
Herman Van ROMPUY



Herman Van Rompuy was born on 31 October 1947. He is the first long term and full time President of the European Council (until the Treaty of Lisbon, the position had rotated among the Prime Ministers of the Member States for six months each, since then they choose a President of their meetings for a 2 1/2 year period, renewable once). A Belgian politician of the Christian Democratic and Flemish party, he served as the 49th Prime Minister of Belgium from 30 December 2008 until his predecessor (Yves Leterme) succeeded him on 25 November 2009.

On 19 November 2009 Van Rompuy was elected by the members of the European Council as the first permanent President of the European Council under the Treaty of Lisbon. He was appointed to chair the institution for the period starting from 1 December 2009 until 31 May 2012 though he only took up his position officially on the first of January 2010.

At a meeting in the Castle of the Valley of the Duchess for a meeting held by Bilderberg group on 12 November 2009, Van Rompuy made a speech about his vision of the European governance. He talked about applying a European Union wide "green"-tax, to cover social security expenses.

On 19 November 2009, Van Rompuy was chosen unanimously by the European Council, at an informal meeting in Brussels, to be the first full-time President of the European Council; for the period of 1 December 2009 (the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon) until 31 May 2012. He took up his position officially on 1 January 2010.

Gordon Brown also praised Van Rompuy as "a consensus-builder" who had "brought a period of political stability to his country after months of uncertainty". This opinion is shared by others; he has been described as the painstaking builder of impossible compromises (*l'horloger des compromis impossibles*) A statement made by Van Rompuy at a news conference after his selection illustrates his approach:

"Every country should emerge victorious from negotiations. A negotiation that ends with a defeated party is never a good negotiation. I will consider everyone's interests and sensitivities. Even if our unity remains our strength, our diversity remains our wealth."

In a November 2009 press conference, Van Rompuy related to global governance by stating: "2009 is also the first year of global governance with the establishment of the G20 in the middle of a financial crisis; the climate conference in Copenhagen is another step towards the global management of our planet." Van Rompuy referred to the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2009.

In the first months of his presidency Van Rompuy visited most EU member states, he also organised an informal meeting of the heads of state of the EU. The meeting took place on the 11th of February 2010 in the Solvay Library (Brussels), topics to be discussed were the future direction of the economic policies of the EU, the outcome of the Copenhagen Conference and the then recent earthquake in Haiti.