Speech by Mr Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission

Japan and Europe: Global responsibilities in a changing world

to the National Diet of Japan. Tokyo, 26 April 2002

Mr Speaker, Mr. President, Prime Minister, distinguished members of the Diet,

This is my first visit to Japan since the successful G8 Summit hosted by Japan two years ago.

Like most Europeans, I am full of admiration for Japan, a country with an ancient and refined
culture at the cutting-edge of industry, science and technology.

So it is a particular pleasure and a privilege to address today the elected representatives of the
Japanese people. I value that privilege all the more since I am the first President of the European
Commission to do so.

I shall also have the honour this afternoon of being received by His Imperial Majesty.

— And later in the day, when I meet my friend Prime Minister Koizumi, I hope to build on the
success of the Europe-Japan summit last December in Brussels.

My programme is not entirely filled with official engagements, however. I shall also be visiting
an internet café for young people set up by one of your best-known football players. A good
example of the welcome Japan is extending to World Cup visitors from all over the world.

We are all confident that this summer’s tournament co-hosted by Japan and Korea will be a great
success.

Distinguished members of the Diet,

We want to build a strong political partnership with Japan.

In the past our relations were dominated by economic concerns. Not surprisingly. When Japan
and the European Union sit down to talk business, almost half of world output is on the table.

However, both of us now have to grapple with challenges at home and shoulder greater
responsibilities abroad.

We have much to share and to learn from each other. Cooperation across the whole spectrum of
our relations will enrich us both.

Distinguished Members of the Diet,

You are, I know, well informed about the European Union. But let me bring you up to date with
recent European developments.

The European Union faced a major test at the start of the year and passed with flying colours: the
successful introduction of euro notes and coins. This was an event of historic proportions that will
have far-reaching economic, political and even cultural consequences.

The euro is already improving stability and competition. It paves the way for the creation of one
large capital market in Europe, with all that implies.

Meanwhile, the European single market is being consolidated by major liberalisation measures
affecting financial services, telecommunications and energy markets.
The European Union has taken giant steps forward since the early days of the Community of Six. We are now gearing up for the entry of over 100 million citizens of the candidate countries into our existing Union of 380 million.

Preparations for accession have gone so well that we aim to have the first wave of candidate countries join the Union in time for the European Parliament elections in 2004.

Earlier in the year, the Union embarked on one of the biggest challenges of all: overhauling the Brussels institutions and the decision-making machinery.

The European Union is a unique political structure, made up of individual Member States that have come together for the common good but accept each other’s differences.

Its way of operating now has to be updated to meet the requirements of an enlarged Union with global responsibilities.

What reforms do we need? This is what the newly-opened Convention on the Future of Europe has to decide. One of the issues it has to consider is the type of constitutional instrument needed by the new Europe.

But even more revolutionary is the make-up of the Convention itself: we are listening to grassroots political opinion from the whole of Europe to help map out the future.

Whatever the new institutions of Europe, it is the general public which should - and will - shape the future Union.

Unifying Europe economically and politically will help us overcome the enmities of the past and build a common future.

Distinguished members of the Diet,

Our fundamental values, of democracy and of human rights, are values we share with Japan. Like Japan, we seek a global political role and an influence commensurate with our economic weight.

We in the Union believe that we can contribute to stability and prosperity in Europe, among our neighbours and across the world through our willingness to reach out and engage.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the transition of the new democracies, focused on accession to the European Union, has been a success.

We are strengthening relations with our neighbours along the shores of the Mediterranean. We have a shared history and culture: it is now time to share peace and prosperity.

In the war-torn Balkans our engagement, with the help of our partners of course, has achieved a great deal. The European Union is now working hard to integrate these countries into the European mainstream.