

UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

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Joint statement by French and German industrial and employers' confederations

France-Germany: act together to strengthen Europe

The tragedies of the 20th century grew out of nationalism, xenophobia and violations of human dignity. The European Union has learnt the lesson of history by bringing our peoples peace, prosperity and security.

One of the greatest challenges that the Union has had to face is that of the global financial crisis. In very little time, an emergency fund for the most indebted countries and a budgetary pact were put in place. Very rapidly, a plan for a banking union was launched. Much still remains to be done but the worst has been averted thanks to courageous common action. In this way, the Member States have escaped an economic meltdown and the threat of serious social and political turmoil.

Today we are once again confronted with huge challenges: the war in Syria, international terrorism, risks of destabilisation in the Mediterranean and millions of displaced persons heading for Europe.

When Greece was saved from financial ruin, the European Union demonstrated its cohesion. Today it appears to be inert, countries apparently lacking courage and without solidarity. Some are resolutely turning away from fundamental European values. Completely overestimating their own scope for action, many political parties have just one programme: a rejection of Europe. Yet no State on its own can solve the problems linked to war, to terror and to mass migration. Each State needs the full force of the Union.

It is high time for Europe to find its feet, to regain confidence and to move on to the offensive. That is why we encourage our own leaders – Chancellor Merkel and President Hollande – to take a rapid, decisive and extraordinary initiative. In the face of growing pressures, we must act. Given that France and Germany continue to be the engines of European integration, it is essential that we pool our strengths and mobilise today to move Europe forward.

Two priorities are incontrovertible. The first is to respond urgently to the migratory flows by revisiting Schengen, whose disintegration would be equally costly in both economic and political terms. The second is to put in place the elements of real economic convergence in Europe. These are the two intertwined conditions for the credibility of a project which offers hope to those who feel disappointed by the Union.

First of all, coming to grips with and perceptibly reducing migratory flows towards countries in the European Union. This involves implementing the agreements concluded with Turkey while pursuing negotiations with neighbouring countries and providing assistance to areas suffering tensions. These

agreements will allow better management of migratory flows which cannot be addressed unilaterally. The European Union must give Frontex more powers and more resources. These measures will help to restore confidence in the Union.

More effective controls at the European Union's external borders would make it possible to avoid controls inside the European area. Schengen is and remains a step forward for European citizens. True freedom of movement translates into the disappearance of customs controls. It is a precondition for growth and for prosperity in a globalised world which depends on worldwide commercial exchanges.

Effective controls at the Union's external borders will open the way for better acceptance of the right of asylum which sits at the heart of European values. It is incumbent on all Member States to assume their responsibilities by integrating refugees. Those which refuse to do so should accept the consequences: by declining to offer a quid pro quo, they would not then be able to demand the benefit of European solidarity when they need it.

It is our duty to give refuge to those fleeing bombs and persecution. But those who are ineligible for refugee status must not be encouraged to come to Europe and must be returned if their asylum application is rejected under the terms of an agreement between Europeans and countries of origin.

It is now that we need a common foreign and security policy to respond to the dramas and conflicts that are detonating outside our borders. The battle against the causes of the exodus entails a stabilisation of the regions in crisis and development aid for their populations. There will be no enduring solution without the European Union, its Member States and its institutions.

The second priority is to bring about a deepening of the Eurozone and a real economic convergence. It is also of crucial importance to deepen the single market, in particular for energy, for the digital universe and for capital, at the same time as strengthening the principle of subsidiarity. This will allow growth and prosperity to benefit the greatest number. This process of coordination and reforms will have to be accompanied by effective incentives. A strengthening of the institutions of the Economic and Monetary Union goes hand in hand with the pursuit of in-depth structural reforms in each of our Member States.

We, confederations of industry and employers in France and Germany, appeal for a mobilisation to bring Europe out of one of the most difficult crises in its history. Our prosperity, our security and our liberty are at stake. We Europeans have managed to surmount immense challenges. All governments must now show unwavering courage and determination. We call on the French and German authorities to do everything within their power to put Europe back on the road. This is how we will overcome the current crisis. And the European Union will emerge stronger for the benefit of its peoples.

Pierre Gattaz
President of MEDEF

Ulrich Grillo
President of BDI

Ingo Kramer
President of BDA