70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SCHUMAN DECLARATION
EUROPE'S NEW CHALLENGE

May 9th 1950 was the start of a revolutionary process destined to have a profound effect on the history of mankind. On that day, Robert Schuman, in a historic declaration, announced to Europe and the world the birth of a Community, radically new in terms of the principles that had inspired and would guide it. The Schuman Declaration marked the start of the first democratic process of unification of sovereign states. These were states that until a few years earlier had been locked in fierce combat, but now they had chosen to unite. It was a choice prompted not by the need to unite in the face of a common threat, but by an awareness of the need to build a community of destiny, thereby making war in Europe "not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible". It was a question of realising "the first concrete foundation of a European federation indispensable to the preservation of peace".

Today, 70 years on, Europe marks this anniversary in the midst of a dramatic new peril that is threatening its cohesion and future. The current pandemic may not be a war, but its consequences — countless deaths and situations of untold suffering — are proving just as devastating for European society as a whole, especially for its production system, its workers, and the most vulnerable sections of its populations.

At the same time, today, in the wake of seven decades of progressive integration, Europe's citizens are well aware of the need to tackle this crisis together, and they are looking, with renewed attention, to the supranational institutions built over the past decades.

It therefore falls primarily to the European Parliament and the European Commission to display the ambition and courage necessary to develop and adopt a major new "Project for Europe", setting out a roadmap that will allow the consequences of the pandemic to be turned into a driving force for change. This tragedy must open a new phase of European integration, centred on the values shared by all Europeans, in the context of a wider sharing of sovereignty at European level.

The necessary transformations concern Europe's ability to compete in the globalised world while introducing a coherent new model of green economy. Specifically, they concern equal opportunities, the fight against inequalities and poverty, inclusion policies, and the promotion of a new eco-system based on the objectives of full employment and the elimination of job insecurity. All this demands a fresh industrial strategy embracing SMEs and the cooperative system, the development of research and of an adequate system of schooling and lifelong learning, and the strengthening of the Single Market. The necessary transformations also concern the organisation of space, the role of cities, the organisation of mobility, the distribution of time, generational change and gender equality, forms of civil participation, economic democracy, the development of communication and pluralism of information.

None of these transformations can be pursued without taking into account the international geopolitical framework of today's globalised world, where the European Union must be a leader in supporting multilateralism, United Nations reform, and special relations with the Mediterranean area and with Africa.

None of this will be possible unless the European Union urgently breaks free from the paralysing intergovernmental mechanisms that have weakened its unity and allowed selfishness to prevail and misunderstandings to grow. Today, as in 1950, it is time to pursue the common European interest, reversing the logic that binds the European Union to a method of negotiating that sees each state acting alone with the aim of reaping benefits for itself.

We therefore appeal to the European Parliament, first of all, to seize this 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration as an opportunity to affirm its willingness — in the name of the citizens who elected it — to take on a substantially constituent role, thereby paving the way for a federal constitution for Europe.

The time has come to open the debate and advance concrete proposals in order to verify who, among the European states and peoples, is willing to create a "refounding pact" as a response to the phenomenon of global interdependence that the pandemic has so tragically highlighted.

It is time for a new renaissance for Europe. It is time to resume the journey towards Schuman's goal of a European federation.