

**Speech given by the Vicepresident of the European Parliament, Alejo Vidal-Quadras, on the occasion of the presentation in Brussels of Business Europe's "Go for Growth" strategy on the 5th of May 2010**

Dear President of Business Europe,

Dear colleagues,

Dear Business Europe national representatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation to host tonight's event organised by Business Europe to promote their latest campaign "Go for Growth" that President Jürgen Thumann has just presented to us. We need growth and jobs and we need them urgently and I have to say that the recommendations presented here are ambitious but necessary if we are to come on top at the other side of the tunnel.

I fully share the view that we need to go back to basics, to the fundamental values of the market economy, that is, rewarding hard work, ensuring full transparency in the market, avoid distortions in competition, encourage risk taking, prosecute fraud and ensure affordable public services and social security for all. Unlike what some are saying, it is not that the markets have failed; we are where we are because we have betrayed these core principles that the markets need (transparency, no tolerance with fraud, and properly dimensioned and effective public services). I am seeing a dangerous tendency to vilify businesses and entrepreneurs for all the ills in the world and this is unacceptable. On the contrary, I think we need to listen very carefully to those that are willing and able to be the most active players in the economic recovery, in creating growth and jobs. And this is what we are doing tonight.

Allow me to put Spain, my country, as an example of what not to do. In the first trimester of 2010, around 240.000 jobs have been destroyed while 23.000 have been created in the public sector. Since the beginning of the crisis, 2.5 million people have lost their jobs while at the same time 250.000 posts at all levels of the Administration have been created. Only in the first trimester of this year the costs of personnel in the public sector have increased by 5%. This is unsustainable. We are on the brink of the abyss.

And Spain is not the only one in Europe living beyond its means. But as I am Spanish and I am polite I have used my country as an example.

For this reason it is imperative to carry out deep structural reforms in public finances and in the job market to restore the trust in the system and to enable job-creation. We need also, at EU level to redirect the EU funds to the area of promotion of competitiveness. We also need more supervision, but avoid the temptation of interventionism at all cost. The single market has to be further integrated in all areas and the Union should be a leading voice in international trade where the emerging economies are becoming frontrunners and where we can only compete by being more efficient and innovative than the rest. Moreover, it is impossible to have a single currency without economic governance. We cannot live sitting on a contradiction. The price for it is failure.

In all these areas, with the Treaty of Lisbon now into force, the European Parliament has an important role to play. As legislators, we have the obligation to set the adequate regulatory framework to allow firms to do

what they do best: generate growth and jobs, promote research and development, drive innovation and improve social welfare.

Europe is facing probably one of the biggest challenges since the creation of the European Union. The current economic crisis is putting to the test our foundations of competitiveness, social and economic cohesion and welfare but it is precisely now that these principles need to be upheld the most and when we must pull together and show our strength when working as a unit in a joint effort. Because, let's be clear, we are only as strong as our weaker partner and, because, the dimension of the problem is such that no one can go at it alone. We have probably gotten ourselves tangled in the details during better times but if something has been made very clear during this crisis is that the fundamentals of our economy are not as strong as we thought they were and put a remedy to it. For this, we need decisive and coordinated actions from the public authorities and society as a whole.

I would like to thank you all, representatives from the business sector across the Union, for your valuable contribution and I assure you that, like in the past, the Members of this House will be very open and attentive to your proposals. Because you are not the problem, not even part of the solution. You are the solution and we legislators and politicians in general, have only one duty in these difficult times: to give you the means and eliminate the obstacles for you to do your work. And the rest, as it is written in the Holy Book, will be given to us in addition.