



**Speech by the President of the Senate of the Netherlands,
Ms Ankie Broekers-Knol,
at the extraordinary conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments
on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the signature of the
Treaties establishing the European Communities**

Rome, 17 March 2017

It is a great pleasure to be here as President of the Senate of the Netherlands, one of the six proud founding members of what today is the European Union. My colleague, Khadija Arib, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, is very sorry that she could not be here today. As you will have heard, we had general elections last Wednesday.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

"Europa unita per il progresso e per la pace!"

This was the slogan on the Italian posters publishing the signing of the Treaties of Rome, 60 years ago. A Europe united for progress and peace.

Today we celebrate this founding moment of European unification. Six signatory member states took the first steps to foster economic cooperation. Together, they triggered a level of cooperation that was unprecedented. They all believed that countries that trade with one another

become economically interdependent and are therefore more likely to avoid conflict. They were right.

To this day, the European Union remains a unique form of governance and partnership. It is neither confederal, nor federal. It is unique. It is an organisation *sui generis*. And it has brought us so much.

In the coming months, all national parliaments and the European Parliament, will debate the five possible courses the President of the European Commission, Mr. Juncker, laid out in the white paper of the European Commission on the future of Europe.

As Mr Juncker said "Rome must also be the start of a new chapter. "

Whatever course we decide on: we can only do so if we have the support and trust of our citizens. We have to make sure that their priorities are the EU's priorities. After all, the European Union is a unification of people, not states. It is my belief that national parliaments - together with the European Parliament - are ideally placed to reaffirm the connection between EU-citizens and the EU. Parliamentarians are in the position to make sure that the policies the EU pursues, are based on public acceptance and benefit the citizens of our respective member states.

Above all else one thing is clear: in the complex world of today no single member state can tackle issues like terrorism, climate change or migration alone. We have to work together to achieve goals that go beyond the interest of individual sovereign states.

If we do not succeed in tackling those issues with all 27 member states together at the same time, then cooperation between different groups of states on different subjects can grow gradually into cooperation on those subjects by all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When discussing the various scenarios for Europe, our main objective should be to strengthen mutual trust and unity among the 27 member states to the benefit of our citizens, to the benefit of Europe. If we succeed in tackling together the important issues no state can tackle alone, we can achieve a prosperous and peaceful future of the European Union.

Progresso e pace.