

**Statement by the Delegation of the Holy See  
at the Permanent Council on 22 January 2004**

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

My Delegation too would like to welcome Minister Roche and thank him for his statement. We also wish Ireland every success for its term as holder of the EU Presidency.

I have noted with pleasure that many elements mentioned by the Minister coincide with the programmatic address made last Thursday by Minister Passy at the inauguration of the Bulgarian Chairmanship. This augurs well for an ever more fruitful cooperation between our Organization and the European Union.

I would just like to add two things to what has been said by the previous speakers.

1. Looking at Europe as a civil community, despite many contradictory signs, the Holy See notes also positive signs of hope: the growing openness of peoples to one another; the reconciliation of countries which have long been hostile to and at enmity with each other; the progressive opening up to the countries of Eastern Europe; forms of cooperation and exchange of all sorts; the growth of a European culture, indeed a European consciousness. More than a geographical area, Europe can be described as a primarily cultural and historical concept, which denotes a reality born as a continent thanks also to Christianity, which has been capable of integrating different peoples and cultures. The work of Saint Patrick and the Irish missionary monks is a clear example of this integration. In this process of integration which continues today, it is of vital importance to remember that it cannot be reduced to merely geographic and economic-monetary dimensions, but must include consensus on the values to be reflected in its laws and in its life.

2. For the Holy See, "Europe" must be synonymous with "openness". European history itself demands this. Europe is really not a closed or isolated territory; it has been built by expanding overseas and meeting other peoples, cultures and civilizations. Therefore, it needs to be an open and welcoming Continent, continuing to develop in the current process of globalization forms of cooperation which are not merely economic but social and cultural as well.

I conclude by expressing best wishes to the colleagues of the Irish Delegation in dealing with the challenges which await them.