



**Near verbatim transcript of remarks by the United Nations Secretary-General at a press stakeout,
on his being awarded the 2019 Charlemagne Prize by the city of Aachen, Germany**

Geneva, Switzerland, 26 February 2019

Your Excellencies,

When I was a Portuguese and European politician I always felt that, both for Europe and for the world, it was very important to have a strong and united Europe. But I never felt it so clearly than now as Secretary-General of the United Nations. When I look at today's world I feel how important it would be to have a strong and united Europe.

I lived, when I was a student, the bipolar world, in which the United States and the Soviet Union dominated our planet. Then, when I was in government, I lived a unipolar world with a period of American clear supremacy. And now we are forcedly no longer in a unipolar or a bipolar world but not yet in a multipolar world; we live in a kind of a chaotic world, where power relations became unclear, where impunity and predictability prevail, and we badly need factors of rationality to try to move towards a multipolar world with multilateral forms of governance. And, when one sees the need of those factors of rationality, one sees the need of a strong and united Europe, and one sees the need of the European values.

I believe the most important contribution that Europe has given to the global civilization are the values of the Enlightenment, the primacy of reason, tolerance. And we see those values today more needed than ever. And, at the same time, we feel that when we face challenges as complex as climate change, the massive movements of people, global terrorism... that only by combining efforts with strong international cooperation, with strong multilateral institutions, we will be able to address these challenges. Unfortunately, multilateralism is also in the fire at the present time. And, once again, we absolutely need a strong and united Europe to strengthen multilateralism as the tool that is absolutely essential to face the challenges of our time.

And so, in this context you can imagine that I feel very humbled but also very happy that I was remembered to receive this extremely prestigious award. I don't know if I deserve it or not, but I do everything to deserve it and to make sure that what I am doing now I will always be loyal to the same values that were an inspiration to try to build that democratic, united Europe where human rights need to prevail. And that was the inspiration of my political life when I was directly involved, in my country and in Europe, in political activities. So, I am very grateful, very honoured, and I will be very pleased to be in Aachen during those two days. *Danke schön.*

Question: Mr. Secretary-General, you are a defender of gender rights, you are trying to promote women. Do you feel very comfortable in a lineup of more than 40 middle-aged men to receive the prize with very few women who have been given that prize?

Secretary-General: Well, I do not intend to interfere with the way the prize is organized. Where I have direct responsibility, which means in the United Nations and in the appointments for the senior staff of the United Nations, I am very proud to say that we now have full parity in our senior management group and we now have full parity in our group of resident coordinators that lead the UN country teams around the world. And I can see that parity is a very important tool for a more balanced world because with more balanced power relations we will have more chances to build peace, to sustain peace and to have human rights upheld. But of course, traditions are traditions; I respect all traditions and I will be delighted to receive the prize

independently of whatever may be decided one day in relation to an area that is not of my responsibility.