

**Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Mr George Cunningham,  
European Union Delegation to New Zealand  
Short Intervention at EU event for the Opening of NZ Parliament  
9<sup>th</sup> February 2010**

Good evening and welcome to Honourable Members and our many guests. The resident representatives of the European Union and Member States are all so pleased to be with you on the auspicious occasion of the Opening of the new Parliamentary session and to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between us.

Democracy is also having its day in Europe. Today the new European Commission is being voted in by the European Parliament. It will be in office for the next five years. New Zealand will have new interlocutors for all its key policy areas – such as foreign affairs, trade, agriculture, climate change and the Pacific. Baroness Ashton is already fulfilling her duties in the new post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The Lisbon Treaty has altered the relationships between the EU institutions and Member States in many fields. That is why many of you will find it important to follow the implications of all these changes for New Zealand. The EU Delegation is here to help you do that, of course.

The European Union continues to be important for New Zealanders – and not just for sentimental reasons. The EU's economy is the largest in the world bar none. It is the biggest trading entity. It provides around 60% of world aid. Its markets hold no nasty surprises. And Europe's economy is heading out of recession.

The world is certainly a fast changing place. Globalisation has shrunk it. Information is immediate. We all need to be agile. That is why all our diplomatic services must evolve and constantly prove their worth and value to our Governments and citizens.

Just like MFAT is looking at how they can do their job better, so are we. 2010 will see the roll-out of the newly-created European External Action Service, or EEAS for short.

Whereas previously the European Commission was the EU's *de facto* diplomatic service, the EEAS will be composed of Member State diplomats as well as those from EU institutions. Its work will become much more political and visible.

With experienced hands on the till, the EU should be better prepared to weather the storms increasingly buffeting western democracies. And our likemindedness means that what's good for the EU nowadays is usually good for New Zealand too.

So thank you for coming tonight. There are many EU representatives around so we hope Members of Parliament will take advantage to enjoy a pint and mingle with us.

And now' let's raise our glasses to our great EU-New Zealand relationship