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WELCOME MESSAGE TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE
OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR A UNITED NATIONS PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
ON 4/5 NOVEMBER 2008 IN BRUSSELS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the occasion of the conference of the Steering Committee of the Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, I warmly welcome you on the premises of the European Parliament. The selection of the European Parliament as the location of this year's international meeting of the Campaign has a special symbolic meaning in a twofold way:

Almost fifteen years ago, already the European Parliament, as one of the first parliamentary institutions in the world, has declared in a resolution on the reform of the United Nations that the establishment of a consultative parliamentary assembly shall be examined so that the elected representatives of the peoples may better participate in the work of the United Nations. The European Parliament has reinforced this position on a number of occasions. We support the cause that the United Nations becomes more transparent, more democratic, and more effective. The creation of a parliamentary dimension of the United Nations is part of this effort. Today, in times of globalization, it is much less justifiable than in the past to limit the democratic participation of the citizens of this world to the nation state. This is one of the lessons which we have learnt in Europe from the increasing integration of our societies and our economy. This is why we, as European Parliament, support ways and means to give the people a strong representation also at the global level.

The history of the European Parliament itself is very instructive for the project of a worldwide parliamentary assembly. The European Parliament, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, has originated from the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Community for Coal and Steel, which was established in 1952. Since 1979, the representatives are directly elected. This way the European Parliament ensures, in my view, the indispensable immediate democratic connection to today's almost half a billion people in the European Union. The rights of democratic participation of the European Parliament have been expanded incrementally. For the parliamentarization of the United Nations, a similarly incremental approach should be chosen. In case of the European Parliament, this will lead to an almost complete equivalence

with the Council as the body of the member states, once the Treaty of Lisbon hopefully enters into force.

The close participation of Members of the European Parliament in the Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, as it is eminent in this meeting, therefore is very gratifying. Hence, I expressly support this cooperation. The experience of the European Parliament and its members is doubtlessly an important inspiration for all who advocate that the citizens have more say at the United Nations.

I wish you all the best for your deliberations and send my most cordial compliments.

Hans-Gert Pöttering

The President