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*First meeting of the Group on the  
spiritual and cultural dimensions of the  
enlarged European Union*

## **Speaking Notes**

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Es gilt das gesprochene Wort~~

I want to thank you all for agreeing to take part in this Group on the spiritual and cultural dimensions of the enlarged European Union.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the dedication of Professor Michalski, with whom I set up this Group. Professor Michalski has kindly agreed to coordinate our activities.

As I said in my speech in Vienna last December (Conference on Politics and Morality – 7 December 2002), I am convinced that the time has come to take wide but also in-depth look at the most important issues facing the enlarged European Union.

I have accordingly set up three Groups: a Group on intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean area, another on the characteristics of the European social model, and this one on the spiritual and cultural dimensions of the enlarged European Union.

All these initiatives are based on the same approach: the need to identify and rethink the fundamental principles that form a basis for societal life in a society which is shared by all the inhabitants of the EU and with due attention to our neighbours.

New rules on coexistence are needed to create a genuine “society of peoples and a civil society” at European Union level and in harmony with our neighbours. From this viewpoint also, these three Groups are complementary with each other. They respond to the same need to redefine who we are and where we want to go --

both as a social body (Strauss-Kahn Group) and in terms of relations between this social body and the fundamental values on which it is based (Michalski Group).

In Europe we need to re-establish a link between ethics and politics. After enlargement, we will need to understand the new spiritual and cultural foundations on which we can build the new Union.

As I told hundreds of young students in Florence recently, we must start thinking now about the future identity of the Union. The concept of identity does not change, but its representation does evolve as a result of political developments.

Today there is a great need for a sense of identity in the Union, for a common expression of solidarity and of a common destiny. And identity cannot be conceived in a monolithic manner. The Union's unity is drawn from its diversity. Our European identity is based on history, sentiment and pluralism.

But to do this, we must enhance our citizens' awareness and make them stakeholders of Europe. A European identity is inextricably intertwined with new types of citizenship based on different forms of allegiance, ranging from the local town to the Union. A single national identity is giving way to complementary identities.

These links between values, politics and citizenship will be vital when the Convention comes to a close and we have to foster and encourage a wide public debate on the significance of a "European

Constitution". When we have to communicate with the public about the values on which this new political entity -- the Union -- is based.

Looking into the links between European politics and values, between EU political processes and their spiritual and cultural dimensions, means believing in a strong Union, in a "Europe with a soul". And it means we can also define and identify Europe as an actor with its own identity on the international scene.

Today, I must stress one point again: Europe's approach to international relations is taking shape. We have chosen the path of multilateralism, not unilateralism. We want to harness the force of ideas and persuasion, not of coercion.

We have come a long way since we invented "reasons of State" and *realpolitik*. Our concept of power is based on the power of rules. We reject the idea of going it alone and of the absence of any international reference framework.

At a time when we are reflecting on the future of Europe, we cannot neglect its spiritual, religious and ethical dimensions.

A new Europe built on the fundamental values that have fashioned it through history, combined with the new values it is acquiring today will be of benefit to all.

As I said in Vienna, as we lay the foundations of a new, enlarged European Union, it would be a grave mistake to marginalise the

religions and movements that have contributed, and are still contributing, so much to the culture and “human face” that Europe is rightly so proud of. Of course, recognising these roots in no way signals any rejection or exclusion of others.