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og deres stedfortrædere

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I forbindelse med Det Europæiske Råds møde i Barcelona den 15.-16. marts 2002 vedlægges brev af 4. marts 2002 fra de nordiske statsministre til den spanske ministerpræsident.

P. H. Orskov

4 March 2002

H.E. Mr. José María Aznar  
Prime Minister of Spain

Dear José María,

The Lisbon Summit two years ago launched a bold and ambitious ten year process for modernising Europe. The Nordic EU countries firmly supported this initiative from the outset. The leading idea is that efficient markets, investment in education and sustainable welfare systems are mutually reinforcing factors for progress.

During these two years important achievements have been made. At the same time, however, there are clear signs that the process has lost steam. We therefore fully agree with the Spanish Presidency that giving new impetus to the reform agenda should be an overriding goal for the Barcelona summit. The difficult economic situation makes economic reform more urgent than ever.

A well functioning internal market is at the core of the Lisbon strategy. We distinguish five issues of special importance to achieve this.

- The Financial Services Action Plan is a cornerstone of the economic reform agenda. All necessary efforts must be made to ensure that the deadlines set in Lisbon and Stockholm are met. We welcome the recent agreement on the Lamfalussy conclusions and emphasise the need to attain the timetables presented by the Commission for further steps during this year.

- An agreement on the Community Patent has not been reached, despite the fact that the deadline set in Lisbon has expired. This hampers efforts to strengthen European competitiveness, especially in frontier technologies. It also weakens the credibility of the reform process in which concrete timetables play an important role. New efforts must be made to find a solution, while respecting the Lisbon and Laeken objectives that a Community Patent must be flexible, cost efficient and non-discriminatory. If an agreement on this basis is not achievable, new ways to proceed on this issue should be sought.
- Liberalisation of energy markets must continue. A deadline for opening up energy markets for all users should be decided during the Spanish presidency.
- Production structures must be reformed on the basis of a new Europe Action Plan. A dynamic restructuring of business is vital for creating a competitive European economy. Common rules on takeovers are therefore urgent.
- Growth today is knowledge-based. Barcelona should increase the focus on Information Technology, Biotechnology and Research and Development. Stronger links between universities, research institutions and private enterprises should be encouraged. We must fully embrace the new biotechnology strategy, paying special attention to the sustainability and ethical aspects of it.

A year ago the European Council stressed that the number of elderly people will increase rapidly, while the share of the working age population will start to diminish already by 2010. These demographical challenges must not be forgotten. We need a long term strategy to address problems related to low employment rates and the risk of a coming lack of labour.

Women form the largest unused employment resource in Europe. A long term commitment to gender equality together with tax and benefit systems that favour female labour market participation are needed. Good supply of child care is also important. This is crucial if we want to increase employment rates.

Tax- and benefit systems should support labour force participation, while preserving the concept of solidarity inherent in the European social model. We should make it more attractive to become or stay employed, and for the employed to increase their labour supply. Pension systems must be reformed in order to guarantee their sustainability. Well functioning welfare systems should be seen as a productive factor.

The European Council in Göteborg decided to include a sustainable development perspective in the Lisbon process, and to add an environmental dimension to it.

This decision must be properly implemented. The environmental aspect of the Lisbon process must be treated as seriously as the economic and social dimensions. Early ratification of the Kyoto protocol, a deadline for the phasing out of subsidies for fossil fuels, enhanced energy efficiency and agreement on a common framework for energy taxation are important goals in this context.

Adding an environmental dimension to the Lisbon process will be counterproductive if it is done in a way that hampers economic development, whereas correctly pursued environmental requirements and new technology can be important sources for future growth and employment creation.

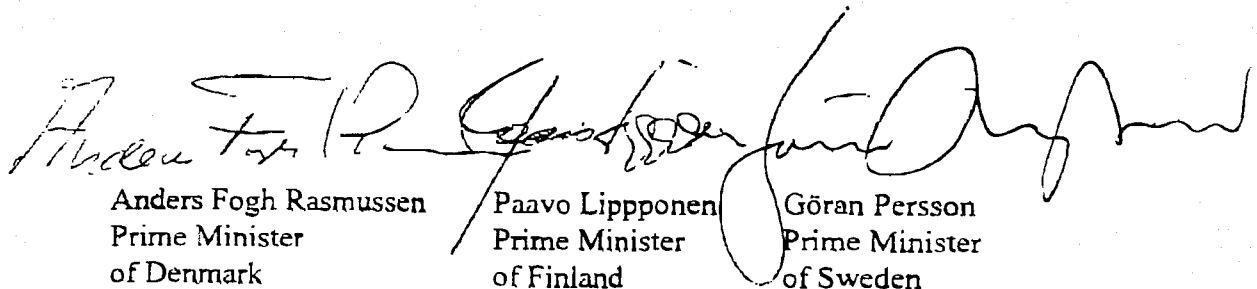
The Barcelona summit should also be used to prepare a common and ambitious EU contribution to the world summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg. Intensified combat against poverty, free trade and effective market openings to poor countries in agriculture, commitment to the target

of 0.7 percent of GDP to international development aid and promotion of transfer of clean technologies and sustainable energy production should be part of this contribution.

Efficiency, transparency and openness are the key to enhancing public comprehension of and support for the reform process launched in Lisbon. In Barcelona we should therefore be ready to critically assess present procedures. We do not need more processes but better synchronisation and streamlining.

We have noted with satisfaction that the candidate countries participate in the Barcelona discussions. They are welcome to join us in taking forward the Lisbon process.

Yours sincerely,



Anders Fogh Rasmussen  
Prime Minister  
of Denmark

Paavo Lipponen  
Prime Minister  
of Finland

Göran Persson  
Prime Minister  
of Sweden

