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**PLENARY SESSION 3: LEVERAGING LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS**

**Speech by Mr Klaus WELLE**

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How can parliaments help to leverage long-term solutions?

The European Union is the citizens best chance to get a focus of political actors on the long-term. Policy decisions are not dominated by issues of the purse, but structural reform with effect over the mid and long-term. Its budget is not about consumption, but an investment budget. It keeps available the highly qualified multinational staff which is capable to elaborate for the member states and the European Parliament innovative proposals and solutions. Decision-making procedures are slow, but once finalised guarantee a large political and geographical consensus. And it allows more than 440 million European citizens to negotiate internationally as equals and from a position of strength.

The European Parliament in my nearly 14 years as Secretary General has tried to provide concepts to institutionalise thinking over the long-term and do that systematically rather than accidentally.

Starting 10 years ago we did revive the work on the Cost of Non-Europe with a specialised unit focusing on it. The idea of Cost of Non-Europe was originally behind the remarkable success of the internal market project, but afterwards largely forgotten.

We did show early on, that there is a huge unused potential for growth without debt. When you can demonstrate that there is a potential of hundreds of billions for non-debt based growth out there through intelligent regulation, you have all the chances to shape the agenda and establish consensus even with the most integration reluctant governments. Digital featured as the most prominent single item. I do know that this revival had a huge impact on the reflection of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in preparation of his term in office.

Cost of non-Europe is approaching systematically the long-term from the opportunity angle. You can also do that focusing on risk.

The European Parliamentary Research Service under its founding General Director Anthony Teasdale developed a methodology on risk, capabilities and long-term planning. Risks can be classified according to whether they are more or less likely to realise and whether the effects would

just be sectorial or systemic. Systemic risks being very likely to happen need special and urgent attention.

In a second step you can verify whether tools are already available either on the national level or inter-governmentally or integrated into the European Union framework. If the outcome is that neither regulatory nor financial resources are available, all alarm bells should be ringing. Or in other words, appropriate measures should be integrated into the midterm planning of the European Union as foreseen under the treaties.

Both cost of non-Europe methodology and risk and capability analysis provide a systematic and institutionalised approach for mid term planning and leverage long-term solutions. They also facilitate to find consensus for a non-ideology, but needs based integration agenda.

The European Parliament has also Initialised the ESPAS process on global trends and foresight. Budgetary amendments put forward by the British Conservative MEP James Elles in 2010 and 2012 set in motion a process of cooperation among the highest levels of European Union civil servants across all institutions developing a joint view on the challenges ahead.

A decade onwards the process has not only resulted in numerous annual foresight conferences and several reports to the Presidents of the EU institutions, but maybe more importantly the creation of a Vice President of the European Commission responsible for foresight, a regular meeting of the ministers of the future and the establishment in most of the EU institutions of specialised foresight units as Centers of excellence. Foresight is becoming part of our institutional DNA.

Foresight helps us to give the future a voice in the political process. Generational Justice depends on it. We can neither sacrifice the future for the present, nor sacrifice the present for the promise of a bright future that is maybe never going to come, as commonly practised during the time of communist regimes.

Sustainability has to be the guiding principle across policy areas.

In a new function as Chairman of the Academic Council of the Martens Centre I have pioneered a reflection on the 7D's for sustainability: Debt, defence, digital, democracy, demography, de-carbonisation and de-risking of globalisation. Our request is "focus future". We are suggesting 175 projects for sustainability as an inspiration for the next term in office of the European Commission 2024 to 2029.

The document is now publicly available and shall serve as a basis for a large consultation before it will find its final form towards the end of this year.

All of you are wholeheartedly invited to participate in this process.

*A video of the speech:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPZvPgIm510&list=PLafTseM15bmGXfMyNS2B41zIF24U8cX6h&index=25>