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## OPENING WORDS

*Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends and Colleagues,*

Let me start with congratulating the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts for time and again organising this conference at a critical moment in the European Union's history. Case in Point: I made a similar statement at the previous MASA conference — obviously critical unresolved issues remain with us.

The Global Round Table is delighted to again be among the organising partners.

History has shown that while cultures often spill over from one civilisation to another, neither economic- nor military strength prevent civilisations from vanishing. They rise due to fortuitous circumstance; they generally crumble because they overlook or underestimate warning signals. In this context, same might argue that, Europeans suffer from existential, civilizational fatigue with consequences for the long-term survival of the European civilization.

The EU has arrived at a crossroad in its history. It is experiencing, as everybody else, the hyper- connected World and digitalized global economy, also called globalisation.

Globalisation is unstoppable and irreversible. It has previously not experienced consequences — at least not at a global scale.

The EU is witnessing an unimaginable human migration from other cultural regions. By mid-2017, more than two million individuals have arrived in Europe (their real number is probably much higher, but unknown) and thousands are dying or drowning during the journey across the Mediterranean.

The smallest parts of these migrants are legal refugees. For these unfortunate people, the challenge of Europe is providing temporary asylum according to international law and helping to return to place of origin to rebuild once normality has been re-established.

By far the largest part are economic migrants offering cheap labour to the European economy. Here idealistic blindness and political naivety could defocus

attention from the more than 20 million unemployed EU citizens that makes up the “6<sup>th</sup> largest EU Member State”.

Indeed, this is the situation today at the EU level.

The EU and its member states must now decide how to balance legal — and moral obligation towards own citizens versus uninvited migrants who violate international — and EU law.

This development has also resulted in several EU member states revival of opportunists and populists on both sides of political spectrum.

To be able to address these and other burning issues, the EU needs independent high-quality advice. But most of its advisory structures encompass disturbing shortcomings — above all, insufficient interface to- and representation of Civil Society, poor gender balance, and limited, if at all, participation of youth. Due to these shortcomings, their advice can be short-sighted or politically or otherwise biased.

From the perspective of Civil Society and democratic management of the EU, this conference is important as it addresses “Globalism versus Nationalism”. Wisely dealing with these issues is essential for the long-term survival of European civilisation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my hope that discussions here will live-up to these expectation to which I wish every success and which I will be following with great interest.