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SPEECH BY PIERRE GATTAZ, PRESIDENT OF BUSINESSEUROPE

Dear Emma,

You are setting the bar very high but you can count on me to continue your work.

Like you, I am a convinced entrepreneur and like you I have served as President of a national member federation before taking up this important European responsibility.

As you rightly said, times are not getting easier. On the contrary, we might live at a turning point in history. A turning point concerning the global trading system, not to say the world order as we have known it. A turning point on whether we will bring the European project to further blossom or seeing member states drifting apart. In other words, we are at a turning point concerning Europe's future and place in the world.

The next years will decide on whether Europe will continue to deliver for its companies and citizens. And the business community has a strong responsibility to make sure things are going in the right direction.

Business will have to speak up. We will have to make our voice heard loud and clear on how to further shape globalisation, on how to be at the winning side of digitalisation and on how to make the European Union stronger but at the same time less bureaucratic and more efficient.

Building upon the work we have already done on the future of Europe, we will define first our vision for Europe in 2030, then what we expect from the next European Parliament (ahead of the European elections of May 2019) and from the next European Commission.

Without prejudging of the results of this important common work, let me briefly sketch out how I see my mission at BusinessEurope.

There is a new form of Euroscepticism and it is sometimes translated into votes. After Brexit, the elections in Italy reminded us that even a founding Member State can be affected.

As entrepreneurs, we know that Europe is not an option but an absolute necessity.

European integration has strengthened the development of our companies. It has boosted growth and employment. There is a clear link between successful integration in our Single Market and growth and employment!



Of course, European integration is also demanding because it leads to more competition among enterprises, sometimes starting from very different economic and social situations. It is therefore crucial that the European Union continues to ensure that this competition is fair.

Free movement of goods, services, capital and people is an absolute “must” to build a strong Europe. We must say this loud and clear!

Faced with giants such as the United-States or China and with the huge challenges of digitalisation, climate, environmental and demographic change, the solution is not less Europe. The future is not in dissensions but in joining forces within institutions that allow to discuss and settle divergences.

The Euro is a major asset. We must continue to strengthen our Economic and Monetary Union. Constantly pushing back necessary decisions from one European Council to another is not the solution. As the European Commission often says, we must fix the roof of the house while the sun is shining!

The strategy of “the law of the strongest” followed by the United-States is an eye opener. We must react by strengthening our common trade policy and by further improving our Single Market.

The convictions I just shared with you need to be explained. This paedagogical side is an essential part of my mission within BusinessEurope. And I will only be able to fulfil it if all our member federations carry our common message in a simple and understandable way across Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In a world undergoing profound changes, companies are a crucial factor of adaptation while ensuring stability. They bring 80% of the solutions to the problems that people are facing. Companies are also a link between countries and a tensions absorber because doing trade allows to understand each other better and to find common solutions.

Europe is a technological, economic, social and environmental giant. European countries share values, a history, traditions. We must be proud of them. Companies are the keystone to build a stronger Europe, a more united Europe, an open Europe, a human Europe. Let us defend our European Union. It is a worthy cause and there is an urgent need to do so.

Dear Vice-President Katainen,

During our last BusinessEurope Day, you expressed concern about some of the risks I just mentioned.

As the man in charge of jobs, growth, investment and competitiveness in the European Commission, you are a key interlocutor for BusinessEurope. I really look forward to continuing the good cooperation you had with Emma Marcegaglia. And you can count on my full support to defend a strong and competitive European Union.