

# PIERRE VIMONT

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Good afternoon, I am very pleased and honored to be asked to participate in this conference, the World Policy Conference, in spite of the fact that I am here in Brussels, a little bit far away. Thierry de Montbrial insisted that I give you this small talk – even from Brussels – and I have accepted – even if I wonder sometimes if really I can be of any help looking at the impressive panel that you have already in Cannes. I think first of all what I would have said if I had been able to be in Cannes, was to give you a few observations from my own experience in the EEAS now that I have been there for nearly 2 years.

And the first observation I would make is that I have been quite impressed by the fact that so many of European Union partners around the world have been time and again asking for the EU support, whether it would be assistance, whether it would be diplomatic intervention or military or civilian operation, whether it would be financial assistance. The number of requests that we have had has been increasing, whether it would be on bilateral basis, on multilateral basis, think about the UN, the African Union, the Arab League, and I think this is quite telling about the place and the role the European Union is playing already in today's international community. My second observation is in spite of what I read time and again about the sort of competition and difficulty one could face between the national member states diplomatic action and the EU action at the level of the European Union, I think this complementarity in fact has been working rather well, and more smoothly and more naturally than is usually said. It is sometimes a bit of a surprise when I say that to some of my colleagues or to those who ask me from time to time what is the experience we get from the EEAS but this is really what is happening on the ground. We seem to go in a rather easy way, member states having their own interest and their own way of doing things, the European Union finding in a rather natural way its own role and its own place. And even if you look at recent events like the UN General Assembly vote on the Palestinian issue, the statute for a non-member state that was recently adopted in New York, it is quite striking to see that member states had split vote, a 3 way split vote as you all know, but at the same time, exactly on the same day, the European Union with its 27 member states all united could go for a statement that was made by the higher representative by Catherine Ashton we have mainly restating the principles of the European Union with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. We were able to be united on the issues, on the need for relaunching the peace process, reminding our support for the two-state solution, for the inadmissibility of the settlement policy, etc. So it seems to me, even if we all agree we are still very far away from getting any agreement with regard to the peace process, at least the Europeans were able to show this unity and I think this tells a lot about the kind of complementarity we can have there.

If you admit what I just said about these two observations, one can then ask the question: but why is it then that we still have this feeling when we talk about the European foreign policy, why can we have this feeling that something is still missing there, and not yet totally complete? I think there maybe there are 3 reasons for that. The first one, it is about communication; maybe we need to communicate a little bit more about some of the success stories we have had so far – and we have had some if you look at the Horn of Africa and what the European Union has been doing there and is doing there on the ground, the way we have brought some interesting and important contribution to Somalia, to the fight against the piracy, and to the resumption to some extent of the Somalia state – still very fragile, we still have to move ahead – but there has been pretty good success there. Think about the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, the High Representative has just shared the third round of this dialogue, it is moving in the right direction, slowly, it will take time, but here again one could talk about a good success in that field. I think therefore we may need to do more on this, and I hope we will as we go on, we have to be careful of so because member states are watching us very closely. I think the second point, issue, on which we need to do more, it is about putting and implementing what is really the innovative part of this new EEAS, it is about this idea about having a comprehensive approach, it is about putting altogether all the different instruments and tools that may exist at the moment in the European Union, and it is more than anything else finding the right place for the EEAS, as it stands between the Commission on one side and the member states on the other side. You know this is something rather new it was never put into motion in the European Union so far, and this is the sort of ongoing process that will need more time as we go on. And I think the third issue on which we need to work more, it is about strategy, and the possibility for the EEAS to come up when we face all the different challenges we are facing today, to come up with some new innovative ideas that member states



are very much looking for. This is I think one of the great assets of the European Union and the EEAS as it stands and the High Representative as she is there at the moment, the fact that we are standing there at a level which is more than member state, at the European level, at the level when we can look at the problems we are facing with a new vision and a new point of view, whether it would be the global challenges that we all know about – climate change, energy, the fight against terrorism – whether it would be the main crisis that we are facing at the moment, think about the Arab Spring, as it is usually called, and the way we should look at it for the next three or four years ahead and how we should try to handle our relationship with countries like Tunisia, Egypt, and others, as events will unfold in that part of the world. When we look at all those different issues, Europe can come up with some ideas and put it to member states to try altogether to see how we move ahead and I think there there is special tasking for the European Union as we are going to move ahead and I think that would be very important to be able to put more input into this as we go along.

I think as a word of conclusion, and I apologize for being too long, I think that many of you may be surprised that at a time when we have been discussing the financial crisis taking place in Europe and when we even hear some of our observers telling us time and again that there may be even doubts about the future of the eurozone, people may be surprised that, if they detect some sort of optimism on my part with regard to foreign policy, but I think we can be optimistic. I think what is sometimes forgotten is that we have been dealing with foreign policy more or less for the last 40 years among all of us, the different members of the European Union; and we have gathered, as time has been going on, some good common points, some good policies, I was talking about the Middle East but one could talk about also Africa, or Latin America, etc. And sometimes this is being forgotten and I think we should make the best use of that possibility that we have now to put all this together and to work all this together; and for me if I had to end with a personal conclusion, I think if you want to move ahead and to improve the European integration, at this stage, it would be less about new reforms of our institution but more about having more self-confidence and more trust in what we have been doing so far and how to use the incredible resources we have had already put together in the recent years.

I have been quite too long, I apologize, may I wish you fruitful and I am sure very interesting conference, and all my best wishes for the success of this conference. Good afternoon.