

Note for Mr. Skouris

INTRODUCTION

President Pöttering

Your Royal Highnesses

Marshall of the Court

President of the Chamber of Deputies

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Presidents and Members of the Luxembourg and European Institutions

Dear Friends

We are especially honoured this evening by the presence amongst us of Their Royal Highnesses Prince Guillaume and Princess Sibilla.

It is my very great pleasure to introduce our speaker, Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament. I do so as Vice-President of the Forum and on behalf of its President, Yves Mersch, Governor of the Banque centrale du Luxembourg, who very much regrets that he cannot be present this evening.

We all know what the European Parliament is and does, so there is no need for me to explain that. Dr. Pöttering is a well-known figure but all the same it might be useful if I say a few words about his background.

Hans-Gert Pöttering was born in September 1945 in Lower Saxony. He never knew his father who was killed during the last days of the Second World War. This personal tragedy led to his involvement in politics and his commitment to the integration of Europe.

He studied law, politics and history in Bonn and Geneva and made a study visit to Columbia University, New York. He obtained his doctorate in 1974.

Hans-Gert Pöttering has devoted his life to the European idea and to European politics. He has been a member of the European Parliament since the first direct elections in 1979. He is a member of the German CDU and, in the European Parliament, of the Group of the European People's Party.

In the European Parliament Dr. Pöttering has been particularly concerned, *inter alia*, with the institutional reform of the EU, regional policy, enlargement and intercultural dialogue. He was largely responsible for introducing European defense into Parliament's work and so into the activities of the EU as a whole, and he was Chairman of Parliament's Subcommittee on Security and Disarmament from 1984 to 1994.

Hans-Gert Pöttering became Chairman of the Group of the European People's Party and European Democrats in 1999. He was elected President of the European Parliament in January 2007. He has been a successful President of the Parliament and is recognized as a major European personality. He has worked hard to raise the profile of the Parliament, playing an active role at meetings of the European Council and helping to increase Parliament's visibility.

Dr. Pöttering is the recipient of many honours including, in the context of Luxembourg, the "Mérite Européen en or" and the "Gold Medal of the European Court of Auditors" which was presented to him this year.

President Pöttering has kindly agreed to reply to questions following his speech. His speech will be in English and will be interpreted into French. After the speech questions will be interpreted from English into French and from French into English. German speakers may of course put questions in German but they will not be interpreted since the Forum is only a simple association and does not have the resources of a European institution.

It is important to note the word “values” in the title of Mr Pöttering’s speech. This reflects the new Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty which states: “the Union’s aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples”. Needless to say the Court of Justice welcomes this text.

I shall bring the question session to an end promptly at 8p.m. At 8p.m. there will be a reception, to which you are all warmly invited, in the area immediately outside this meeting room. Our speaker will attend the reception for a few minutes before leaving us. President Pöttering, the floor is yours!

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CONCLUSION:

Thank you, Dr. Pöttering, for your remarkable tour d’horizon that covered so many important aspects of the European Union. We have all learned a great deal from your wise words. We now come to question time which I shall close at 8 p.m.

I call on Michael Palmer to ask the first question on behalf of the Forum.

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The time has now come for us to thank Dr. Pöttering for his full replies to the wide range of questions put to him. His speech and his answers revealed many of his qualities both as a man and as a politician. President Pöttering it was a privilege for us to hear you this evening. You are a man who has devoted his whole career to Europe and we appreciate that. We wish you a successful conclusion to your Presidency of the European Parliament. Thank you!

Let me remind you that the next conference of the Forum will take place at 6 p.m. on Thursday 9 April at the Chamber of Commerce. The speaker will be M. Jacques Diouf, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. His subject will be: "L'économie alimentaire dans le monde d'aujourd'hui". M. Jean-Louis Schiltz, Minister for Cooperation, will introduce the speaker. The meeting will be chaired by Mr. Yves Mersch, President of the Forum.

Let us move to drinks next door!

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