

**Conferring Ceremony at UCC for the Students in European
Studies
- 7th September 2010 –**

Guest Speaker Hélène DUQUIN, Director AF

Address

First of all I would like to congratulate you all on your wonderful academic achievement which reflects your great commitment, the superb outcome of your many years' hard work, and the beginning of a thrilling period in your lives. You are credit to yourselves, your university, your country and indeed to Europe.

As the Director of the Alliance Française de CORK, and as the Vice-President of the Institute Robert SCHUMAN for Europe I am very honoured this morning to address you because, for me, you are the future of Europe, you are the future of Ireland in Europe.

Ireland is a gem within Europe, Ireland is an essential component of Europe, Europe needs Ireland, and all its excellence, which you all embody, to be able to fully be itself ; Europe needs you to realise this goal, and the great skills and knowledge you have started to gather in this beautiful University College Cork are the fundamental instruments to forge our common future both nationally, and internationally.

There is a quotation, of which I am particularly fond, from one of Cork's most distinguished citizens, Jack Lynch, who oversaw Ireland's entry into the then European Community. I quote:

«It would be unthinkable that Ireland which “belongs to Europe by history, tradition and sentiment no less than Geography, should stand aside from this historical process »

For all of you who have chosen to study the arts and humanities, European and Cultural studies, and European languages, you prove your openness to the world, to the **Other**; You reassert that what Europe is primarily about first and foremost is the blossoming of men and women in order to fully realise their potential and talents towards greater international cooperation.

Europe is a privileged space of equality of chances, of emancipation for the individual, and of the fostering of citizenship. It matters to all of us to continue this European Construction within the footsteps of the Founders of Europe, since the memory of the various tragedies that have cruelly marked our territories is still vivid.

When we enter the death Camps of the second world war, when we walk on these roads we call the roads of shame, when we encounter Human distress, we thankfully also meet men and women such as Robert SCHUMAN, whose mission and whose ideal: « *Make the European Men and Women raise.* » is the only one that can redeem Europe of such a trauma.

Europe is not only an economic space, it is also a unique and privileged democratic space, and its vocation is to continue to serve humankind to the best of its ability.

Through excellence in Education and Training, in scientific and technological research, through Literature, Arts, Philosophy, Human Sciences, we must continue to enlighten the European Consciousness, to determine what is right, what is good, what is beautiful, to reach for what is fair. Europe is a Historical power; its vocation is to be not only an economic power but also a generous democratic and cultural power in the world. And you are the ones who will help to fulfil this vocation.

To create a European democratic and humanist society is a fair and thrilling project. It is yours, it is mine, it is ours.

Great Irish figures like Mary ROBINSON, Patrick HILLARY have fully committed themselves in this direction.

Europe improves our daily life, it facilitates progress thanks to the mobility of ideas and people which it allows and encourages. It is not only in the name of competitiveness that we must achieve and succeed to create a political Europe; it is in the name of the progress of Civilisation. It is a continent of opportunities that is offered to us, we are just about to become more conscious of it. In allowing our European Citizenship to blossom, Europe gives birth to a unique and unheard of Community, that is why we need all our intelligences to be able to live up to the Challenge that its political harmonious construction requests; and Ireland is the country which counts the highest number of Nobel prizes in proportion to its population, Europe does need all its genius for a strong construction: it needs your genius.

At the highest level of the various European States, Europe is looking for strategic responses and reactions to answer the various economic, cultural, political and democratic challenges it faces.

Europe has to live up to many challenges; it is, for Europeans, the new political frontier of our time. Europe has great initiatives to take, great risks to master.

“Who could have imagined 50 years ago that today the European Union would consist of **27 Member States**? Its population having a very high standard of living and member states being all based upon stable democracies.

Through a still limited pooling of our national sovereignties, we Europeans have fashioned a uniquely successful instrument to promote our interests and our values.

We have become **a truly global actor**. Our population of half a billion is larger than the US and Russia combined.

We have established **the EURO**, now the 2nd reserve currency for central banks.

We have created a single market that is **the world's largest trader** with a 20% share of global trade and an equivalent share of global income.

We are **the largest donor** community of official Development Assistance in the world, accounting for 55% of all such aid and are the biggest donor of humanitarian food aid.

We are active leaders in the fight to address the challenges of **global warming** and climate change not least through the Kyoto Process, which would not exist without determined EU leadership.

We are indispensable to the establishing of **the International Criminal Court** in The Hague as an extension of the concept of the rule of law in which we believe.

By any standards this is an impressive record of achievement, of solidarity, of sustainability and of leadership but also of service to European citizens, their needs and their ideals.

The Union has the credibility and legitimacy to forge ahead!"

And only thanks to young hugely talented women and men as yourselves will we achieve that dream !

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.