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Confédération Européenne des Associations d'Administrateurs
European Confederation of Directors Associations

ECODA's Launch event – 25th of April 2005

Speech of Daniel Lebègue (Chairman of ECODA)

It is an honour and a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the launch of ECODA, here in the European Parliament thanks to the sponsor, Jonathan Evans, MEP and member of Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, represented today by John Purvis. I would like to thank him as well as his assistant, Anna Wallace for making this event possible.

I would also express my thanks to Pervenche Bérés from the European Parliament and Pierre Delsaux from the European Commission for being there and showing therefore the very kind support of the EU institutions to our new confederation.

The initiative of building up the European Confederation of Directors' association was taken jointly by three foundering national associations, the Institut Français des Administrateurs (IFA), the Association Belge des Administrateurs (AB) and the British Institute of Directors (IOD).

Together with Pierre Klees and Miles Templeman, we consider that companies' directors need their own confederation to make their voice heard by the European decision makers. ECODA was established at the end of 2004 and began its activities at the beginning of 2005 with the opening of its office in rue de la loi and the appointment of Béatrice RICHEZ as our Secretary General.

Corporate governance has become a major political issue to restore confidence in corporate and in markets. In order to create better markets and a more integrated financial market in Europe, corporate governance is a key component of a strategy to boost business' competitiveness and to foster efficiency in a modern economy, strengthening shareholders' rights and to restore confidence in capital markets.

It is obvious that companies with good board governance practices usually perform better than average and have a shareholder-value focus.

The European Commission endeavoured to promote the development of a sound corporate governance framework at the level of the European Union.

Governance requires much more the broadcasting of good practices and the bindings of the different players rather than additional regulation. Convergence is relevant for both companies

and investors who want to be sure that they will get the same level of protection in another jurisdiction. Our confederation will seek to encourage convergence of rules and good practises.

It seems that the European Commission shares our pragmatic approach. In fact, we had the pleasure to meet the Commissioner Mc Creevy who ensured us that the approach chosen at EU level is in favour of the “comply or explain” principle rather than new law enforcement. It goes without saying that ECODA welcomes such a position.

ECODA will be a high-level forum for debate and for the exchange of experiences. It will act as a standing body where national experiences will be shared and discussed in detail. It will raise awareness and build consensus amongst our members. Our Confederation intends to disseminate best practices as well.

Our confederation has already convinced new partners. In fact, I am very delighted to inform you that the Institut Luxembourgeois des Administrateurs has just joined us on the 14th April, following its own creation. The Luxembourg institute must also be considered as a full member of our Confederation and will take thoroughly part of our actions and decisions. I would like to greet Patrick Zurstrassen whose dynamism will give us a strong support.

Thanks to the Spanish and more specifically to Fernando Iguarta Arregui and Juan Alvarez-Vijande Garcia, ECODA will not remain a northern association. Indeed, the Spanish institute will be also another affiliate at the beginning of January 2006. All our members are looking forwards for such a valuable partnership which will substantially increase ECODA's public standing to the joint benefit of all.

These new members will provide ECODA with their support and their own background helping us to make a significant contribution towards better corporate governance. One of the main tasks of ECODA will be to look for any other accessions within the European Union, in the forthcoming months. A large membership will enable ECODA to deal with different cultures on corporate governance.

ECODA intends to play a full part in the consultations that will lead to policy and legislation advances in this field on specific issues defined by the Commission like shareholders' rights, responsibility of board members and companies' capital. The confederation will be not only a pro-active partner to the EU but also an active one by giving some feedback concerning the recommendations' application on directors' remuneration and independent directors, for instance.

We will intend to dialogue not only with the European institutions but also with others main actors such as stakeholders, investors, business' representatives at European level, and professionals of audit, law and management.

Here are our main short-term objectives we would like to handle with the support of our sponsor Egon Zehnder International. With decades of consulting experience, EZI provides managers with different services helping them to face new challenges.

It is high time for me to give the floor to our guests speakers. Thank you again for coming.