

Eurostep is a network of autonomous European non-governmental development organisations working towards peace, justice and equality in a world free of poverty. Its membership, rooted in their own societies, works together to influence Europe's role in the world, particularly in pursuing the eradication of injustice and poverty. It advocates changes in Europe's policies and practice based on the perspectives drawn from direct experiences of an active involvement of its members and their partners in development in over 100 countries across the world. The members of Eurostep include: 11.11.11 (Belgium), ACSUR Las Segovias (Spain), Alliance Sud (Switzerland), Concern Worldwide, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (Germany), Hivos (Netherlands), Kepa (Finland), Manitese (Italy), Mellempfoelkligt Samvirke (Denmark), NiZa (Netherlands), Oikos (Portugal), Oxfam International (Netherlands), People in Need (Czech Republic), SNV (Netherlands), terre des hommes Germany.

Mr. José Manuel Barroso
President of the European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200,
B-1049 Brussels

Dear Mr. Barroso,

The role of Europe in the world fifty years after the Treaty of Rome

The 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome is certainly something to celebrate. The achievements of the past half century have not only brought peace and stability to Europe and its people, but have also positioned the European Union as a global player with the ability to play a significant role in projecting these objectives outside its borders.

Indeed, the world of today is very different from that of 1957. Levels of global interdependence have become significantly greater over the past half century. Events in one part of the world impact across the globe much more readily than in the past. The ability of the European Union to maintain the objectives enshrined in the Treaty of Rome increasingly depend on its interactions with other peoples and societies – not just in the immediate neighbourhood, but in all parts of the world.

As representatives of civil society organisations working with people in all parts of the world to eradicate poverty and bring social justice to all we are particularly concerned with the global impact of the EU. We believe that the European Union not only has the ability to play a constructive role in promoting development, but has a responsibility to act in ways that make achieving the Millennium Development Goals a possibility. We recognise the commitments that the EU and its member states have made to increase the Union's efforts to support development. The Communique adopted by the EU Ministers for Development in Petersberg on 15 March provides a comprehensive and forward looking statement that clearly identifies the EU's aspirations for its role in the world.

Over the coming weeks much attention will be given to how the current impasse on the Constitutional treaty will be resolved. While we recognise the difficult challenges facing the Union in achieving the adjustments that will make the EU relevant and effective for the coming years we wish to emphasise the critical importance this has for defining the future of the EU's role in the world. We strongly believe that this will be a key testing ground for the EU. In this context we would ask for your assurance that in the coming negotiations on establishing what changes will be made to the current Treaties, you will work to ensure the inclusion of the articles specifically relating to the EU's cooperation with developing countries (particularly articles III-316 to 320) as included in the Constitutional Treaty. These articles are only clarifications of what exists in the current Treaties, as can be clearly seen from the legal opinions produced during the negotiations at the time. The clarifications established in the drafting process of the Constitution were adopted on that basis by the Convention and accepted by the IGC. These particular articles have not been subject to any opposition during the ratification process.

The fiftieth anniversary is an important milestone for the European Union. We hope that in the coming months the Union is able to reach out effectively to the people inside and outside Europe and demonstrate that it can adopt a vision for the future, including taking a responsible role in the world, which commands respect and support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Stocker', written in a cursive style.

Simon Stocker
Director

cc. Mr. Louis Michel, Commissioner for Development Cooperation
Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations