As the new year gets under way, the start to 2005 is marked by a combination of events:

- the drafting of the proposed strategic objectives for 2005-2009 by the Members of the Commission under the presidency of Mr Barroso;
- a six-month Luxembourg presidency of the Council that is due to examine the mid-term report on the implementation of the Lisbon agenda at the spring Council meeting, and conclude in June with the adoption of the Union’s financial perspectives for the 2007-2013 period;
- the renewed participation of the European Parliament in these discussions.

In this decisive context for the medium-term future of the peripheral and maritime regions, the CPMR Political Bureau chaired by Mr Claudio Martini, President of Tuscany Region, adopted the following address at its meeting in Santiago de Compostela on 14 January 2005 held at the invitation of the President of Galicia, Mr Manuel Fraga Iribarne.

CHALLENGES FOR 2005

The negotiations which will take place in 2005 on the European Union’s financial perspectives for the 2007-2013 period should not be a mere repeat of the exercise the Member States’ representatives undertake every six or seven years. Four things give this event a special dimension:

- the progress being made towards unification of the continent, as demonstrated by the accession of ten new members in 2004, as well as other applicants, namely Romania and Bulgaria, in 2007.
- the adoption of a draft Constitutional Treaty, subject to approval by citizens and their representatives in 2005, which notably guarantees economic, social and territorial cohesion.
- the re-stated goal to make Europe the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010, which, if it is to be achieved, means that everyone’s energy and enthusiasm needs to be harnessed, in order to make up for the shortcomings underlined in the Kok report;
- the challenge of ensuring that our fellow citizens participate widely and convincingly in the 2009 European Parliament elections, thus bringing an end to the disenchantment so apparent in 2004.

It is in this context that the discussions on the main areas of European action and their budget allocations take on their full meaning. If the laudable intention of having a Union for everyone – without there being a
danger that the regrouped whole becomes either entirely or partly unravelled – is to be transformed into a tangible reality, much depends on the extent of the ambition of the final agreement between the negotiators.

To be successful, the 2005 negotiations must be set in the ongoing historical framework which has characterised the uniqueness and imagination of the European project since long before Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957. The Union’s institutions (the Commission, Council and Parliament) should exploit the heritage of a disunited Europe in order to ensure long-term vibrancy within a peaceful continent. The choice is between la carte de l’Europe and l’Europe à la carte, or in other words between drawing on the potential and diversity of Europe as a whole, or adopting a pick and choose approach.

EUROPE REPRESENTS FREEDOM AND DIVERSITY

In the years preceding the First World War, when Europe was at the height of its influence, it was a “Europe-World” (to use the title of a conference and book by the future Europe Museum, under the direction of Krzysztof Pomian). Throughout the centuries of modern history, it extended its influence right across the globe. Its thought and civilisation helped provide a structure for understanding the world. No other continent was up to the task of meeting such a challenge. And it is currently again undertaking the hard quest of finding a new global role, among other players, of which some are already at the summit of their power, and others which are on their way there. It will only manage to do so by looking back in history and drawing on the long-standing characteristics which have represented both its strengths and weaknesses, and retaining the assets it needs for a new era.

To explain Europe’s singular productiveness among the world’s civilisations, let us look more closely at four constant elements which have been observed by major historians down the centuries.

1. Enshrined respect of citizen’s freedoms

Europe’s past has constantly been marked by the winning of “franchises”, obtained to the detriment of royal or seigniorial powers. Current decentralisation and devolution measures (as well as their recognition on the Union’s draft Constitutional Treaty) are just an extension of the trend towards local and regional autonomy over the centuries.

2. Internal cohesion and external power

“Franchises” cannot exist without peace at borders and, by inference, there can be no peace at borders without “franchises”, in other words unless subjects are motivated to contribute to their defence. Paul Kennedy, in The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, confirms this analysis by attributing the dismemberment of Poland in the 18th century and Spain’s decline on the inability of ruling monarchies to raise taxes.

3. Oligopolarity

All attempts to create an empire either by force or peacefully have failed, contrary to experiences in other continents. The richness of European civilisation and its expansion across the world has been due to it having multiple power centres, its oligopolarity, its polycentrism, and the inability of any of its power centres to assert dominance over others definitively. Europe is intrinsically diverse and would not be able to exist in the absence of such diversity.

4. Nations

In Leçons au Collège de France (Lessons to the Collège de France), winter 1944-45, Lucien Febvre –on his return from deportation- for his part noted in 1789, French revolutionaries enshrined oligopolarity in the concept of the nation and its territory, which had become a homeland. For better or for worse, the concept led to national claims which forged the way the world was organised politically during the 19th and 20th centuries. He concluded by estimating that this concept would never become out of date, thus rendering any sort of European unification impossible.
This is the question that anybody following current debates is certainly likely to ask themselves, whether regarding common defence and security, common foreign policy or the Union’s budget. Is it possible that the effort made nearly sixty years could lead to a union of nations which does not constitute a superstate, to an empire which is not an empire, or to a grouping which, within its borders, ensures citizen’s freedoms, internal cohesion, foreign influence, territorial diversity and compatibility between nations?

2007-2013: A NEW LEAP FORWARD – THE TERRITORIAL PACT

In accordance with the constant elements outlined above, further progress in European integration will be impossible if it is not founded on:

- the permanent attachment of Europeans to their “franchises”, and to the national, regional and local democratic structures which guarantee them;
- the multipolarity of their territories.

Citizens’ consent for a new phase – namely that set out by the draft Constitutional treaty – must be based on the respect and enhancement of these permanent characteristics of European civilisation. The key issue in coming years will be to stimulate, within the Union, the profoundly rooted personality Europe has developed over the last millennium, and to ensure that it continues to be a source of productiveness in the peaceful context of a unified continent.

Accomplishing this makes it possible to highlight some good practice rules in the context of the discussion on the financial perspectives.

1. The most efficient way for the Union to involve our fellow citizens in further integration will be to forge a direct link between its institutions and Europe’s territories, where the franchises that have existed for centuries are exercised, and through which the recognition of diversity is most apparent. Continued support for the common project will be secured by involving the territories in achieving European goals (e.g. Lisbon and Gothenburg), much more so than by pursuing traditional communication policies entailing top-down efforts to persuade people of the validity of decisions taken in far off places.

2. The necessary conditions have been forged over the last twenty years through economic and social cohesion policy and its implementation at regional level, on the basis of the Single Act. The Constitutional Treaty has enlarged its scope to territorial cohesion. The European Commission’s proposals on financial perspectives, although insufficiently ambitious, go in the same direction.

3. This strategy must now be strengthened by developing a real Territorial Pact, to ensure that everyone is involved in meeting the challenges of developing a role for Europe in the context of globalisation. This could be a major strand of the new European Commission’s action.

4. The Member States must be the main proponents of such a development when conducting their negotiations on the Union’s financial perspectives. Who would be able to understand why they had ratified a draft Constitutional Treaty reflecting the optimisation of Europe’s long-term advantages, on the one hand, if on the other hand the European budget for the 2007-2013 period did not reflect this new momentum? The administrative mechanisms and the legitimate budget concerns of inter-governmental negotiations must be reorganised so that they take account of such a political impetus.

5. The minimum goals put forward by the European Commission for involving the regions in convergence, competitiveness and employment, as well as in territorial cooperation, cannot be reduced without seriously undermining the vital link between sub-state government and the European institutions. The political price of such an act would far exceed its cost in budgetary terms. To give one example, the European Commission’s proposals on ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) support for all Regions not eligible under the convergence objective represents 11 euros per head per annum between 2007 and 2013.

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For these reasons, acting on behalf of its 150 Member Regions, the CPMR Political Bureau:
- **Urges** the European Council and its Presidency, the European Commission and European Parliament to raise the standard of their debates on the Union’s financial perspectives and the policies to be delivered, to bring them into line with the strategic challenges facing Europe in 2005 both inside and outside its borders;

- **Urges** the European Commission and the European Parliament to place high on their agenda for 2005-2009 the introduction of a territorial pact, which is vital to ensuring that all our regions become stakeholders in the Lisbon strategy;

- **Proposes** that the European Commission make this issue a focus of structured dialogue with the representatives of regional and local authorities;

- **Strongly advises** all its members, the Committee of the Regions and other organisations representing regional and local authorities to express their utmost concern to the European institutions and Member States should the outcome of the current negotiations result in a setback for European integration.