustainable development and addressing the challenge of climate change and energy security.

These are the values which strive for an ambitious world trade round.

And in our relations with the world, the Lisbon Treaty, which came into force last December, is making the EU a stronger partner.

Thankfully, these values are not unique to the European Union. When these values are shared, relationships become easier in a world where we all face increasing challenges.

And so, finally, since we share these basic values, it should come as no surprise that the EU looks upon Australia as a natural partner. And, it should come as no surprise either that this partnership is flourishing.

Thank you for your attention