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## *Report- Public Talk*

# **“60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome: Foundations and Prospects of the European Integration Process”**

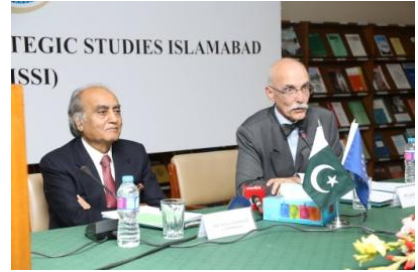
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### Pictures of the Event



The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a Public Talk on March 28, 2017 under its series of Ambassador's Platform. The speaker at the occasion was the Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Pakistan, H.E. Jean-Francois Cautain who spoke on the *60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome: Foundations and Prospects of the European Integration Process*.

In his welcome address, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman ISSI said that initially there were only six signatories of the Treaty on March 26, 1957, that included Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and West Germany who agreed to reconstruct Europe after the Second World War. Later, it expanded to cooperation amongst 28 countries of the European Union. The Treaty helped bring about effective cooperation for the reconstruction of the economies of the European continent, prevented war in Europe and ensured a lasting peace. He said that credit goes to the EU for promoting the objectives of the free flow of labour, capital, services, market, and common currency for some, and visa free zone (Schengen) as well by maintaining peace.

Pakistan has also been benefitting by its relationship with the EU since 1962 when diplomatic ties were established. Cooperation since 1974 across priority areas covers politics, education, energy, governance, humanitarian assistance, plight of minorities, and now, counter-terrorism between EU and Pakistan. Since January 2014, Pakistan has a GSP+ Great Preferences Accord with EU. By 2015, trade between Pakistan and EU reached more than 10 billion Euros. EU's support to Pakistan during the natural disasters is also widely appreciated.

Since 2000, EU is going through turbulent phases, particularly since expansion in 2000, with multiple issues like Brexit, the debt crisis in Greece, carnage in Syria, heightened threat of terrorism, conflict of Ukraine, immigrants to EU, resurgence of Russia and the issue of 1.4 million asylum seekers. However, EUs' confidence in its capacity is successfully reflected in "post Brexit political reflection". On March 25, 2017, all the members of the 27 remaining states met in Rome to reflect on the current situation.

The main concern now is: What possibly could be the future of the EU? Could there be a breakup of the EU since it is facing an existential threat particularly after the Brexit. Many remain embedded in the idea of its even stronger integration with multi-speed policies. Of course, with some, a slower pace be maintained is the priority. Maybe the solution is in some kind of loose set up. However, to remain integrated as a stronger EU is the ambition overwhelmingly expressed in the Rome session of political reflection despite the setback of Brexit. Process of integration should continue.

H.E. Ambassador Jean-Francois Cautain said that 1957 was an important year for EU. This was warmly celebrated by France, Belgium, Italy, Luxemburg and Germany with other member states on the anniversary of the EU on March 25, 2017. Before 1957, Europe experienced six years of war which destroyed European cities and killed around sixty million people not only in Europe, but all over the world. The atmosphere in Europe was more towards falling back on revenge rather than integration. Mostly promoted by the nationalists, some thought that this fallback would be more of an absurdity, and it would further inflame the continent. The founding fathers of EU came up with an idea of United Europe, which initially was only considered as a



dream and a wishful thinking. On the other hand, the union has brought the longest period of peace in Europe. This very idea of peace was embedded in the treaty of hope. The process of regional integration by the establishment of common market, free movement of people and services and trade is the key to the stability of the EU.

Sixty years have passed since the Treaty of Rome. To date there are 28 countries - 27 if Britain withdraws. It was a challenging journey. Whether it was the core countries which laid down the foundations of the Union, or those which joined later have all experienced adversities and disasters in their history. For them, EU brought in peace and stability. The Union can now shape their competencies, their institutions and policies. EU has strong institutions despite the fact that people, from time to time, portray them as complicated. EU is not a federation. It has a parliament elected by the core European countries. It is a forum of a de facto solidarity.

Solidarity is the key word of the EU which defines its purpose. The meeting of quite a few Heads of States on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of EU itself manifests that it is a very dynamic project. It reaffirms our faith in our objectives and values. EU is a study of democracies, peace, freedom, equality, integrity, prosperity and well being of citizens. There is no denial of the fact that there have been set backs in this journey, and these would continue though, yet, the challenges faced by the “New EU” must take stock of its achievements.

The EU would continue to be a platform to stand for human rights, regional and international cooperation, sustainable development, democracies, inclusive societies and multilateralism. In solidarity, the EU sees investment in security and prosperity. Despite economic constraints, the EU is contributing in the sustainable developmental goals. EU development aid goes to 150 countries including Pakistan. It is currently focusing on environment issues. From 2014 to 2020, the EU would focus on the development of the countries which have suffered from natural disasters and 70% of the aid would go to those countries. EU would also continue to stand for global rules to protect the people against abuses and establishment of rules for better standards.

According to Ambassador Cautain, the EU is also planning to introduce innovative agreements on climate change. In a world of re-emerging power politics, the EU feels that it has an even more significant role to play. As a Union of major to small size countries, the EU believes that such challenges as migration, climate change, and instability at borders could be faced with more integrated EU while maintaining sovereignty. The EU also believes in its economic strength as world's largest global market always inviting investors. It is ready to encourage trade. The GSP+ status given to Pakistan is a perfect example of EUs' belief in cooperation. The EU economy is not a blind one. It is bound by development model capable of policing one quarter of the world's wealth. The EU is committed to its social market economy which strives to reconcile efficiency on social cohesion unlike any other region of the world so far.

The world is going through times of great uncertainty. The global balance is also making a great shift. The EU believes that it would play a pivotal power role in the global order. The challenges posed by Russia, Ukraine, crisis in Syria, Iraq and Libya could be grave for the global balance. The EU has the capacity to confront these challenges by essentially uniting. The EU considers migrants as victims and not as threats. Our borders are being effectively monitored to ensure the security on these borders for the migrants.

The world community is living in times of existential crisis. No doubt, the EU is under threat, yet the projects undertaken by the EU have brought unprecedented peace, democracy and prosperity. However, a more shared vision for common action is needed, and a fragile international environment could be encountered by greater engagement. This approach is the most important strategy for its security policy adopted in June 2016. It is by acting together that EU would be able to sustain its strong position and ensure the security of its citizens based on principles and values.

The EU would continue to assume its responsibility in the area of security and defence, and is ready to protect, respond and deter against external threats. A common security and defence policy embedded in military and civilian operations will strengthen EUs' ambition of strategic autonomy both within EUs' borders and beyond. The objective of EU remains to continue its partnership worldwide to respond to the challenges faced, and work on the capacity of resilience of our partners for sustained peace.

The EU and its member states benefit from a unique range of instruments to take external actions aimed at using them in a comprehensive way. The EU would continue to support regional order and global cooperation based on international law which would consequently ensure human rights, sustainable development, promote global peace, security and development cooperation to counter humanitarian crisis.

H. E. Jean-Francois Cautain said even when extensive internal difficulties absorb energies, the EU would remain committed to its goals. The decision of the British people is deeply regretted. However, the difficulties have been faced in the past as well with positivity, which confirms our commitment even in challenging times.

On March 3, 2017, the president of the European Commission presented a white paper on the future of the EU. This has been described as a new birth certificate of the EU. It recommends "reflections on scenarios" through 2007-2025. It identifies five scenarios on the future of the EU ranging from the less to the ambitious. Coming back to the sole single market, maintaining the status quo, going forward towards the federal Europe were the possibilities put forward to the member states by the president of the Commission, and which are to be decided by the member states, most likely before the end of 2017. Some members have underlined the concept of Europe at multiple speeds in the white paper. The principle is similar as is used for the 19 members of the Eurozone or Shengen area with 22 member states. This would be further extended to series of other policies for which some member states seek greater integration. The future shape of multi-speed Europe is still unknown and needs clarification from the political point of view. A more structured framework open to all could be the solution.

Depending on the choice of important subjects like taxation at the EU level, standardization of social benefits is an issue which would clearly shape the future of EU. Disrespect to the European values such as freedom of religion, protection of minorities and sovereignty is not negotiable in any case.

Unity in diversity was once again affirmed by the heads of states in March 2017, at the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the EU. This will be an impetus for the European integration. In conclusion, H.E. Jean-Francois Cautain emphasized on the significance of integration to meet

any challenge. The EUs' principles would remain democratic and flexible since Europe remains the future.

The presentation was followed by a question and answer session moderated by Ambassador Khalid Mahmood. On a question regarding Ambassador Cautain's views on the future of NATO and Europe and its relations with the US, the Ambassador referred to the five models presented by the president of the European Commission and said that it largely depends upon the citizens of Europe. Elections this year in some countries would also help shape Europe. About Europe's relations with the US, they have always been very strong according to Ambassador Cautain. Economically, Europe is the largest trading partner of the US, and would like to continue with the same bond in the transatlantic relations under any US administration. NATO is an important subject for the security of its member states including the EU, which has its own Command and Defence policy which would respond to the demand of the US on the increase of the defence budget for NATO by the European member states.

Regarding a question in view of the prevalent perception that EU sanctions against Russia have hurt Europe more than they have hurt Russia, Ambassador Cautain replied that some sections of the economy of the EU have been badly affected. However, since EU stands for international law and sanctions were more about that. Similarly, in answer to the inequality in the Eurozone, he opined that the solidarity among the states has been more a preference. EU has reached to a conclusion that if any of the member country is facing financial issues, a strong mechanism in solidarity is required. The question remains that how far can solidarity be stretched. There is a general agreement that a monetary policy cannot go too far. It breeds inequality. Hence, economic policy is an important and open debate.

In reply to the requirement of new leadership by the exit of Britain, Ambassador Cautain said that it certainly has hurt the EU. However, opportunities would continue to come and it all depends on how they would be translated.

In an answer on the question of the nationalist wave in Europe, Ambassador Cautain regarded it as unhealthy, and is mainly being used by the national politicians for personal gains. He also suggested that to counter terrorism, strict laws must be adhered.

EU-China relations were also considered amicable by Ambassador Cautain since they are good trade partners.