



***** Check against delivery *****

12 March 2009

PKPP LEWIATAN 10TH ANNIVERSARY 16 MARCH 2009

ADDRESS BY ERNEST-ANTOINE SEILLIÈRE PRESIDENT OF BUSINESSEUROPE

Dear Prime Minister,
Dear President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking very much our host tonight, Henryka BOCHNIARZ. It is for me a great pleasure to have been invited to join PKPP Lewiatan in the celebration of its 10th anniversary and an even greater honour to be given the opportunity to address your guests tonight, in this splendid and – as I understood – very symbolic setting.

I fully appreciate the significance of this celebration. Indeed, in December last year, we had our own jubilee in BUSINESSEUROPE with the 50th anniversary of our European organisation.

The year 2009 also marks the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 5th anniversary of the enlargement of the European Union to ten neighbour countries, for a large part from Eastern and Central Europe.

We have four celebrations, four symbols and one clear thread which links them to one another. At the heart of each of these commemorations, we celebrate a reunified Europe and we remember the past efforts which have made it possible to turn the project of visionary post-war politicians to build a continent based on peace, prosperity through market economics and solidarity into a reality today.

As you know, BUSINESSEUROPE is the Confederation of European Business. Through our 40 member federations in 34 countries across Europe, we represent more than 20 million small, medium and larger companies. Lewiatan was an active member of BUSINESSEUROPE even before your country joined the EU in 2004. Together, we take an active part in promoting a European Union of common values and rules, offering companies a favourable and competitive environment which allows them to create growth and jobs, for the prosperity of all European citizens.



I would like to congratulate Lewiatan's staff – there are some 20 colleagues in daily contact with BUSINESSEUROPE. They do important work in helping to prepare our European positions, constructively seeking solutions that will correspond to the needs of Polish business and to the general interest of European companies. I must mention that Henryka BOCHNIARZ is a Vice-President of BUSINESSEUROPE and a member of our Executive Bureau. In this position, I can assure she makes sure that the views and issues of Polish businesses are taken into account! I go on to thank Lewiatan's management for their determination in supporting and actively promoting those common positions at national and European level. This has contributed in no small measure to the success of BUSINESSEUROPE over the years.

But I am not here tonight only in my capacity as President of BUSINESSEUROPE or out of my personal consideration for Henryka BOCHNIARZ. I would not have missed this celebration because Poland matters a lot in Europe. Our Polish partner certainly matters very much for BUSINESSEUROPE.

Since the 2004 enlargement, your country has demonstrated that it is a major political player in the EU. Poland will play an even greater role in the coming years, preparing for and hosting the European Council Presidency for the first time in the second half of 2011.

But, in the image of Poland, Central and Eastern European countries have brought a lot to the EU ever since late 1989. Indeed, from an economic point of view, European integration started already 20 years ago. It was driven by companies' eagerness to develop activities on both sides of the borders, with what they had always considered as natural partners. Since then, EU accession has materialised and we can be pleased with the enormous achievements.

Although European integration is far from being achieved – and as BUSINESSEUROPE we maintain this as our key priority – the good economic performances of the enlarged EU were obtained thanks to a period of stability, increased market openness and structural reforms favourable to business development. This situation has changed dramatically.

Accompanying the collapse of financial markets, the world's economic situation rapidly deteriorated. We started to witness the effects with rising concerns since the summer. But certainly, it is in 2009 that the impact of the crisis will be felt in its full dimension. Last week, BUSINESSEUROPE published its Economic Outlook based on members' assessment of economic prospects. We expect EU-27 GDP to contract by 2.2% this year. EU-27 investment spending will plunge by 7.4%. We forecast that job losses will reach 4.5 million in the EU-27 by the end of 2009, with some countries more affected than others.

The unprecedented circumstances companies find themselves confronted with have forced us to refocus our priorities and actions. With our members, we have reflected on what should be the EU strategy to get out of the crisis.



We advocate a four-pillar strategy:

- 1) Companies' access to finance must be urgently restored under affordable conditions
- 2) We must resist all forms of protectionism undermining the internal market and free trade
- 3) Member states must implement national recovery plans in a coordinated manner
- 4) Member States must speed up the implementation of structural reforms.

Companies have high expectations from Europe. It is crucial that the EU policies which will be decided by EU institutions and put in place by Member States reflect the sense of urgency of the situation.

In these turbulent times, the European Commission in particular should demonstrate strong leadership. On the one hand, it should give a renewed momentum to the development of strong EU policies and ensure the respect of fundamental Community rules. On the other hand, it should work together with Member states to foster greater coordination at EU level. It is key to ensure that the principles of solidarity and unity will prevail over national protectionist reflexes so that no country is left behind.

We all know that the time of recovery will come – we hope as soon as early 2010. Companies and business organisations play a crucial role in preparing this post-crisis era. Companies face the crisis with a lot of courage and try their utmost to maintain their workforce. As soon as credit flows are restored, they will be able to resume investment spending and look for new business opportunities. Business organisations live up to their responsibilities. They are engaged in a constructive social dialogue at national and European level where they emphasise the importance of flexicurity principles as well as education and training policies. It is therefore crucial that we remain optimistic and take the necessary actions now to make sure that our economies are stronger when the pick of the turmoil has past.

When one thinks about it, ten years is a short period of time. But Poland has changed in many ways over the ten years of Lewiatan's existence. Lewiatan can be proud of its contribution to the development of your country and its successful integration in the European Union. I am sure that, as BUSINESSEUROPE, Lewiatan is a forward-looking organisation. We take stock of past achievements but we never stop working on improvements for the future. We will continue to defend our positions, and remain confident in what the companies we represent can achieve. We will remain proactive in offering solutions to the world's economic and social challenges. This is our duty if we want to be recognised by policy-makers and public opinion.

I raise my glass to the past and future of PKPP Lewiatan. I look forward to enjoying with you the Beethoven Symphony No. 9 – the Ode to Joy – a symbolic piece for PKPP Lewiatan and the European Union at large.

* * *