

SPEECH BY LAKER LEVERS TO THE EUROCHAMBRES CONGRESS XI - ROME
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Mr President, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to take this opportunity of saying a big thank you to the Eurochambres for their very kind gesture of inviting me to address this the 11th Congress. It is also my pleasure to congratulate the organizers for the efficient manner in which the Congress has been arranged and for the courtesies extended. Of course, I cannot but express the historical ecstasy I feel to be once again in your beloved Rome.

Mr President, Europe like all other parts of the metro pole has always had the advantage in any of its trade relationships with developing countries. Europe, today is assessing its economic, social, cultural and environmental successes in its grouping as a Union and ponders on these advantages as it enlarges itself by the admission of additional countries in the region. It is concerned about its current constitution and its effectiveness in an enlarged Union. It is concerned about the adequacy of its Parliament, the Union's relationship with civil society, the matter of equal rights for women in its employment practices as well as of those of the migrants within its borders, the economic monetary union and of course its relationship with the rest of the world as it relates to research and matters of trade.

As Europe seeks to amend its constitution, it should adopt a flexible method of amendment or change as the Union is still young and the possibility of further major changes in the future should be anticipated. The world has already started to divide itself into trading blocks and it is my view that eventually there will be a European Union comprising of all the European Countries including Russia and those, which were once a part of the USSR. Any contemplation of a constitution with a more limited view will be shortsighted. The outcome of such deliberations must be a European Union Model capable of absorbing these additions on a gradual basis.

The model finally decided on is of immense interest to the countries of the developing world as the considerations of the diverse influences of so wide an array of cultures and economies will impact greatly on the trading patterns it offers. Currently, we live in a world where the once colonized countries although politically independent are still economically dependent. We live in an international economic environment in which the rules of the game are set by the developed/industrialized countries. They set the prices they will pay for the goods we produce. The prices at which we sell our bauxite, rum, sugar and bananas are set by the metro pole and the prices at which we purchase their machinery and fertilizers are also stipulated by them. As most of the developing countries are of an agricultural economic base and because of our limited technological knowledge, we have to sell most of our production as raw materials. These are bought by the metropole at their determined prices, processed and sold back to us at high prices. These rules are used to create favourable trade balances for them thus ensuring their own economic prosperity and high standards of living for their peoples. The global unfettered trade liberalization being espoused brings us higher debt ratios, deepening adverse trade balances, slow technological development and low-level foreign direct

investments (FDI). These conditions make timely development for us, a process of gradualism, if not an elusive dream

In the instances where we have some capabilities in manufacture, our exports are impeded by tariffs and non-tariff barriers. The Common Agricultural Policy poses great problems for our exports. Developed countries in providing subsidies to their farmers render our agricultural production totally uncompetitive in the international markets. Financial aid is usually used as a means of marketing goods and services of the donors.

Mr President, for Aid to be beneficial to developing countries it must be developmental.

The enlargement of Europe will certainly have its internal problems. The coming together will pose problems of adjustment for those already in the Union by those coming in as well as problems for those coming in by those already in. Some countries coming in enjoy varying forms of governments such as Dictatorship and Democracy. Matters of Common External Tariffs (CET) and security will also be problematic. All these adjustments must take place in the reality of the World Trade Organization (WTO), a new regulatory body for international trade.

In the light of recent international occurrences in Cancun and elsewhere, there is considerable reason for the scrapping of this organization. The industrialized country members of the WTO are political trade barons in a power struggle for political economic turf to the disadvantage of ACP countries. Let the Private Sector organize and develop world trade.

The new Europe contemplated or future will be a giant economic entity, undoubtedly the largest and most powerful trading block to date. For it to be successful it must use its economic power to bring about a level playing field in international trade. It must pay particular attention to the bringing of the developing countries to an economic level where they can enjoy equity in matters of trade and economic development.

Mr President, the new Europe must realize that the absence of military conflict is not necessarily peace. It must be known that the continuation of inequitable trade practices can continue to result in disasters and loss of life greater than those obtained in armed conflict. It must know that, since it is accepted that the private sector is the engine of growth, the development of ACP private sector and the continued prosperity of the European private sector is not mutually exclusive but are inextricably intertwined. That health, education and training are not social necessities but indeed are tools of economic development. That industrial, technological research and development are essential to ACP countries if they are to be equal trading partners of Europe. That agricultural development must be given different treatment from industrial development.

Mr President, to enhance trade, developing trade relations between ACP developing countries and the European Union must be affected. If global trade liberalization is to be effective European countries must cease immediately their subsidies to farmers. The

Common Agricultural Policy must be terminated. Fair prices must be paid for goods being traded. Where there are non-reciprocal trading arrangements between countries of the ACP and countries within the Union, these should be respected.

In order to improve the competitiveness of ACP countries there should be a concentrated policy of technology transfer. One such area could be in encouraging Joint Ventures, the twinning of European commercial entities, educational institutions and medical facilities with their counterparts in ACP countries.

There must be free movement of peoples by removing immigration restrictions to coincide with the free movement of capital. If there is a truly joint partnership between the peoples of the European Union and the peoples of a developed ACP, there will be equity in competitiveness, commonality in economic standards of living, education, health and patriotism. There will exist a shared vision of mutual fairness and there will be no fear of mass migration between ACP peoples and Europeans, much like the stability of migration that obtains within the Union itself. Nationals who live in a well-developed economic society are not migratory.

The building of a strong and vibrant ACP private sector cannot be too strongly emphasized as such will provide the economic and social growth necessary to bring prosperity to its peoples. The Association of ACP National Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Other Economic Operators is the viable engine for such a development.

An enlarged Europe augurs for great opportunities of trade especially if the trading arrangements are bilateral between countries rather than under WTO regulations. Because of Europe's proposed impending gigantic size such opportunities are only realizable if there is a level playing field with all its trading partners. Otherwise its size will give it such dominance that untold incessant conflict would be the order of the day.

Whether an enlarged Europe will be realistically competitive, enhancing peace and prosperity or a trade colossus, only time will tell.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentleman, I thank you.

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