IT IS TIME TO BUILD THE UNITED STATES OF EUROPE

The Members of the Third Jean Monnet Action Committee for the United States of Europe,

In recalling once again the lessons of the thought and action of Jean Monnet and Altiero Spinelli, who dedicated their lives to building the European Federation, helping to lay its foundations and cornerstones, and though the Ventotene Manifesto and the Schuman Declaration,

Wish to issue this appeal to remind citizens, activists, parliamentarians, policymakers, and members of the European Council and European Commission that the time has come to demonstrate that Europeans can once again turn crisis into opportunity and further unity:

The multilateral world order is rapidly deteriorating. Under Trump, the United States became a critic and destroyer of the international order based on rules, international institutions and open markets, it built and led after the Second World War. As reflected in the National Security Strategy adopted by the United States in November 2025, the US has now formally severed itself from the very notion of "the West" it once embodied. The European Union, once a strategic ally, has become, in Washington's eyes, an enemy to be weakened. Despite heavy losses, Putin´s Russia continues its war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as hybrid attacks on the EU Member States. Despite the obvious difficulties, Putin is determined to destroy everything that Europe stands for. All this whilst the Middle East is burning, and destabilisation threatens to freeze international trade and cut off supplies of gas, oil, fertilisers and other crucial raw materials. Under Xi's leadership, China is establishing itself as a new hegemonic power – including as a model for others to follow – by exploiting both its dominance in many key sectors (from rare earth minerals to new technologies) and the strategic mistakes of the Trump administration. Moreover, in front of the accelerated climate crisis, that is particularly affecting Europe and the Mediterranean Sea, with dramatic fires all around the continent experienced once more in the summer of 2026, it is more and more evident that there is a lack of global governance regarding the multiple crisis that affect the world as a whole.

A degree of European strategic awakening can nonetheless be observed – one that must continue to be strengthened over the coming months, up to the 2027 national elections in several Member States. For the first time Europeans must ensure their own defence, economic and technological security by themselves. The EU needs a single foreign policy and defence system to carve out a sovereign international role, to cope with competing imperialisms, and to promote peace, multilateralism, and a new rules-based global order based on an effective international rule of law, also through a strengthened role of the United Nations. The forthcoming EU Security Strategy should include these goals, including the setting up of a global coalition of true liberal democracies, and the task of territorial defence as a European pillar of the NATO.

However, the Union´s political and institutional mechanisms are inadequate to achieve these ends. The EU continues to bear the paralysing hurdle of unanimity in foreign and defence policy, even in the face of the resurgence of hard power dynamics in international relations and is falling short in defending its interests and values of freedom, democracy, justice, the welfare state and fundamental rights. It is also clear that even in matters relating to the Single Market, economic and monetary union, the vision of the common interest must take precedence over narrow national interests. Structural changes are needed if the Union is to ensure its economic competitiveness, climate and social sustainability, technological development and security and to assert its role and strategic autonomy, starting with the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Reports by Draghi, Letta and Niinistö. This is necessary to answer the citizens' needs, the only effective response to those nationalist and anti-democratic politicians whose funding and coordination place them at the

service of foreign powers. Our quarrel is with those politicians and that money, not with the millions of Europeans who have voted for them and whom the Union has too often failed to protect.

The European Parliament is the central element of democratic legitimacy in the EU. However, it lacks some traditional parliamentary powers, foremost among them fiscal powers, a full right of legislative initiative and the power to decide on matters of peace and war.

When it comes to resources, the EU budget is woefully inadequate to meet increasingly pressing challenges. Spending money jointly at European level saves money at national level by avoiding duplications and gaining economies of scale. Individually Member States lack the means to tackle the current challenges, and opinion polls confirm an overwhelming consensus among citizens in favour of greater European unity, solidarity and cohesion, also in security and defence. That support coexists with dissatisfaction about the way European decisions are delayed, taken without proper scrutiny, or not taken at all. Citizens do not reject Europe; they reject a Europe that cannot decide. Answering the second is a precondition for keeping the first. This requires more shared sovereignty and new European powers and competences on foreign, security, fiscal, economic, industrial policies matched by a sufficient budget. That multiannual budget should be made of sizable real own resources instead of depending on national contributions and agreed by applying the ordinary legislative procedure and thus overcoming the unanimity rule.

The EU response to the COVID health crisis and the aid provided to Ukraine have shown its potential. Thanks to the unwavering support of the EU and its Member States over these last months and years, Russian aggression against Ukraine has reached an inflection point and Putin’s position is now more difficult. EU freezing of funds for autocrats in Poland and Hungary have eased it for citizens to vote democracy back, but reforms are needed so citizen´s freedom can never be damaged for up to sixteen years.

Moreover, it is evident that Member States can only reach consensus in emergency situations, often deciding too little too late, through compromises without a long-term vision. It is not enough: the EU needs to act, not only react. In his Aachen speech Mario Draghi emphasised: ‘we have reached a point where the decisions Europe must take can no longer be contained within the institutional framework we have inherited. Some require a scale that only Europe can provide. Others require a degree of democratic legitimacy that must be built from the ground up’. Unless - at least a group of Members States - decide to build up their shared sovereignty further, Europeans will be overwhelmed and become satellites of the new global powers.

Unanimity in the Council can be overcome through the ‘*passerelle* clauses’, both in general terms and in relation to specific areas, such as foreign policy or the multiannual financial framework. But it requires unanimity to overcome unanimity. This is precisely why our case does not rest on the passerelle alone. A government unwilling to vote for the change can still be moved by the cost of refusing it — by a Parliament withholding its consent on money and on enlargement, by a proposal to reform the Treaties, by coalition of the willing advancing without it, and by its own voters.

Already in 1984 the Parliament proposed the Spinelli draft Treaty, and in the spring of 2021 the European Parliament had submitted to the European Council a first proposal for a comprehensive reform of the Treaties. Additionally, in November 2023 the European Parliament submitted to the European Council a detailed proposal for a comprehensive reform of the Treaties, which allows for the convening of a Convention by a simple majority of governments in the European Council.

This need for EU reform was further reaffirmed by the European Parliament in autumn 2025, with the adoption of two landmark resolutions on the institutional aspects of the Draghi Report and on the institutional consequences of EU enlargement respectively. Both resolutions explicitly endorsed the Parliament's 2023 Treaty reform project as the reference framework for the Union's constitutional

future, making clear that the EU can deliver on its key objectives only by overcoming fragmented national approaches, strengthening decision-making at Union level and, where necessary, pursuing the Treaty reforms already proposed by the Parliament. The second resolution further confirmed that the legal basis for a European Common Defence already exists within the current Treaties while making the case that enlargement and institutional reform must proceed together.

However, the European Council has not discussed Parliament´s constitutional proposal to date, violating the principle of loyal cooperation among the institutions. This is why the Action Committee has endorsed the petition for Union Act - asking for the parallel activation of articles 42 (European Common Defence) and 48 (Treaty reform) of the TEU – and promotes a public debate involving citizens, civil society and all institutional levels, to define the new institutional and political architecture of the EU, also in view of the enlargement towards Ukraine, Moldova and the six Western Balkan countries, and, given the evolution of public opinion there, even the United Kingdom and in Iceland.

To break the deadlock the European Parliament could condition the approval of the 2027 annual budget and the adoption of the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) on the activation of the passerelle and the opening of the reform process of the Treaties. Furthermore, accession treaties should provide for the overcoming of unanimity as a measure to prepare the Union for the enlargement. This enlargement is expected to take the Union from 27 up to 37 Member States within the next decade. We are aware that this condition may be read as holding the candidate countries hostage to the Union's internal reform. The opposite is true. A Union of thirty-seven Member States governed by unanimity would be incapable of deciding at all, and the new members would be admitted to a body that could no longer act — while being blamed, individually, each time it failed to. Reforming in conjunction with enlarging protects those who are joining; enlarging without reforming would be tray them politely.

We also call on the European Parliament to consolidate in a constitutional form the 2023 Treaty reform project sending it directly to national parliaments for debate and approval, and to convene an Interparliamentary Conference (Assise) with participation of civil society following the model of the first Conference on the Future of Europe to agree with national parliaments on common positions regarding MFF and the EU reform.

In the meantime, Member States willing to enhance shared sovereignty should proceed with differentiated integration forming a pre-federal vanguard, through a coherent set of enhanced cooperations. These two routes are complementary and not alternative: reform at twenty-seven remains the objective, while the vanguard is what keeps the objective credible if reform is blocked, and what makes the cost of blocking it visible. These should include structured permanent cooperation on defence, like the Euro and Schengen, forming a constitutional Union within the Union.

One way of moving in this direction could be for a group of Member States to decide to share further sovereignty through, for example, a "Europe of the Six+" mechanism – the six most populous Member States, accounting for close to 60% of the EU's population and nearly 70% of its GDP (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland and the Netherlands) – which, through an instrumental treaty, could address their differences and replace unanimous decision-making with a qualified-majority system. This could be the evolution of the project now known as the "E6+", which has been under negotiation since January 2026.

Draghi has called for a pioneering initiative by a group of states to begin pragmatically paving the way to a fully-fledged pre-federation by cooperating (in a manner open to those wishing to join) in specific sectors. This can include the setting up of the European Common Defence and, the European Security Council but doing so with a homogeneous membership, both with the intention of conferring

effective supranational authority on the European institutions in those sectors, thus building genuine pre-federal political unity, with the explicit consent of citizens and their national representatives.

We also recall that in 2027 about 60 per cent of European citizens will vote in national elections. The cleavage between pro-European forces on the one hand and nationalists and populists on the other is increasingly relevant. In ten years these 2027 elections will probably be seen as the moment when Europeans decided to share sovereignty to cope with increasing threats or not. The future of European economy and security is at stake. We must launch a message of unity and hope, in view of those elections, which are in essence European ones.

Finally, we invite the European Council to convene an extraordinary meeting on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Rome Treaties to adopt an Inter-Institutional Declaration on a Stronger Political Union, activate the passerelle clauses, initiate the Treaty reform process, which should involve European citizens' panels, along with representatives of the EU institutions and the Member States, following the innovative method of the first Conference on the Future of Europe, and to pave the way for an initiative by willing member states to share more sovereignty, including on foreign policy and defence.

To foster all these ends the Action Committee will gather in Rome on 19-20 March 2027 and invite all pro-European civil organisations to join the European People´s Congress and citizen´s demonstration that it co-organises. It must be the source of the political pressure that makes the institutional levers described above credible, and it is addressed to the governments that sit in the European Council. We therefore ask each elected representative and the readers of this appeal, individually and before March 2027, to do three things: to sign the petition for a Union Act; to ask their Member of the European Parliament and their national representatives to support the activation of the passerelles and the convening of the Assises; and to participate in the Rome Congress.

Certainly, the activation of the passerelle, enhanced cooperations, and the convening of the Assises a can be decided within this institutional cycle, whereas the negotiation and ratification of a reformed Treaty will necessarily take longer. That is a reason to begin now, not a reason to postpone. We advocate that these 2029 European elections should have a constitutional character. To that end, a second European citizen´s congress should be convened in May 2028, on the 80th anniversary of the 1948 Hague Congress, to hold an open conference on the European project.

National governments have no further excuses: the path forward is clear, and citizens, above all, are calling for it to be taken. European institutions must break out of their current paralysis and begin to propose concrete measures to address the dramatic problems that beset the people. On 9 May 1950 the Schuman Declaration was made public, championing the project agreed a year earlier at the 1948 Hague Congress, and stating – on no fewer than three occasions – that Europe had to advance towards a European Federation; it specifically understood the ECSC to be the first of three supranational European Communities, and the first step towards the constitution of the European Federation. Now, ahead of the 2029 elections, further steps must be taken towards the constitution of the European Federation.

Our arguments must convince people of the absolute necessity of an autonomous EU force in today's world, which would otherwise reduce Europe to a mere annex. The basic identity of each European nation remains fundamental. However, the real question is whether this identity is better served by a weak or a powerful EU. And where will this power come from? It comes simply from the EU having a seat at the table with those who decide the direction towards the world is heading. From an economic perspective on one hand and a security perspective on the other, we are in a very unsustainable situation, and we need to get out of that. The resurgence of pro-EU, pro-liberal democracy sentiment may be expected, as was the case in Hungary. But the time for a major decision

for an EU in a superpower position is now. Our aspiration for Europe, with all its fervour and maybe excess, besides being logical and rational in its foundations, corresponded perfectly to the aspiration of the popular spirit itself and, after all, pursues an undeniably higher goal.

We find ourselves at the critical threshold of a world undergoing irreversible transformations. A new world, in a way. A new era in our time. We see how public perceptions are distorted, social, parliamentary and military instances are derailed or manipulated, studies mischaracterized or ignored, false scientific credentials and sweeping claims are used to deceive or confuse mainstream journalists. We do not want repentance to come too late to be useful. We do not want the already familiar features of the EU to become strange, but rather, we want the strange, or seemingly utopian idea of a powerful European federation to become familiar to the world, starting with the Europeans themselves. Outside the EU, people risk their lives demonstrating because they want to belong to the EU. Europe is the best place is to live in the whole world, and to protect this, Member States need to act in the general interest.

It is time to act. It is time to build the United States of Europe!

Ventotene, 30th August 2026