First of all I would like to say how pleased I am to participate in this meeting and to see faces that I know and respect, as well as the joy we share in speaking with some of the best specialists in the world on European and international issues at a time when words take on greater importance and have more repercussion than usual.

I would like to talk to you of the work undertaken by the European Convention.

For over a year now a meeting bearing the grand title of Convention (in direct reference with the Philadelphia Convention that was held two centuries ago) has been held in one form or another nearly every week in Brussels. Its mandate has been to lay down the new founding treaty of Great Europe. 
All the governments of all European countries, all the parliaments and all of the major political parties in Europe are represented; I take part myself representing the European Parliament.
We have to hand over our work in June, that is in three months time.

So, first and foremost a word about our vision of European construction.
I am going to mention some things you know already about the 50 years of European construction but I shall also talk a little about how we see matters.
If we make a round up of those 50 years we realise two things: firstly how strange the construction of Europe has been.
For half a century now we have been committed to a project that will last as long as the construction of the great cathedrals did during the Middle Ages, over several decades and maybe even a century.
This is strange in political history, and even more so in that for 40 years this project has never ceased and never suffered a setback. This is the mysterious side of the story.
Things are moving forwards slowly in an irregular manner. At times things speed up and then they slow down but there is never a setback.
The number of participating countries is increasing and as if by a kind of magic spell, that might stop from one day to the next, but has that has continued to have its effect until now, all countries who enter into the system feel a responsibility in continuing the project and contribute to it. This is even true for less enthusiastic countries like the UK, brilliantly represented here or Denmark. Once in they slow up but they cannot stop and therefore we move forwards.

There is also a second strange phenomena; and that is that we started to construct a federation but back to front.
Of course we examine the historic experiences of unification, of federal state constitution in Europe and without very closely.
And we have been taking a good look at the American experience, federations other than the USA, such as Canada, Australia, and in Europe, Switzerland, Germany and Italy. Essentially we can see that historically the phenomena of unification was undertaken more to counter an external enemy, and unfortunately it was in favour of wars; wars of independence or wars for freedom.
We are not building Europe against an external enemy; we no longer have any enemies and during the Cold War it was the Atlantic Alliance that protected us from a common external enemy. We are building Europe against the curse of the past. Our common enemy in fact are the 2,000 years of fratricidal wars that we waged against one another. The founders of Europe wanted to launch the process of the European Union in order to create a means of relations between our countries that would make war impossible. So when they launched this project the Second World War had just come to an end and it was impossible to create a Federal State between France and Germany and the other countries who had torn each other asunder. So a process of modest beginnings was launched; it was of a purely commercial nature but it was designed as a process, with the idea to achieve political union one day.

What did political union mean? They did not know then. What did "one day" mean? One day, but when? They did not know - they were launching a process and it is still go on 50 years later. We started the wrong way round - that means we started by dealing with a series of themes that, often, in traditional federations are not the federation's responsibility but that of the Federated States or the Länder; here I am referring to agriculture, regional policies or even some policies involving the protection of the environment. They decided to postpone dealing with all of the real subjects that came under federal responsibility until later once the Union had been consolidated and when confidence had been re-established between our countries that had once been enemies and when we had sufficient experience in operating common mechanisms.

So we had to wait 30 to 40 years before creating a single currency and it is only today in March 2003 that we have really started to talk of foreign policy. Therefore it is a back to front federation.

After 40 to 50 years or so we succeeded in achieving two historic and tremendous results and we have also witnessed two miserable failures.

The two tremendous achievements are first of all peace, peace amongst ourselves - this is nevertheless something quite unique. Today it appears completely natural to us, but not only did we managed to find peace but also a depth in the reconciliation between populations that is miraculous in itself. When we ask the French population via six monthly surveys (Eurobarometer) "Which population do you think is the closest to the French?" Two Frenchmen in three answer quite naturally, the Germans. The Germans fluctuate depending on the month between the Americans and the French. If we had said that to my grandmother, whose father, husband (my father), son and son-in-law like all the women of that generation in France, had fought against the Germans - in Germany the women of their generation could have said the same thing - if I had said to my grandmother that I as a grown man would see a time when the German people would consider the French as being the closest to them, she would have told me "You're very nice but completely mad."

That is what has happened; it is as if in 20 years time we asked the Israelis which people was the closest to them and they naturally replied the Palestinians - or if we asked the Indians the same and they answered "the Pakistanis" and vice versa.

There is, nevertheless, a miraculous side to these achievements that seem obvious to us today but that deserve to be pointed out. The second historical success it the monetary union taken to the point where currencies merged.
We deserve particular credit for this. The opportunity for independent States to give up their national currency in place of a common one was considered by some great Nobel prize winners as completely impossible, like a utopia. Some people won the Nobel prize because they demonstrated what utopia was. It was very difficult to achieve politically because when currencies are merged it is like when someone gets married - we join everything we have together, both assets and debts but no one wanted to pay the debts of the other badly managed countries. So before merging our currencies together order had to be re-established in each country's national finances and since we were in a period of economic stagnation all of our budgets were in the negative, all of our countries were in debt. For seven years we applied unpopular policies such as the increase in taxes and the decrease in expenses. Twelve countries committed themselves to this policy. In the twelve countries the twelve governments that committed themselves to unpopular policies were defeated in the following elections. In the twelve countries the opposition parties that came to power continued the unpopular measures and we achieved monetary union.

Opposite these two remarkable achievements lie two failures that are just as surprising as the achievements are remarkable. The first that I shall come back to is foreign policy. This should have been the easiest thing to do together and it has revealed itself to be extremely difficult. And the second thing that is even more surprising is that we have not managed, until now, in finding a way of controlling Europe by a democratic system. We provide the strange spectacle of 15 countries that are each and every one an exemplary democracy and when we compare ourselves with the rest of the planet we are amongst those, and we are not alone, we are amongst those democracies that function well and are building together a system that is not democratic. At the European Convention we say that the EU is not a super state and that undoubtedly we do not want to build one, but we are a system that makes laws. The best French legal experts believe that today nearly 60% of the new legal rules that the French are obliged to accept each year are set down in Brussels and not in Paris. We vote in more laws in the European Parliament than in the French one, than here at the National Assembly; so Edouard and I vote in more laws in the European Parliament than Xavier de Villepin in the French Senate.

I'm not saying they are better but the EU has a budget of 100 billion euros, which is around that of Spain or slightly less and about the size of the budget of the Netherlands. The EU has its currency, France doesn't, the EU has one. The European Union has a high rate of external activities in terms of trade; France has not negotiated for 40 years in terms of trade, internationally it is the EU who does this. The EU signs treaties and it has co-operation agreements with three quarters of the countries in the world - but it takes decisions in obscure and undemocratic conditions. That is not a Super State, it is a sub-democracy. It is a situation that cannot go on.

This is why the Convention exists. It was created a year ago since the European heads of State and government quite rightly believed that the time had come to provide the EU with real institutions, institutions that were more stable, longer lasting, more transparent, simpler and more democratic. They were aware that with the enlargement of the Union by a dozen other countries, which practically doubles the number of member states, there would be radical new problems and it was the chance to modernise the institutions.
Hence after one year of work the Convention came to a consensus on some major subjects and simultaneously is encountering some major difficulties. It is time for me therefore to provide you with an overview.

First we came to a consensus that was sufficient enough to be able to say that the Europe that would emerge from our work would be another Europe. Maybe there are some here today who understood nothing at all and who are worried about understanding nothing at all of the Community, then the EU that we knew with the Treaties of Rome and Maastricht with its extremely complicated system but we, who are at the heart of matters, do not even understand.

We agree that we do not have unanimity but there is a wide consensus who thinks that the text with which we are replacing all of the existing European treaties will be called the Constitution, the Constitution of the European Union. Legally it will be a treaty adopted between States, ratified by each State but that will be presented as the Constitution of Europe.

We agree and this agreement was far easier to reach than I thought initially - on the distribution of tasks, on the distribution of competencies between the EU and the Member States, at least in terms of everything related to the EU's internal functioning. The experience we have acquired over the last fifty years has enabled us to estimate what we could reasonably expect from the EU and what we ought to maintain at member State level. It enabled us to go a little further in terms of the distribution of competencies that are fatally great in number. There are many problems that are national, local and then European in dimension. In terms of environment the cleanliness of the water we drink or the processing of waste water, must remain on a local or national level. However the prevention of major maritime catastrophes that lead to serious pollution must obviously fall within European competence.

Therefore we agree on the distribution of competencies as far as internal politics within the EU are concerned.

We agree to think that since Europe is setting down laws the legal system must also be as clear, simple, efficient, transparent and democratic as any other national legislative system. And as we are a political unit there are two types of player, the citizens but also the States. We need a legislative system that resembles the ones that exist in federal countries with two Chambers, one representing the citizens proportionally to the national populations - this is the mission of the European Parliament and a Chamber that represents the governments of the States - today this task is fulfilled by the organism we call the European Council of Ministers, but that in reality has a legal role rather than an executive one.

At present if there is conflict between the two it is the Council of Ministers that has the final word. The principle whereby the two assemblies have to reach agreement as in most federal countries, is a principle that will probably be retained by the Convention. And although the Convention has not even reached agreement it is seriously debating the possibility of providing Europe with leaders. Europe today has no leaders; there is no "Mr" or "Mrs Europe". Everyone knows the words attributed to Henry Kissinger, "I am accused of never consulting the Europeans, fine I shall consult the Europeans, I'll call Mr Europe, give me the telephone number." There was no number for Henry Kissinger neither is there one for George W Bush, nor for the European citizen.

There are authorities with prestigious names, President of the Commission, President of the European Parliament but in reality everything happens as if Europe is controlled by the fifteen national leaders, which is a system that has functioned for a long time, but which will no longer function with 25 people around a table.
When the European Council was created in 1975 there were nine countries. With nine members it was a directorate. With 25 or 30 it will be a Surveillance Council. It cannot be Europe's executive.
The question is to know whether we shall finally provide Europe with its own leaders with democratic legitimacy different from that of national leaders.
On this point the debate is open, it has not been closed but we went as far as daring to raise the question which until now had been thought of as sacrilege.
Then came the Iraq war that in terms of our work deserves credit and yet has caused us a problem.

The credit of the events we are experiencing are twofold.
Firstly it makes us ask questions that we had never asked since the end of the Cold War. What has our vision of the world been since the end of the Cold War? How do we see our role in the world? Our relationship with the USA and the other major world players, the role of the UN? Strangely enough in spite of the fact that our leaders meet up every fifteen days (every week for the Foreign Affairs Minister) these are subjects that we have never broached together. We were always whipped up in the crisis of the moment: in the 1990's it was the crisis in the Balkans. We never took the time to say "the Cold War is over, we are in a world that is radically new with other stakes, other types of threats, other players, a different kind of stability or instability between powers - which role shall we appoint ourselves with? And in the role we grant ourselves what are we doing alone, what are we doing together? How do we distribute competencies for external relations?" Essentially the exercise we undertook within the Convention has been to reach an agreement on the EU's competencies.
The crisis obliged us to do it and it will be a long haul because many countries have not yet joined in the exercise. I cannot speak for countries that are not my own, but in France there has been no debate about the world at the start of the 21st century, France's role in the world and the role of the European Union seen by France in this world.
Just as an example we are continuing with a military policy that was founded on the Cold War and the aim of which was to confront the Soviet threat, this is funny.
In the EU there are some neutral countries. What does neutrality mean in 2003? Don't you find this strange?
When the great European powers were waging war against one another or during the Cold War being neutral was a political attitude that we could understand, that made sense and that also benefited the countries that adopted this attitude.
But today however the countries of Europe are at peace, even better, they are united in the same political unit, the Cold War is no more - there are no more direct threats against any of our countries on the European continent except for the obscure terrorist who threatens everyone in the Western world. What does being neutral mean? We cannot say in the same breath that we are participating in the same political union that aims to be a community for the future and also say "yes but if the going gets really rough than for my part I shall remain neutral."
Therefore neutral countries must question the meaning of their neutrality in 2003.
France has to look at the meaning of having strategic nuclear arms for itself alone within the EU in 2003.
Countries that are attached to the importance of the Atlantic Alliance should look at the meaning of an alliance that was born in the 1950's to counter a threat that thanks to the political and, to a certain degree, the military success of this alliance, no longer exists today.
These are the thoughts that we have never looked at in depth, neither in France nor in the other member countries, nor between ourselves.
Our Parliaments have not discussed this and it has not been put to public opinion either.
The crisis's credit is that the major leaders have brought the debate into the open. It is necessary now to make progress and take the discussions to a conclusion. I am convinced that once we have dared to continue we shall discover that there is greater convergence than we ever believed possible at the time of the crisis.
This is the positive side of the crisis if I may say so. Until now the Europeans have essentially, in terms of foreign policy been pretending to provide themselves with the means to take up a common position. The crisis shatters this sham. It is clear that we do not have the means, but we can hope at least to be able tackle the real problems and bring the debate forwards.

The negative side of this is that the process will be a long one. These are major themes linked national sovereignty and in all of our countries they are linked also to the prerogative of the chief of the executive, and the personal prerogatives of the national leaders.
When we created the single European currency the national leaders had to bully their Finance Ministers. They did so. Foreign Policy means bullying oneself and this we do not do willingly. We do it if there is a crisis or pressure from public opinion. Hence we shall need time.
The question for the Convention is to know whether we include a chapter on foreign policy or not in the Constitution that we are drawing up and that has to be ready for June.
Good sense will probably dictate not to write a real chapter on foreign policy because we have to wait for the dust to settle. Our leaders need to be able to start talking to each other again in a more serene manner than has been the case over the last few weeks. Simultaneously we need to take a step back in order to form a calmer opinion about our inadequacies. We also need to be able to take a look at what each of us really wants.

We shall see how to proceed but if I could make a forecast today I would say that we shall include a text in June that will, in terms of internal policies, go much further into integration that we hoped for a year ago and will resemble a federal system to a great extent, even though we cannot use the name. But in reality it will be more disappointing in terms of foreign policy than we had hoped for a year ago.

So this means that we shall still only have half a constitution, referring to another text and another debate later: the definition of the Union's relationship with the rest of the world.