

Speech by President Charles Michel at the official dinner of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa

It is an honour and privilege for me to take the floor as the voice of Europe before you, in Ethiopia, the land of origins and the cradle of the last Nobel Peace Prize. Congratulations again dear Abiy Ahmed.

It is with deep pleasure that I return to this continent, for which I have so much affection.

I am here today to bear witness to a metamorphosis of this continent but also that of Europe.

Your northern neighbour is changing. I am here tonight to speak for 27 European countries. 22 of them never had any colonies.

A new generation of leaders is coming to power. They are not hampered by the burden of nostalgia.

We want to look towards the future, and to our neighbours. We want to tackle climate change and the digital revolution. The two major challenges we are all facing.

Europe wants to speak up on the international stage, where its values inspire its actions.

This changing Europe is looking at Africa with fresh eyes – with respect, optimism and confidence!

Africa is vibrant, full of the energy of youth and it is buzzing with new technology!

A continent of opportunities: that is what Europe sees.

For a long time, Europe remained trapped in an outdated view of this continent.

Africa, too, has at times cultivated a kind of ambiguity in its relationship with Europe.

Our closeness connects us, our partnership is a rich one. Everything draws us towards one another: history, geography, culture and the many exchanges between us.

Europe is your partner for trade, investment, cooperation and development. But this partnership is no longer enough; it needs to be reinvented. We must build a new house to accommodate our many common interests, and we must write a new chapter together.

Mesdames et messieurs,

Pour paraphraser Nelson Mandela, nos choix doivent refléter nos espoirs et non nos peurs. Avec l'Afrique, l'Europe veut parler de capital économique et humain, de commerce, d'emplois, d'investissements, d'infrastructures.

L'Europe tend la main à l'Afrique pour co-écrire les nouvelles pages d'un avenir commun optimiste et positif.

Une Europe forte est bonne pour l'Afrique tout autant qu'une Afrique solide est bonne pour l'Europe.

Notre agenda commun doit être un agenda positif élaboré ensemble. Il ne peut pas être une route à sens unique, car les routes à sens unique conduisent trop souvent à des impasses.

Je le dis avec solennité, l'Europe sera au rendez-vous. C'est une priorité pour mon nouveau mandat comme président du Conseil européen.

Nous sommes à l'aube d'une nouvelle décennie. Nous sommes prêts à échanger, partager et coopérer.

Que vive l'alliance entre l'Europe et l'Afrique.