

Monsieur le Président Lurel,
Messieurs les Présidents des Régions ultrapériphériques,
Messieurs les Ministres [if confirmed],
Honorables Députés au Parlement européen,
Monsieur le Président du Comité économique et social européen [if confirmed],
Représentants des Etats membres,
Mesdames et messieurs,

Bonjour [FRENCH],
Bom dia [PORTUGUESE],
Buenos días [SPANISH],

[I am going to say some words in French]



INTRODUCTION – REMERCIEMENT - EXCUSES

Je vais prononcer quelques mots en français.

Je vous prie de m'excuser par avance pour mon niveau,
c'est la toute première fois que je viens dans les Antilles.

Ensuite je continuerai en anglais.

Je souhaiterais, tout d'abord, remercier le Président Lurel et son équipe pour l'excellente organisation de cette XXth [vingtième] Conférence des Régions ultrapériphériques.

Je suis consciente qu'il n'était pas facile d'y parvenir, compte tenu du changement de dernière minute.

Je vous prie de bien vouloir m'en excuser.

Je tiens également à vous remercier pour votre flexibilité.

Je pense, sincèrement, qu'il était utile de reporter la Conférence, étant donné que cette même semaine, nous avons une réunion du Collège des commissaires à Bruxelles, où nous avons adopté une clause de flexibilité pour les cofinancements nationaux, qui devrait renforcer la capacité d'investissement des régions de l'Union, dont notamment les Régions ultrapériphériques.

PREMIERE FOIS DANS LES RUP

En tout cas, je suis vraiment heureuse d'être aujourd'hui parmi vous, et de faire partie pour la première fois de la famille des Régions ultrapériphériques.

Vous savez, je viens de la Roumanie, un état membre de l'Est de l'Europe, qui par tradition n'a eu que des relations limitées avec vos régions.

Par conséquent, vous pouvez imaginer à quel point j'ai été frappée par l'hospitalité des gens que j'ai rencontrés au cours de ces derniers 3 [trois] jours.

J'ai eu l'occasion de constater, qu'ici l'hospitalité n'est pas un vain mot. Au contraire, j'ai vraiment eu l'impression d'appartenir à une même communauté.

Dès lors, je suis ravie de pouvoir assumer la double casquette:
d'un côté, je suis Commissaire pour la Politique régionale;
de l'autre côté, je suis la Coordinatrice des Politiques de l'Union
vis-à-vis des Régions ultrapériphériques.

Et maintenant, je vais continuer en anglais.



The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
¹¹acknowledges the special situation of 9 [nine] European regions:
Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique, Mayotte, Réunion, Saint-Martin,
Açores, Madeira and Canarias [best if read out in the national languages].

These regions, your regions, have a very particular potential, due to their specific geographical location.

They are, among others, the entry gate of the European Union, to a number of strategic places in the World:

- the Caribe,
- the Indian Ocean,
- the North-Eastern Atlantic.

At the same time, your regions encounter a range of specific difficulties, which justify the setting up of dedicated instruments.

For these reasons, I deeply welcome the opportunity to work together, in the framework of a specific partnership, which involves the Commission, the 3 [three] Member States and the 9 [nine] Outermost Regions.

There is a great number of things that have been achieved so far, in particular since 1999 [nineteen ninety-nine], as the Treaty first recognised "*le statut de l'ultrapériphicité*" [NO ENGLISH EQUIVALENT].

In my capacity of Commissioner responsible for the Regional Fund and the Cohesion Fund,

I would like to emphasise in particular the wide range of projects that these Funds have supported in the past years.

Don't worry, I will not mention here all of them, not even a few ones.

But let me just quickly refer to two projects, which I had the opportunity to visit yesterday:

- the Memorial of Slavery
- and the Port of Pointe-à-Pitre.

Unfortunately, it was a quick visit, but highly symbolic for me, because these projects

- reflect the past, present and future challenges of Guadeloupe,
- and outline the responses you have proposed.

PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

However, in spite of these encouraging outcomes, you will agree with me that there are still many things to do together.

Let me quickly refer to them, by highlighting the 2 [two] most relevant areas of common work:

1) **First**, we have to continue working on the 5 [five] priority axes set out in the last Communication:

- **Accessibility,**
- **Competitiveness,**
- **Regional integration,**
- **Reinforcement of the social dimension,**
- **And addressing climate change.**

These axes set out the priorities,
that will steer public action in view of further development.

In this context, I am especially glad with the enthusiasm generated by the last Forum of September in Brussels, but also with the dynamism triggered by the tripartite working groups, which have allowed exchanging good practice and learning from each other.

There are three areas, where I find that the work together is of special importance:

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- **First, fight against unemployment**, which hits millions of our fellow European citizens;

- Second, further regional integration with your neighbours, which will shape the future of your regions, for the next 10-15 [ten fifteen] years to come.

Deleted: fight against climate change, where Outermost Regions have a strong potential to increase their share of renewable energy. . . as discussed in the Conference that took place last October. . . right here, in Guadeloupe.

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Deleted: further regional integration with your neighbours, which will shape the future of your regions, for the next 10-15 (ten fifteen) years to come.

So, first objective:
working along the 5 [five] priority axes of the Communication.

2) **Second objective**, we have to exploit the potential of the operational programmes for the 2014-2020 [twenty-fourteen twenty-twenty] period, most of which have already been adopted.

This involves of course the Regional Fund and the Cohesion Fund, including European Territorial Cooperation, and the programmes for the other European Structural and Investment Funds.

This support should be done in complementarity with the support from the new European Fund for Strategic Investments, in the framework of the Investment Plan promoted by President Juncker.

Therefore, the Funds are now on the table.

However, they will only have an impact on the ground, in terms of growth and job creation for people, if we are all able to identify, select and implement projects that make the difference.

You already have a long tradition of using European Funds.

Please build on this tradition, and give us the best that these regions can offer.

CONCLUSION

Let me just finish now by a short, personal reflexion.

The years to come will be crucial on our road to further development.

From my exchanges, discoveries and visits of these last days,

I understood that you have the potential for meeting your ambitions.

Now, you have at your disposal a number of EU policies and instruments.

Please use them.

Put in the best of yourselves...

... and come back in five years, at the end of my term,
with 9 [nine] success stories,
which I can share with other European regions.

In the meantime, I will be particularly happy of standing by you,
to support your efforts for the benefit of your regions
and the European Union as a whole.

Merci, obrigada, gracias,

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