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The EU, the Middle East and the Mediterranean - a key challenge of the 21st century

NUMOV's Gala Event and Foreign Trade Conference 2007

by Helene Rang



H.E. Günther Verheugen, Vice President of the European Commission

On 11th May 2007, NUMOV / German Near and Middle East Association invited to its General Meeting, and to its traditional Foreign Trade Conference.

The events of 11th May 2007 culminated in the German Near and Middle East Gala Event hosted by Porsche AG. It was attended by 250 German and foreign guests, among them high-ranking government officials, German ambassadors working in the

region and foreign diplomats active in Germany.

In his address, **H.E. Günther Verheugen**, Vice President of the European Commission, underlined the development of relations between the E.U. and the countries of the Middle East as a key challenge of the 21st century.

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He described the state of affairs of the European Union with the words that for the first time in the history of the EU Germany is expected to take the leadership, for example, with regard to new attempts to draft a European Constitution. It is crucial, in the interest of Europe, to negotiate a better treaty to meet the challenges of the 21st century and to safeguard and maintain the developments achieved so far. In Verheugen's opinion, Europe is the



Porsche AG demonstrated that it is not only an excellent constructor of cars, presenting its Porsche Cayenne, but equally showed that it can produce excellent star-rated cooking at the NUMOV Gala Event. Our sincere thanks go to the Porsche AG

strongest economic region in the world. Yet it is not sufficiently united politically to be able to maintain its economic strength. A new constitution should enable Europe to defend the European way of life in a world, that is changing radically, as well as strengthen its ability to act as a global player. The role of Europe in a changing world should be to try to solve global problems.

The Near and Middle East is Europe's neighbouring region with traditional links in all fields. Of course it is a major supplier of oil and gas, but it is growing even more important for Europe,

in spite of difficult and dangerous conflicts in the region.

The work of NUMOV provides an excellent example of how to establish friendly relations with all countries in the area, a fact very important and helpful for policy makers. Business requires stable and clear political conditions. Businessmen have a strong interest in a world of peace and stability.

H.E. Verheugen stated that relations between Europe and the Near and Middle East are improving, but not enough. The Barcelona process is developing slowly, yet it is of exceeding importance and

has great potential. It can strengthen the dialogue between all countries. The European Neighbourhood policy is of importance too, as it attempts to build a network of friends, and an area of stability and security around Europe.

The states of the southern and eastern Mediterranean region have failed to receive access to the European Union. According to Verheugen, however, it is possible that they achieve a status comparable to the status of Norway or Switzerland. They could then receive full access to and participation in the core policies of the European Union, which will offer them assistance, and access to European programmes. In return they are expected to continue their political and economic reforms step by step, adhering to democratic principles and the legal order.



Klaus Berning, Executive Vice President Sales and Marketing of Porsche AG

H.E. Verheugen believes this to be in the interest of Europe's neighbours. It is a long-term process. However, it should begin immediately.

In an overview of the region of the Near and Middle East, H.E. Verheugen underlined the special responsibility of Europe to protect Israel, and enable its Palestinian neighbours to develop economically. Regarding Turkey, H.E. Verheugen mentioned his fear that the present situation



H.E. Günther Verheugen, Vice President of the European Commission

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might be used against Turkey in the accession process. The EU needs Turkey, and Turkey needs the EU. The European Union is greatly responsible for relations between Turkey and the Western world.

H.E. Verheugen concluded by stating that the most important challenge is how we will arrange the relationship of the western world to the Islamic world. Do we want a relationship that is based on tolerance and understanding or a relationship that will lead to conflict? Islam is a peaceful world religion, not a violent religion. We have much more common interests than reasons to separate.

Klaus Berning, Executive Vice President Sales and Marketing of Porsche AG, welcomed the guests of the NUMOV Gala Event 2007. He emphasised that NUMOV's role was even more important today than 73 years ago, when NUMOV was founded. There is a growing demand for German products in the Near and Middle East. Porsche with its exclusive sport cars demonstrates the success of top technology 'Made in Germany' in this region, which is of great importance both economically and politically. He expressed his hope that the relations between Germany and the Near and Middle East will continue to develop positively, providing benefits to both partners.

Martin Bay, the Chairman of the German Near and Middle Association, thanked the Porsche AG for hosting the event and welcomed the foreign and German guests to the German Near and Middle East Gala Event in the name of the Association. He especially thanked H.E. Günther

Verheugen for his presence at the event, thus demonstrating Europe's awareness of the challenges that arise from its proximity to the Near and Middle East. He particularly mentioned Verheugen's role as EU Commissioner for Enlargement and his efforts in the process of accession of Turkey.

Bay recalled the foundation of NUMOV more than seventy years ago in Berlin. Since then NUMOV has continuously examined the economic development as well as political processes in the region. This is clearly shown by the fact that the German Orient Institute proceeds with its regional research under the umbrella of the German Orient Foundation, established by NUMOV in 1960. In all the years of its existence NUMOV has served as an intermediary between

Germany and the Near and Middle East. And it will continue its work in the future.

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