

Jürgen Habermas, a philosopher not of the Christian faith. He has stated: "For the normative self-understanding of the modern period Christianity has been more than a mere catalyst. The egalitarian universalism which gave rise to the ideas of freedom and social coexistence is a direct inheritance from the Jewish notion of justice and the Christian ethics of love. Substantially unchanged, this heritage has always been critically reappropriated and newly interpreted. To this day an alternative to it does not exist."

Given the uniqueness of its calling, Europe also has a unique responsibility in the world. First of all, it must not give up

on itself. The continent which, demographically, is rapidly ageing, must not become old in spirit. Furthermore, Europe will grow more sure of itself if it accepts a responsibility in the world corresponding to its singular intellectual tradition, its extraordinary resources and its great economic power. The European Union should therefore assume a role of leadership in the fight against global poverty and in efforts to promote peace.

With gratitude we can observe that the countries of Europe and the European Union are among those making the greatest contribution to international development; but they also need to make

their political importance felt, for example, with regard to the urgent challenges presented in Africa, given the immense tragedies afflicting that continent, such as the scourge of Aids, the situation in Darfur, the unjust exploitation of natural resources and the disturbing traffic in arms.

Nor can the political and diplomatic efforts of Europe and its countries neglect the continuing serious situation in the Middle East, where everyone's contribution is needed to promote the rejection of violence, reciprocal dialogue and a truly peaceful coexistence.

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Closing date 28 September 2007

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