

University College Cork

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY:

DR. MICHAEL B. MURPHY, President, University College Cork on 5th March, 2014, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **JOSÉ MANUEL DURÃO BARROSO**

A Leas-Ard-Mhéara, a Sheansailéir na hOllscoile Náisiúnta, a Thánaiste, a Ambasadóirí, a Theachtaí Dála, a Sheanadóirí agus a Chomhairleoirí, a Ionadaithe Pharlaimint na hEorpa, a dhaoine uaisle agus a mhuintir na hOllscoile,

is mór an onóir dom fáilte chroíúil a fhearadh romhaibh go léir chuig Ollscoil Chorcaí ar an ócáid stairiúil seo chun céim oinigh a bhronnadh ar Uachtarán Choimisiún na hEorpa, an tUasal José Manuel Barroso.

Chancellor,

In this hall, on May 12, 2008, José Manuel Barroso, 11th President of the Commission of the European Union, engaged with an audience of UCC students and staff, on the future direction of Europe. A referendum on the Lisbon Treaty was in the offing and, while the President may not have swung the minds of the Irish not present in the Aula Maxima, he left an indelible impression on those who were. With eloquence, with energy and with force, he conveyed the passion of his personal commitment to the ideals of Schuman and Monnet - of a Europe of united peoples rather than united states, a Europe prosperous and at peace. He reminded us that he had been born under a dictatorship in Portugal, sharing poverty and a bleak introverted political and social framework with Ireland. Both countries were subsequently transformed by European Community entry, but both countries would sustain their progress only through enthusiastic, committed membership of a European Union that is open, democratic, led and organised effectively. The audience was enthralled and there was consensus that we should have him back! Regrettably, “Events, Dear Boy”, to quote Harold MacMillan conspired to delay his return.

The President is the head of the European Commission — the executive branch of the European Union. The President is responsible for allocating portfolios to members of the Commission and has the power to reshuffle or dismiss them. He determines the

Commission's policy agenda and all the legislative proposals it produces and only the Commission can propose EU laws. He is the most powerful officeholder in the European Union.

By October of this year, after 10 years in office, President Barroso will match Jacques Delors as the longest serving holder of the Presidency since the role was established in 1958. Of the first 10 presidents, Delors is credited by most as having been the most successful, in that he gave the Community a sense of purpose, a sense of direction and a new dynamism after the doldrums of the 1980s.

But, when the history of his term comes to be written, José Manuel Barroso can lay strong claim to have competed with Delors. Under his leadership, 11 new countries have been integrated into the union, creating a global economic and political powerhouse of over 500 million citizens, representing one quarter of global GDP. The EU is the largest provider of foreign aid in the world and, in 2012, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize recognising six decades of contribution to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe. President Barroso along with President Van Rompuy made the acceptance speeches.

Beyond enlargement, his greatest legacy will be the extensive reform of the modus operandi of the EU, which he shaped, shepherded and implemented, initially through the Treaty of Lisbon. The result, a union that is more efficient in its decision making, better positioned to effect its global geopolitical agenda, now exhibits a healthier and more sustainable relationship between the executive or Commission on the one hand, and directly elected representatives in the Council and Parliament on the other.

There is little doubt that had these reforms not been made the outcome of the unprecedented euro crisis of the past 5 years might have been significantly different. While the earliest response to that crisis consisted of individual countries effecting decisions that were decidedly in their national self-interest, the final resolution, a re-design of Europe's financial future was drafted quietly by the Barroso Commission, which formed the basis for the final communiqué of the G20 summit in London, 2009. From there the new rules for global as well as European financial order emerged and the EU completely overhauled its legal framework. Within the Eurozone, steps towards banking union began, while, across the EU, limits on annual government deficits were agreed along with unprecedented co-ordination of annual national budget plans, supervised by the Commission.

In an interview in 2009, at the height of the crisis he had set out his clear vision for the future. I quote: “we need open, competitive market economies, but, at the same time with effective regulation and supervision. An important level of social commitment, strong international institutions and mechanisms of corporate governance.....is the economic culture of Europe”. In 2014, the Eurozone has not broken up, it has enlarged; economic growth is returning and jobs are being created again across the continent; still more countries wish to join. If the president wishes for an epitaph after 10 years he might well consider that used originally for Christopher Wren: *si monumentum exegeris, circumspice*. “If it is a monument you seek, look around you”.

José Manuel Durão Barroso was born in Lisbon in March 1956 in Salazar’s Portugal. He inherited political activist genes; his grandfather, a monarchist, had fled Portugal for Brazil in the early 1900’s. His accountant father and schoolteacher mother afforded him a comfortable professional childhood. He read law at the University of Lisbon, graduating top of his class. But, the political activism gene was awakened early. Like many students of his era, he did not relish the repressive influence of a bureaucratic and military elite that ruled 1970’s Portugal. He joined the Maoists, though he describes his political philosophy at the time as more “centrist reformer”. Parenthetically, for younger members of the audience, Maoists constituted the largest political group at UCC also in 1973 – and I bought my copy of Mao’s “Little Red Book” in Ljubljana that year! The Ireland of that era was not greatly dissimilar to Portugal.

José Manuel Barroso was an active activist – he once related fleeing from an armed military convoy that had arrested him, with the belief that they would not shoot him in the back. His confidence was obviously justified! However, with increasing maturity and study, his politics shifted to the right and he joined the Democratic Popular Party in Portugal – but he never strayed far to the right of centre in his own view.

Further studies followed – a Diploma in European Studies and a Masters in Political Science from the University of Geneva and, later a period of research at Georgetown University in Washington. This personal American experience probably shaped his later unwavering commitment to strong, mutually enhancing, political and economic ties between the United States and Europe.

In 1985, while studying at Georgetown he was recalled home to take up his first political appointment, as under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs, the first rung on a political ladder which saw him rise to be Prime Minister of Portugal within only 7 years, in 2002. And if that

sounds meteoric, consider that within only 2 more years he became President of the EU Commission!

How, you might ask, what skill-sets underpin his extraordinary success? Well, thousands of journalists have written tens of thousands of column inches over the years on his personality traits. However, I prefer to cite a 176 page academic paper from 2010 by Dr. Jurriann Middelhoff from the University of Antwerp. Middelhoff applied the Millon Inventory Diagnostic Criteria to 10 contemporary European leaders as part of his research. Summarising a very long piece on Mr. Barroso, the President scored very strongly on the “inter-personal relations” and “expression” domains. In personality type, he apparently exhibits significant scores for the “dominant”, the “dauntless”, the “ambitious” and the “accommodating” behaviour patterns. I quote from Middelhoff: “overall, we conclude that the President of the European Commission appears to have an ambitious, outspoken, but overall fairly balanced personality”. So there, you have the scientific view! And, President, you can read all about Chancellor Merkel, Prime Minister Cameron – their negotiating strategies, strengths and weaknesses in the same article! The President has clear vision, ambition for Europe, passion for ideals, and yet, a capacity to accommodate diverse views.

Speaking of science, I now wish to highlight what may well be the greatest legacy of all from the Barroso presidency. While many will cite Union expansion, administrative reform of the Union institutions, the single market for services, restructuring of banking and harmonisation of the national annual budgetary processes, I will argue that it is the promotion of research, of education and of innovation that has and will have the greatest impact.

Science, too, was in the President’s genes. Many of his family had been professors of mathematics, science or medicine. His mother wanted him to be a professor of law, though he admitted, in a Financial Times interview 5 years ago, that he would have preferred literature. He did become an academic, spending several years as an Assistant Professor of Law in Lisbon University, in the University of Geneva and Visiting Professor at Georgetown. As a junior faculty member he was active in academic politics in Lisbon. He founded the University Association for European Studies.

Those who have followed his career know that his passion for education and of the role of academe is tangible. In June, 2009, having been inducted to the Honorary Senate of the Lindau Foundation of Nobel Laureates, President Barroso set out that pressing global problems, such as climate change, will only be addressed if dialogue between politicians and

academia is stepped up. At Lindau, he celebrated his commitment to have extensive contacts with academics everywhere in the Community throughout his term.

Over the past 10 years, the President has championed implementation of the European Research Area, a single market for science. He envisages, I quote: “a genuine European Research Area that will abolish fragmentation of effort, streamline cooperation and create critical mass.We want Europe to be the continent of choice for talented young scientists from around the world”. Now, we have it.

He supported the establishment of the European Research Council to support only the most excellent of research proposals, selected only by peer review.

His Commission played a critical role in promoting growth for research funding through Framework 7 and most recently Horizon 2020, in the face of staunch opposition to budget expansion from the European Council. Throughout his term opportunities for cross-European mobility of students and academic staff through the wonderful Erasmus For All initiative have thrived. President Barroso, personally, can take most credit for the establishment of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, (EIT) a key element of the Lisbon Strategy to create an innovative Europe, driving job growth, competitiveness, and social well-being. There is hardly an aspect of trans-European education, research and innovation that does not bear the mark of his personal interest and support.

It is apt that we honour the EU President at UCC today. Forty two years ago, in 1972, Irish membership of the EEC was championed through referendum by the Taoiseach of the day, Jack Lynch, also a law student in his time, at this university.

Membership of the European Community transformed Ireland, its universities and UCC. For 40 years, not a building was erected on this campus without European co-funding. The legend “Project Aided by EU Structural Funds” has featured on the hoarding of every building site at UCC for four decades. Even in the past 5 years, our Higher Education Authority estimates that some 150 million euros of European money were spent on the infrastructure and running costs of Irish Higher Education campuses. During the past 5 years, UCC alone has earned 63m euros for research from the Framework Seven Programme, supporting many high-end jobs, economic and social innovation in our region.

Over all those years we have frequently acknowledged the contribution of the Irish taxpayer and government to expansion of higher education and growth in research. The Irish

universities collectively honoured Chuck Feeney of Atlantic Philanthropies for his extraordinary investments. However, we have never formally acknowledged the contribution of the European Union, and our fellow European taxpayers to the conversion of Irish institutions from Colleges to Universities. Through honouring President Barroso, here this evening, we wish to recognise, finally, the extensive support the EU has provided to UCC and to our fellow Irish universities, enabling us to play our full part in growing a world-class higher education sector in Europe. Go raibh míle maith agat, A Uachtaráin. A thousand thanks to you, President, and to the Union you represent.

We never complete a citation at UCC without some reference to the more human characteristics of our distinguished honorees. President Barroso and his wife Margarida have three sons and one grandson. One son, at least, seems to be taking after his father's early traits – as a student in London in 2009 he somehow found himself among the protestors at the G20 summit where his father was doing his utmost to shore up global capitalism! He likes a good red wine from the Douro Valley; he enjoys the odd visit to the York House restaurant in downtown Lisbon; he takes an interest in modern art, enjoys good music, especially Opera and Jazz. His diary is fiercely protected by Catherine Day, Secretary General of The Commission, of whom we in Ireland are immensely proud. She steadfastly refused to divulge the identity of his favourite football team. Catherine is of course familiar with the fame of The Skibbereen Eagle in keeping an eye on the Czar of Russia and she is wary of enquiries from Cork!

To conclude, Chancellor, I have the honour and pleasure to introduce to you, for the conferment of the degree of Doctor of Laws, José Manuel Durão Barroso, a son of Portugal, for 10 years President of the European Commission and leading architect of our destiny for decades to come, champion of education and research, an independent thinker of the kind we celebrate at UCC, and at heart, a fellow academic!

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:

Praesento vobis, hunc meum filium quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testur ac spondeo totique Academiae

END