Federalists Never Give Up. 
The 70th Birthday of the Union of European Federalists (UEF) 

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The founding fathers and mothers of the Federalist Movement had a dream: a United Europe in which the people can live in peace, in freedom and in wellbeing for all. Celebrating the 70th birthday of the Union of European Federalists (UEF) here in Strasbourg we will analyze how much of the European dream has already been realized and what must be done in the next years to complete the project.

In all these decades, the Federalist Movement has been very instrumental for the idea of the United States of Europe. We are the architects and the engineers of the common European House. Federalists are the only ones with a clear and solid construction plan. From the very beginning there are those who do not want to live in this common European House and those who want to destroy what has been already constructed. Federalists will fight against anyone who undermines the peaceful coexistence in Europe. We will never agree with those who attack freedom and democracy. We strongly criticize policies that will undermine the wellbeing for all citizens in Europe.

The Federalist Movement strived not only for a Europe of states with their governments and experts. Our objective is a Europe of citizens: a Political Union and not only a common market.

In the last 70 years, we experienced various frustrations: the rejection of the European Political Community (EPC) by the French national assembly in 1954, the rejection of the Spinelli proposal for a European Constitution in 1984 and lately the rejection of the constitutional treaty by the referenda in France and the Netherlands in 2005. But the Federalist Movement never gave up. I remind you of the campaigns since the early ‘60s in favor of direct elections to the European Parliament, of the many activities in the early ‘80s in favor of the abolition of border controls, our campaign for a common European Currency from the ‘70s on and finally our decision on the Vienna Congress of 1997 to mobilize for a European Constitution. It sometimes took 10 up to 30 years before our ideas got in the agenda of decision markers.

70 years of UEF teach us a lesson: we are the avant-garde of a United Europe. We have to think ahead and act proactive. Our good ideas get realized between 10 and 30 years later. We must therefore have the energy and the fantasy to think at least 10 to 15 years ahead.

How do we want the European Union to look like in 2020 and in 2030? All the major challenges and bigger problems of our time cry out for more Europe. The Monetary Union cannot survive without an Economic and Fiscal Union. Our freedom and our values cannot be preserved without a Common Security and Defense Policy. The multiple wars and crises around the EU demand a Common
Migration and Asylum Policy.
It therefore goes against common sense and it is as well anachronistic, that populists and nationalists are successful in their demand for less Europe or for even destroying the European Union.
The time has come for the Federalist Movement to fight back. ‘Enough is enough’. Federalists should get more visible. We should think about symbolic actions with high effects on public opinion. Our members destroyed border poles in the early ’50s, they have been cutting fences in 1989/90, they have been able to organize demonstrations around EU summits. Federalists should fight back again on the streets, in social media as well as in the political arena.
The outcome of the British referendum is the perfect occasion to restart a comprehensive debate about the future of Europe. We have to overcome the national trenches and organize a transnational discourse. Now is the time for a Third Convention. All parliaments, all governments and all EU institutions should reflect and decide on the next steps of integration. The new Convention must be prepared by a structured involvement of the civil society in Europe. I could imagine a European Youth Convention, a Trade Union and Business Convention, etc.
The Third Convention should formulate a European Fundamental Law and clarify the architecture for the future EU, for those who want to go ahead with a Federal Union and those who want to be in a second circle of an Economic Space.
Till the next European Elections in 2019 the intelligence, the vision and the engagement of the Federalists are needed more than ever before. The idea of a United Europe is too precious to leave it to halfhearted, uncommitted or even hostile politicians and political forces.
We do not give up our dream of a United Union, where everybody can live in peace, freedom and wellbeing.