Mr CARLSSON (Prime Minister of Sweden).

The Council of Europe is the child of the great visionaries of the post-war period. They wanted to build on the positive heritage of European civilisation - political democracy, the ideas of freedom, equality and solidarity, and a diverse cultural heritage.

Countless politicians, government officials and citizens have contributed to the achievements of the Council. The European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms sets a high standard. The work to build and consolidate democracy and respect for human rights continues each day in this house and all over the continent. We eagerly await the inclusion of new members in the community of the Council.

The applicant countries have their preparations to make. Sweden has recently gone through the process of harmonisation. We are willing to offer technical assistance and advice to the candidates.

When I speak today about the future of Europe, including the challenges to the European Union, it is in a spirit of Sweden's firm and active commitment to the enlargement of that union. It should be truly European, with a truly European Council, Commission and Parliament - not just a west European Council, Commission and Parliament.

Together we must create a democracy on the European level deserving the confidence and interest of our citizens. The concerns of daily life - work, a good environment, consumer protection, personal security against crime, workers' rights - need as forceful a decision-making process as the grand schemes and symbols of the common projects. Europe of the peoples needs just as close attention as Europe of money. It is within our reach to place the economy at the service of the people, rather than the people at the service of the economy.

If we want to prevent the next generation from being worse off than their parents, it is time to come out of these trenches. We need a new economic strategy, a common strategy for growth and employment to build a sustainable and fair society. We need to explore fully the potential of common European action. By the next downturn we could take common action to keep demand up, to stimulate investment and production, and do together what is no longer possible for one nation alone.

It is within our reach to establish a true citizenship based on fundamental human rights and central to the mandate of the Council of Europe. Those who are not convinced by ethics could consider economics. Whenever someone is excluded from a job due to sex, race, colour, creed or sexual preferences someone with fewer qualifications, skills, energy and enthusiasm does the work instead.

Let me draw a historic parallel. Ancient Athens is considered the cradle of democracy, yet voting was very limited - to males, adults, free men. We look at our economy as advanced, but we have only just begun to offer openings, equal opportunity
and equal pay. The careers, the high wages, are still truly open only to a minority of the population: if you are a man; if you are old enough to have made enough contacts; if you were born of someone who could afford your education; or if you are not an immigrant or of dark complexion.

Human rights are a question of being measured and seen, not because you were born a man or a woman, but by your personal qualities; not because of the colour of one's skin, but by the sharpness of one's mind; not by one's religion or ethnic background, but by the warmth of one's heart.

There is talk of a clash between the Christian and Muslim civilisation. At the Euro-Islam conference in Stockholm, one participant said:

"There can't be a clash between civilisations. Civilisations don't clash. If they clash, they are not civilised."

Mahatma Gandhi was once asked what he thought of western civilisation. His answer was:

"It would be a good idea."

And it certainly would.

It is within our reach to give Europe a global identity of which to be proud. To develop a new European global identity is a great privilege. We can choose to make that common identity greater and more radical than the sum of its national parts.

Already, the European Union is the partner with the largest development cooperation, but while giving with one hand, the other hand defends an old economic world order. The European Union is the largest market in the industrialised world. It should be the champion of free trade. Social and ecological standards and cultural identity must be developed, but not as an excuse for general trade barriers. That is not accepted inside the EU. It should be unacceptable around the EU.

Europe should be a partner to the rest of the world, especially to the third world, in the search for a new, just and democratic order, promoting common growth and development, a global governance, and a common security.