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Draft text for the Annual Memorial Service (May 2022)

Today we honour the Members of our Parliament who passed away in 2021 and 2022 either while serving or following the end of their service.

While listening to the roll call of their names in respectful silence, we remembered the faces, personalities and projects of our deceased colleagues.

They came from different lands and by different roads. They carried with them different aims and ambitions. While constructing Europe, advancing democracy and justice and promoting peace and security, we, alongside these esteemed colleagues, developed among us that inspiring spirit of solidarity and friendship for which our Parliament stands.

In our Union, a rising number of Europeans are turning their backs on the Union and blaming Europe for this and that, for doing too much or too little, for going too far or not going far enough. However, millions of Ukrainians looking for hope and help have turned their faces to Europe as an example of freedom, justice and democracy.

Believe me, that is the first and foremost thing at this time:
We must hold together, strengthen and defend this Europe of reconciliation and cooperation, of peace and security, of freedom and justice, of tolerance and democracy – even and especially when it costs us something.

Our Union stands for freedom, for law and democracy, for prosperity and justice and for the peace and security of every nation in Europe.
From the beginning, our Union has stood against dictatorship and against subjugation. Today, it stands with the Ukrainian people against the Russian dictatorship's cowardly neo-imperialist aggression.

Dictators are not our partners, and they have no place in the EU.
And we resist aggressors for the sake of democracy, for the sake of law and justice and for the sake of peace and humanity. This is what drove our peaceful unification of Europe.

Our people, and we ourselves as parliamentarians, have many reasons to blame our Union for this or that. But we refuse to follow the prophets of doom, dusk and dust.
We are not fooled by the crooked mask of Euroscepticism, which hides the grinning visage of resentment and racism.

We remain crystal clear in our convictions:
No mistake, omission or inadequacy justifies abandoning the Union, letting it disintegrate or, in the worst case, destroying it.

Our weapon against anti-European populism is not pro-European perfectionism. Our weapons are our unwavering commitment to our values and ideals and our courage in facing Europe's future and any difficult times that may lie ahead.

In the mid-20th century, our aim was to unite Europe against the self-destruction of war and crises.

In the 21st century, it is to keep the people of Europe together so that Europe can assert itself in the world.

A European Union that allows itself to be dismantled, or that actively dismantles itself, will end up submitting to foreign powers:

First politically, militarily and economically and finally even culturally.

We are not keeping Europe together only in order to be able to better solve this or that national problem – although yes, that.

Nor are we holding it together only to create a large, efficient internal market for the prosperity of all – but yes, that too.

For a long time now, it has been about more:

We are uniting Europe, so that the people of Europe – our interests, our values and our culture – will continue to have weight in and significance for the world

Significance as an orientation and as a motor for a humane future for our planet.

Significance for freedom, justice, democracy and tolerance in the world and for the world.

A Europe that no longer wants to mean anything to the world will lose its soul and without that, it has no future.

Our Parliament is not a copy of any of our national parliaments. It is unique and it must remain unique!

It is the parliament of the world's first and only transnational democracy.

Let us be proud of it!

Our Parliament does not suffer from the 'democratic deficit' of which both supporters and detractors of European unification sometimes accuse it, thus unfairly discrediting it in the process.

In truth, it is the 'democratic difference' between the European Union and all other international organisations in the world.

Let us not squander it!

Our mandate goes far beyond our powers of legislation and scrutiny:

We can and we must radiate courage and hope – to our people, to Europe and to the world!

In this May of 2022, in this time of crisis and war in Europe, we honour our deceased colleagues with the promise:

Yes, we stand up!

Yes, we are strong!

Yes, we stand together!