

SPEECH BY SIR CHRISTOPHER PROUT, CHAIRMAN OF THE EUROPEAN
DEMOCRATIC GROUP STRASBOURG - WEDNESDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER

President Saddam Hussein, in the space of a few days at the beginning of August, succeeded in annexing a law abiding nation, removing the human rights of thousands of resident foreigners, breaking the Vienna Convention on diplomatic protection, threatening to use chemical weapons in breach of the laws of wars, menacing the stability of the world economy by his manifest intention to invade Saudi Arabia and expropriate her oil resources - I doubt if any leader in history has broken so many rules of international law in such a short period of time - that is the measure of the man.

Had President Bush not despatched American forces to Saudi Arabia the moment Saddam began to mass armour on Kuwait's southern border, 60 per cent of the world's known oil reserves would now be under Iraqi control. Prompt and courageous action by the United States have protected a vital "out of area" European Community interest which - let's be frank - we were simply not organised to protect on our own. Not for the first time, Europe owes the United States an immense debt.

Fortunately our chances of restoring stability to the Arabian peninsular are immeasurably greater than they would have been 12 months ago - because of the momentous events that have unfolded on our own continent. Security Council Resolutions condemning Iraq, imposing an immediate economic and arms embargo and, soon after, granting the powers to enforce them would have all been unthinkable in August 1989. Thus the changes in Europe are bringing the world community much closer together.

It is now the duty of the international Community to make certain that Saddam Hussein fails in every single one of his objectives. It will only succeed in doing so by peaceful means, if it has the political will to make the United Nations blockade effective enough to confront Saddam Hussein and his friends, with the certainty of failure. Any talk of negotiation would deal a fatal blow to the blockade and the objectives it is designed to achieve.

But the role of the international Community must not end with the success of the blockade and the consequent departure of Hussein. We must then turn our attention to the circumstances that gave rise to this appalling situation - the indiscriminate trade in arms, the production of chemical weapons, the huge disparities in the distribution of wealth in the Middle East and its racial tensions - and seek genuine and lasting solutions. We will also have to face up to the fact, whether we like it or not, that the oil-rich but sparsely populated peninsular states simply do not have the manpower to defend themselves against a determined aggressor. If Europe is to play its full part in these vital matters, we must take immediate steps to build a strong and more durable structure of cooperation between the West and the Arab world.

The reaction of the Community's Institutions to all this, within the limits of their own powers, has been exemplary. Without hesitation, they have condemned the invasion of Kuwait, called for the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi forces, imposed a trade embargo on Iraq, enacted the necessary legislation for implementing United Nations sanctions, provided emergency aid for refugees, and, most recently, proposed a substantial package of aid to help offset the immense costs to Turkey, Egypt and Jordan of imposing sanctions. The Commission, the Council, and the Foreign Ministers in political co-operation deserve our congratulations.

But the Member States of the Community ought to have been able to do much more. We lack the mechanisms of coordination which would have enabled us to play a part in protecting our out-of-area security interests, commensurate with our economic power. This time, the United States did our work for us. We were lucky. But we may not always be so lucky. This is a matter to which NATO, the WEU and the IGC must now turn their attention with urgency.

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Please contact the sender if the document has not been received correctly

97 - 113 Rue Belliard
B - 1040 Brussels
Tel (32) 2 234 21 11
Fax (32) 2 231 11 83

Palais de l'Europe
F - 67006 Strasbourg
Tel (33) 88 37 40 01
Fax (33) 88 35 39 25

2 Queen Anne's Gate
GB - London SW1H 9AA
Tel (44) 71 222 1720
Fax (44) 71 222 2501

Amagertorv 23, 3rd Floor
DK - 1160 Copenhagen
Tel (45) 33 14 22 44
Fax (45) 33 93 58 54