

**Speech of Mrs Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations
and European Neighbourhood Policy**

28/05/08 - The European Neighbourhood Policy – making Europe more secure

**Kangaroo Group, European Security and Defence
European Office of Land Baden Württemberg, Brussels, 28 May 2008**

Honourable Members of the European Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my thanks to the Chairman of the Kangaroo Group Mr Karl von Wogau for the kind invitation to tonight's meeting of the Working Group on European Security and Defence. I am happy to have this opportunity to discuss the issues that go to the very heart of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The ENP is by now a well-established policy producing concrete results on the ground. The ENP works and delivers!

Yet we are of course looking for ways to make it more effective and attractive – not least given the complex challenges in our neighbourhood. That means further differentiating ENP and focusing on the individual needs and performances of our partners. That is one of the key assets of the ENP.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The kangaroo you chose as your symbol in 1979 - when this group was established - could also serve as an emblem of the European Neighbourhood Policy: A kangaroo is a likeable animal. It is strong but at the same time peaceful. It is able to take great leaps over obstacles. All of which are characteristics of the EU's action in its neighbourhood!

Joking aside, as a key EU policy the ENP is rooted in the analysis set out in the European Security Strategy. We want to avoid the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and our neighbours to the South and to the East. We want to strengthen political dialogue with these countries, promote stability and assist them with their political and economic transformation and modernization.

By working with our neighbours on their reform agendas, by helping them to build open societies and offering them our experience and assistance, we are reinforcing not only *their* prosperity and security, but *also our own*. The ENP creates a clear win-win situation.

The ENP uses the great potential of the Union as a "soft and smart power" and builds a unique, privileged relationship with our neighbours, anchored in shared interests and values. As Konrad Adenauer used to say, "*We all live under the same sky, even if we don't all have the same horizon*".

Democracy and human rights, the rule of law and good governance, market economy and sustainable development – these principles are and must remain the cornerstone of the Union's engagement with our neighbours - despite the undeniable cultural, political or social differences throughout the neighbourhood. Respecting these basic values creates trust. That is essential. Only neighbours that trust each other can become good friends.

The ENP is thus neither megaphone-diplomacy nor a form of social work by diplomats. It is in the EU's own essential interest. We cannot and will not feel secure in a "fortress Europe". We cannot dig trenches and build walls around us. That has never worked, nor will it work in today's globalized, interconnected world.

Only by engaging with our partners, bringing them gradually closer to the EU and sharing with them our achievements and prosperity can we be confident that under the same sky the horizon will get brighter for all of us.

So the ENP is an ambitious project. The specific level of ambition with each neighbour depends on the extent to which they share the values on which the EU is based. On that note, I was very pleased that the second round of so-called ENP Progress Reports that I presented in April allowed us – on the basis of the good progress made - to propose substantially upgrading our relationship with four neighbours: Ukraine, Morocco, Israel and Moldova. I am confident that others will follow.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The EU's position in the globalized world cannot be taken for granted. Of course, we are enjoying an unprecedented period of peace and welfare. Our Union of 27 states and nearly half a billion people is getting stronger, producing over 30% of the world's Gross National Income. Politically, economically and socially we are an attractive model. And in our role as global player we are taking responsibility for regional and international stability from Bosnia or Kosovo to Afghanistan or Congo.

Still, in the field of security much remains to be done. This is particularly true in the EU's neighbourhood, where at our borders violent or frozen conflicts persist.

These conflicts hamper our partners' development, curtail trade flows and limit political cooperation. They foster extremism and create breeding grounds for terrorist and criminal activity of all kinds. They can give rise to unmanageable migratory flows and disrupt energy supplies.

These conflicts - be they in the Middle East, Georgia or Transnistria - are a constant threat to the EU's security. In December 2007 the Commission proposed reinforcing the EU's role in the settlement processes as part of our wider efforts to strengthen ENP.

The ENP is a good framework for conflict resolution, precisely because it is much more than traditional foreign policy. It offers a broad toolbox bringing together economic and trade aspects, a reinforced political dialogue and more directly conflict-related civilian or military operations, as well as police co-operation actions, visa bans and other smart sanctions.

By addressing conflicts directly and at the same time working *around* them to target their underlying causes we can make a difference. What we need is for the EU and its Member States to muster sufficient will to act and then do so in a concerted and coherent way. The major institutional innovations introduced by the Lisbon Reform Treaty in the field of foreign policy and external relations will allow us to better coordinate and increase the efficiency of our actions.

Let me give you some examples: What we are already doing in Moldova with regard to the conflict over Transnistria is an excellent example of the way forward.

Firstly, we are promoting a better business environment: the Commission is active in ensuring that all Transnistrian companies registered in Chisinau and operating according to Moldovan laws have equal access to the Republic of Moldova's international trade preferences. This incentive has brought significant results, with more than 400 Transnistrian companies registering in Chisinau and so participating in legal international trade.

Secondly, through the EU Border Assistance Mission to Ukraine and Moldova (EUBAM) we are contributing to settlement efforts by assisting in border management and customs so as to curb illegal trade and criminal activities. Lastly, we are looking into the possibilities for restoring railway traffic through the Transnistria.

This is a perfect example of how economic measures and practical border-related actions can be brought together to contribute to a peaceful settlement. These are not just technical measures – this is successful European security policy at work!

In Georgia we are witnessing a very worrying rise in tensions around the unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The recent decisions taken by the Russian Federation on strengthening links with separatist de facto authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia represent an erosion of Georgia's territorial integrity. These measures have increased expectations of future recognition in the two separatist regions and therefore undermine efforts to find a peaceful settlement.

Earlier this week I met the new Georgia Foreign Minister and urged her to continue efforts to open dialogue with the Abkhaz.

The EU has also called on the Russian Federation to withdraw its recent decisions, or, at least, not to implement them. We should be ready to look at new approaches to the peace mechanisms, always remembering that a sustainable peace will only be possible with the co-operation of all partners.

In the meantime, we will continue to support Georgia's development so that it grows stronger - politically, socially and economically. The recent elections showed the benefits of our pre-election support package, which was designed to help Georgia improve its democratic practices.

In the Middle East – in addition to the important EU role in the international Quartet – our significant financial assistance underpins our political commitment to solving this long-lasting conflict. The total EU support (from the EC budget and Member States) for the Palestinian population reached nearly one billion euro in 2007. This year we have so far committed €440 million and I am making sure that other donors also deliver on their pledges. This support is crucial to building a viable, democratic Palestinian state.

ESDP instruments are also being used: the EU Police Mission (EUPOL COPPS) provides training and equipment to the Palestinian Civil Police. The Berlin Conference in June will be key in this regard. The EU has recently decided to expand the EUPOL COPPS mission to support also the criminal justice sector. The Commission is already working to strengthen the judiciary by offering training for judges and court administrators and the development of a case law database.

Since the violent events of June 2007, the EU's Border Assistance Mission at the Rafah Crossing Point has been on stand by. The mandate of the EUBAM Rafah has recently been prolonged for six months which demonstrates our commitment. We have regularly made clear our readiness to resume border assistance at Rafah as soon as conditions allow.

We have seen some positive steps in the region in recent days – in Lebanon, and between Israel and Syria. We must continue to urge all parties in the region to look for a constructive settlement and we must be ready ourselves to contribute to supporting that settlement.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have sketched the potential that exists for a stronger, more integrated EU approach to conflict resolution in the neighbourhood. But let me be frank: this potential is so far only partially exploited due to our own reluctance to take a more active role and to coordinate ourselves better.

But we cannot shy away from our responsibilities. We should act as an important political player and a neutral broker, especially where there is a clear wish of the parties involved. We should do it through a combination of political dialogue, economic measures and more conflict related ones, as this will take us further in promoting peace.

The Kangaroo Group has always been at the vanguard of new ambitious projects in the European Union. I fully share your engagement in the issues of security and defence and support efforts to make them the EU's priority for the coming years.

These will be challenging times. But by bringing together existing tools and making use of new institutions, offered by the Lisbon Reform Treaty; by reinforcing political dialogue with the partners; and focusing on key challenges, we can overcome the existing hurdles and make the EU's actions in the neighbourhood more effective. This is what our citizens expect from us!

Thank you very much for your attention.