

Address by the President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering,

**on the occasion of the European Alliance for CSR Event  
to launch of CSR Europe's Toolbox:  
"Equipping Companies and Stakeholders  
for a Competitive and Responsible Europe"**

**Brussels, 4 December 2008**

Mr. Minister of State and President of the Alliance for Corporate Social Responsibility,  
dear Viscount Davignon,

Ladies and Gentlemen representatives of the European Governments of the Member  
States,

Dear Members of the European Commission, dear Günter Verheugen,  
dear Vladimir Spidla,

Dear colleagues of the European Parliament,

Dear representatives of the business communities and stakeholder supporting the  
Alliance,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Distinguished guests,

To all of you participating in this event through online broadcasting,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all today. I regret not to be able to be with you, but the  
Dalai Lama is right now honouring the European Parliament by his visit.

Yet, I wanted to tell you how much I feel close to you: the issue of Corporate Social  
Responsibility is a central part of our European social market economy. Moreover, in  
the context of the current financial crisis, it is gaining unprecedented momentum.

I want to thank the business network Corporate Social Responsibility for organising  
today's event, and especially Viscount Etienne Davignon for his efforts to encourage  
companies to act socially responsible and to serve the society in which they are based.

The timing of this conference could not have been better chosen. As Viscount Etienne Davignon has stated, today's crisis brings our financial, economic and governance systems to a moment of truth.

In a context of increasing globalisation and looming growth, the big challenge of our times is to ensure the competitiveness of our European economy, whilst also maintaining our European social model and preparing a better future both in social and environmental terms.

Responding to this challenge is at the heart of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment, and increasing Corporate Social Responsibility is an essential part of it!

Europe's quest to engage and serve its citizens, to protect the environment and to earn a just place in the world is at stake here.

Europe's strategy "To Make Europe a Pole of Excellence on Corporate Social Responsibility" and the European Plans for Sustainable Production and Consumption are at the forefront of such a cultural shift.

Time has come for business, investors, governments, civil society, academia and the cultural and spiritual communities to engage together in rebuilding trust and hope in the capacity of business and all players to compete with integrity towards a fair and sustainable society.

Last year the European Parliament adopted a resolution on corporate social responsibility, in which we called on business to take more direct responsibility for managing its social and environmental impact, to become more openly accountable not only to employees and their trade unions, but also to a wider range of 'stakeholders' including investors, consumers, local communities, environmental and other interest groups.

All of us have a part to play in achieving this aim. Success greatly depends on our capacity to build a competitive advantage through more and sometimes unconventional partnerships, as well as through better regulation and respect for subsidiarity.

In its report, the European Parliament has challenged the European Alliance for CSR to “walk the talk” by delivering first results by the end of 2008.

And you’ve made it! Congratulations.

Hundreds of visionary leaders and practitioners with a deeply ingrained sense of social responsibility, together with pioneering stakeholder organisations, have engaged in over 20 CSR Laboratories with one same ambition: to turn societal pressures and expectations into practical solutions and new opportunities for sustainable growth with equitable engagement and outcomes for all.

The results go beyond our expectations. The CSR Europe’s Toolbox, which you are launching today, provides tailored materials to help companies to integrate in their governance, management and functions the challenges and opportunities of demographic change, employability, diversity and wellbeing at work.

You have put SMEs at the heart of your preoccupation. We in the European Parliament strongly welcome this. The 23 million small and medium-sized enterprises are the spine of Europe’s economy and it is essential that they get increasingly involved.

With the CSR Toolbox we now have a very promising framework to help mainstream Corporate Social Responsibility. These management tools now need to be disseminated and used. I would like to encourage all of you and other companies and stakeholders not yet involved to get engaged.

All of this would not have been possible without the visionary leadership and passion of CSR Europe and its President Viscount Etienne Davignon.

Your organization has pooled together the visions and values, the know-how and courage, the trials and errors of thousands of company and stakeholder practitioners. You are indeed contributing in making Europe a Pole of Excellence on Corporate Social Responsibility.

Finally, it is also the responsibility of governments and the European institutions to further support this movement. Regarding the European Parliament, our task is to

explore together with you how we can forge better synergies between CSR innovations and all relevant European policies, thereby supporting and scaling up the objectives of the European Strategies for Growth and Jobs and Sustainable Development.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Viscount Etienne Davignon,

I would like to wish you a fruitful event and follow up action by sharing one of his messages that is addressed to us all:

*Today, more than ever before, life must be characterized by a sense of Universal responsibility, not only nation to nation and human to human, but also human to other forms of life.*

Thank you for your attention.