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Commemoration of 8 May 1945 :

*“Nationalism means war! War is not only our past, it could also be our future! And it is us, who will henceforth be the guardians of our peace, our security and our future!”*

Today, 8 May, marks 80 years since the end of World War II in Europe and the liberation of our societies from Nazism and Fascism. This historic moment brought an end to years of oppression, war and atrocities that had gripped the world.

For our generation, and for those born in one of the six founding members of the European Union, it symbolises the beginning of an era of peace and cooperation. Indeed, our generation, the baby boomers of the 1945s to 1965s, has enjoyed one of the longest periods of peace in history.

Peace and democracy! These are perhaps the greatest achievements of European unity. That was the project of the founders of the European Union: “A united Europe will have to be built by means of concrete achievements, in which a de facto solidarity will have to be taken as a starting point. “After a common policy on coal and steel, came European economic cooperation and the abolition of internal borders and the realisation of a monetary and political union.

Since the founding of the European Union, many more European countries have joined this political union. For Spain, Portugal and Greece, accession meant a guarantee for their newly acquired democracies, and thanks to European solidarity they have seen their prosperity grow and flourish; for central and eastern European countries EU membership represented an accession to democracy and for fundamental freedoms and rights to be respected and guaranteed.

European integration was driven by the ideals of cooperation and mutual respect. It is this integration that has ensured that European countries, that were once opponents, are now working together in a Europe built on peace and democracy.

Our generation can also remember the admonishing words to the European Parliament of French President François Mitterrand on January 17, 1995: “*My generation has almost completed its work; it is carrying out its last public acts, [ ... ] Many of you will remember the lessons from your parents, [...] the presence of death - all as a result of the mutual enmity of the peoples of Europe. It is vital to not pass on this hatred but, instead, as an opportunity to*

*reconcile . We must express our gratitude to those who, after 1944, 1945, themselves blood-stained and with their personal lives destroyed, had the courage to envisage a more brighter future which would be based on peace and reconciliation. That is what we have done. [...] We must overcome such prejudices. What I am asking you to do is almost impossible, because it means overcoming our past. And yet, if we fail to overcome our past, let there be no mistake about what will follow: nationalism means war! War is not only our past, it could also be our future! And it is us, it is you, [...] who will henceforth be the guardians of our peace, our security and our future! ”*

Today, Europe is once again confronted with challenges that remind us of the lessons of the past. Nationalism threatens the stability and security of our continent, and not only our continent. The far right is gaining ground, not only in Europe but also beyond, which is a worrying development for the values of peace and democracy that our parents fought for; that our generations have enjoyed. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to pass on this message.

To reverse this threatening trend, we must work together with respect for one another. Put aside our private and national interests and together seek a common interest.

It is necessary to strengthen unity and solidarity within Europe, and to uphold the principles of cooperation that have brought us peace for decades. By working together, we can protect the foundations of our common future and ensure that the values of democracy and peace continue to prevail. Working together and standing up for the common interest also means fighting against the extreme nationalism that leads to war, and to fight against the far right that is based on its self-interest.

The commemoration of 8 May 1945 is not only a look back at the past, but also a call to action for the future. It reminds us of the strength of a united Europe and the need to remain vigilant against the forces that would undermine this unity. Let us therefore use this day to reaffirm our commitment to peace and cooperation, and to work together for a better future for all Europeans.

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