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Lisbon Treaty

A new beginning for Europe

The signing of the Treaty of Lisbon today brings an end to the 8-year long reform process of the European Union. If the treaty is ratified by all 27 Member States over the coming year, it will enter into force on 1st January 2009.

The Greens in the European Parliament support the Treaty of Lisbon as a further step in the European constitutional process. It is a compromise, and in many ways an unsatisfactory one, however it is indispensable and represents a step forward.

The treaty strengthens European democracy, establishes the Union as a community based on fundamental rights, anchors its policies in a comprehensive system of common goals and values, and reinforces the principle of sustainability. It enshrines social rights as human rights and binds the EU's foreign and security policy within international law. It clarifies competences and enhances the EU's ability to act, whilst improving the transparency and democratic legitimacy of the Union, as well as creating the possibility for citizens to participate in the EU decision-making process.

The shortcomings of the treaty should not be underestimated. The crisis of the constitutional process has not been used to take a bolder step forward and this is a missed opportunity. The treaty falls far short of what the constitution set out to achieve. A European social order has not been created, while European democracy remains incomplete.

Regrettably, the request for a European-wide referendum has not been fulfilled but national referendums can clearly not be seen as a satisfactory substitute.

This treaty is not the end of the journey but, rather, a new beginning; a step towards a renewed Europe. The democratisation of the Union will make it possible for its citizens to tackle the challenges facing the future of Europe.

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