

Greens/EFA Co-president Philippe Lamberts' speech to President Macron

Plenary debate on the Future of Europe, 17. April 2018

Mister President, dear colleagues,

It is good to see that France is back. For too long, your European seat had been physically occupied but politically vacant. Of course, we cannot have a French or a German Europe, but in order to thrive in the long term Europe needs France and Germany to be committed. If France really wanted to, it could embody the European motto of "Unity in diversity".

Mister President, you have outlined your ambition for Europe and in many ways it echoes the long-standing battles that we, greens and regionalists, have been fighting.

We are as convinced as you are that Europeans must work together to take up this century's challenges. There lies the key to our true sovereignty.

We share a will to build a political Union that listens to the voice of its citizens. They must be at the core, not at the margin, of the European project.

Like you, we want our common currency to have a future, to be a currency for all Europeans. This means having a robust budget to invest together, a common guarantee on bank deposits, and putting an end to tax competition and social dumping.

Lastly, we join you in claiming that we should "Make our planet great again". We know it, and you know it: Europe must be at the forefront of the ecological transition of our societies - starting with a European budget that supports this transition. Ecology is the key to our prosperity.

Mister President, you said it yourself: what you want for Europe, "France must start doing right now". Your actions tell a different story, a story which undermines your country's motto "liberty, equality, fraternity".

LIBERTY... Where is liberty, when your citizens can be placed under house arrest or have their houses searched on the basis of mere suspicion? Where is liberty, when armed policemen barge in at the crack of dawn to arrest a group of young people whose only alleged crime is to have peacefully occupied a construction site? My daughter was one of them; she was handcuffed in front of her 2-year-old son and taken far from home for an 8-hour long interrogation. In your France, the rule of law that guards our liberties is declining day after day.

LIBERTY, EQUALITY... Where is equality when you make life for the working class ever more precarious while at the same time granting the rich tax giveaways? You call them the “lead climbers” and you have a steadfast faith in them. But the thing is, Mister Macron, that a climbing party is always tied to... the rope. It is thanks to the rope that the lead climber adapts his speed to the needs of the whole party. It is thanks to the rope that those who bring up the rear do not fall behind or into a ravine. But in our societies, the rope has vanished: the rich get richer, while the middle classes stagnate or get poorer, and the most vulnerable are left to their fate.

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY... Is it in the name of fraternity that you sell weapons to regimes that then use them against their own people or their neighbours? Where is fraternity when your policemen slash migrants’ tents and sleeping bags? Hasty procedures, non-suspensive appeals, administrative detentions. Those are the ingredients of your migration bill: containing and pushing back, instead of welcoming humans in forced exile.

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY...

In the country of COP 21, I would suggest adding a fourth term to the French motto: SUSTAINABILITY. You claim that you want a carbon tax, the end of glyphosate and of diesel cars; well done! But at the same time, you are committed to promoting free trade agreements and worse still, nuclear power. Unlike your predecessor, you have allowed the EU to adopt an all too lax definition of endocrine disruptors. And while you have rightly abandoned the senseless airport project in Notre-Dame-des-Landes, you then crush with violence the projects of those who, for years, have been trying to reinvent how we cultivate the land.

Mister President, a book recently described you as a philosopher. According to it, nothing that you say is said by chance. A few months ago, you spoke of “people who succeed and **people who are nothing**”. You didn’t say “people who **do** nothing”, you didn’t say “people who **have** nothing”, you said “people who **are** nothing”. For us, President Macron, the European project should be about making sure that no woman or man on our continent can ever be thought of as “nothing” or think of themselves as “nothing”. Considering a human being as “nothing” opens the door to the possibility of subjecting them to anything. And we will never accept this.

Mister President, you have made it a habit to give your prominent guests symbolic tokens. Allow me to do the same. I give you a climbing rope, as a symbol of this climbing party, of the ties which we must urgently reconstruct in our societies and between them.

Whenever you endeavour to bring Europe towards more liberty, more equality and more fraternity, whenever you act in favour of a fairer, more sustainable and more democratic Union, we will be by your side. Whenever you do not, we will stand in your way.