



IP(83) 14

**PRESSE-MEDELSE • MITTEILUNG AN DIE PRESSE • PRESS-RELEASE • INFORMATION A LA PRESSE
ΑΝΑΚΟΙΝΩΣΗ ΓΙΑ ΤΟΝ ΤΥΠΟ • INFORMAZIONE ALLA STAMPA • MEDEDELING AAN DE PERS**

Brussels, 17 January 1983

Summary of the address by Mr Wilhelm Haferkamp,
Vice-President of the Commission of the European Communities,
at the opening of the International Furniture Fair in
Cologne on 17 January 1983

Mr Wilhelm Haferkamp, Vice-President of the Commission of the European Communities, today called upon the Governments of the Member States to finish setting up the common market, a process that has been blocked for years. At the opening of the International Furniture Fair in Cologne he pointed out that the European Community and EFTA, together totalling more than 300 million consumers, constitute a bigger market than the USA and would offer European industry great opportunities if movement of goods were really free.

He appealed for faster adjustment of the Community economies to changes in the world economic system. "The present crisis", said Mr Haferkamp, "is the result of a failure to adapt; protecting oneself against change and adjustment is in fact not socially responsible behaviour but ultimately anti-social".

The outlook for 1983 (described by many as likely to be the most difficult year since the war) was, according to Mr Haferkamp, indeed gloomy but the course of events was not irreversible. It was up to all of us to make 1983 the first year of the recovery. The worldwide reduction in inflation and interest rates, the stabilization of the energy situation and the realization of an incomes and wages policy more closely geared to the economic situation were positive developments. They should be sustained so that we can stage a recovery from the many years of recession this year.

No Member State could extricate itself from the recession alone. Attempts to solve economic and social problems by means of national measures such as devaluation, import restrictions and subsidization could cause countries to vie with one another in putting self-interest first and this would ultimately be harmful to everyone. What was needed instead was closer cooperation on economic and monetary policy, the accelerated dismantlement of barriers in the European internal market and the mobilization of European financing opportunities in order to promote investment and alleviate social hardship where adjustment was inevitable.

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Mr Haferkamp, who is responsible for the Community's external relations, thought that one of the basic conditions for recovery was that Community and world trade be kept open. If we failed to prevent protectionism in all its forms, even the lowest interest rates would not help. And if world trade was disrupted it was not worth investing either.

It was the Community, stated Mr Haferkamp, that had so far managed to preserve the GATT system of free and open world trade. Had the power to decide on commercial policy measures not been transferred to the Community from the Member States, national protectionism would probably have destroyed world trade long ago and in Europe there would be millions more unemployed than there are today.

This showed, stressed Mr Haferkamp, how successful the Community could be if it acted together, as a united block. Other examples of its success were its ability to overcome problems in its relationship with the United States (export credits, steel exports, the Siberian gas pipeline) and the positive outcome of the recent GATT ministerial conference.

Mr Haferkamp felt that this unity should now also manifest itself in the negotiations with Japan on making the Japanese market more open to exports from the Community and gearing Japanese exports to the Community markets' capacity to absorb them. He described the most recent Japanese measures as steps in the right direction but added that more had to be done to end the constant imbalance in trade between Japan and the Community. Besides, Japanese industry should not only sell to us but also invest and create jobs in our countries.