

The Conference of the Speakers of the EU Parliaments Bratislava, 26 May 2007

UKRAINE, THE EASTERN NEIGHBOUR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**Commentary by Mr. Norbert Lammert, Speaker of the German Bundestag
(Transcript)**

Let me make a comment, because the Chairman wanted us to ask questions, wanted us to make comments. Well, I very much agree what Mr. Dorn and with what Mr. Moroz said about the European perspective. But even though I understand this concern, we need to make a few complementary remarks.

First, this concern does not just pertain to Ukraine; this is also a concern shared by a number of countries that are now the neighbouring countries of the EU comprising 27 countries. I do not think that we could provide for a safe perspective, unconditional perspective for one country while discriminating against other countries. Well, nobody suggested that but we cannot give preferential treatment to a single country. Well, nobody suggested that as I said before, I just wanted to make sure that you understand this.

Secondly, I would like to make the following comment. Yesterday we talked about the status quo of the European Union and my sense is that we are all in agreement that further enlargement steps we need to comply with two things: first there is the requirement of institutional reform, and then there is the capacity of the countries that want to join the European Union to actually become European Union members. And you cannot just fulfil one of these requirements.

European leaders agreed on a declaration in Berlin that provides for a renewed basis of cooperation. As long as we do not have this renewed basis, further enlargements are not possible. There is either a joint basis, or there are no further accession activities. We need this joint basis before any further accession activities can start. Every country that wants to join the European Union needs to make sure that it is in position to actually join the European Union, that it has done its homework.

I have a lot of empathy; I very much appreciate the proposals and concerns shared by Ukraine. But I would like to share one concern with you. There are thousands or millions of people in Germany for example, who are very appreciative of the transformation process that has occurred in Ukraine. But they still have vivid memories of the obstacles, of all the difficulties involved in connection with the democratic elections of the president in Ukraine. I still have vivid memories of all these hurdles, of all these difficulties, and so do others. I cannot put my finger on it; I just wanted to make sure that you understand this.

But right now, there is this rivalry among factions in Ukraine. And that rivalry seems to be more pronounced in solidarity expressed among democratic forces. But this is something that we would need to attain; we would need to attain solidarity. European Union member countries must comply with the principle of solidarity, solidarity among democratically-minded people. Well, that takes precedence over the vested interest of the political factions. If this does not come about, then there is an inherently structural risk meaning democratic standards might be questioned and challenged if they are not in keeping with their own political interests. And that is not what I have in mind when I talk about the European or political community.

Let me reiterate. The European Union places certain expectations in member countries. And if you want to become a member of that Union, you have to comply with the standards set by the European Union. The European Union is a community of democratic states and it has come up with a list of criteria that must be fulfilled. Having this in mind, I very much appreciate the developments in Ukraine, in Moldova, in Croatia, in Macedonia, countries that all want to accede to the European Union, so I have a lot of empathy for these countries and I have a lot of sympathy for the efforts made by these countries.

But declarations of intent are not enough, what we need is structural reforms, sweeping structural reforms, both within the EU and in the countries concerned.

Thank you.