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***The Bulgarian premiere of the recent book "Power of Speech" by Graham Watson was organised by the initiative of the Bulgarian MEP Mariela Baeva, member of ALDE with the media support by Europe Gateway. The event took place in the Sofia University on May 16, 2008. The book was presented by professor Donka Aleksandrova who translated Power of speech in Bulgarian. Graham Watson has sent a [special video message to the audience](#). You may read a brief CV of Graham Watson [here](#) and to read an introduction of the political principles of ALDE [here](#).***

ALDE advocates an open-minded and forward-looking approach to European Union politics combining individual liberty, a free and dynamic business culture, economic and social solidarity, a concern for the future of our environment and respect and tolerance for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. We work towards the promotion of sustainable economic growth leading to more and better quality jobs, more consumer choice and greater opportunity for business and entrepreneurship.

We strive for freedom, security and justice for all European citizens, and standing up for human rights and combating discrimination in all its forms, with the aim to further peace, justice and stability in the world, thus alleviating poverty, and cooperating through international institutions. We support the reform of the EU institutions to make

Europe more comprehensible, transparent, responsive and accountable to its citizens.

Liberals and Democrats occupy the centre ground in the European Parliament and as such frequently hold the balance of power between Right and Left - the voice of reason and rationale, of principle and purpose. We can be moderate and radical, independent-minded and consensual. Our over-riding objective is to build upon the past 50 year of European construction; consolidate the achievements of the post-war years, yet look to the future and adapt the European Union to the changing domestic and international circumstances around it.

It is in this context the former European Liberal, Democrat and Reform group (ELDR) combined forces in July 2004 with Members of the European Democratic Party (EDP) to create the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) in the European Parliament.

Through our work in committees and in plenary, in seminars, workshops, visits and individual campaigning we endeavour to fulfil this ambition. ALDE MEPs have defended data privacy and civil rights against the over-reach of government; have stood up for the consumer against monopolistic utility providers; have supported the aim of delivering a less toxic future for our children by reducing the number of unlicensed and untested chemicals in use; have promoted the rights of disadvantaged groups in our society, whether physically disabled or discriminated on grounds of religion, ethnicity or other. We have underlined the central role of the multilateral system (whether UN itself or the WTO in particular) as the rightful forum for dispute settlement and conflict resolution.

Liberals and Democrats have been principled and consistent on the question of enlargement, both in the welcome we extended to the 10 countries that joined in 2004 and to the process of admitting Bulgaria and Romania in January 2007.

On economic reform we have pushed for honesty, transparency and stability. The long term health of Europe's economy and Single Currency are too important factors.

## **POLITICAL PRINCIPLES OF ALDE**

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For Liberals and Democrats history can be seen as a succession of struggles against prejudice - religious, ethnic, racial, gender or other.

Liberals and Democrats are a growing family. We are making our voice heard and our influence felt. Since its formation, ALDE has been active in strengthening its links with its extended political family; in the Committee of Regions, the Council of Europe as well as parliamentarians within Europe and further a field. We have sought to build up our political network in Asian and Latin American countries as well as to launch a liberal and democrat network amongst African, Caribbean and Pacific states (ALDEPAC). The twentieth century was the century in which war and intolerance soaked our soil in blood. This century must be the century of Liberal democracy - of freedom, tolerance, democracy, reform and Human Rights. These are life-transforming words. That is why we are in politics. That is what we will continue to strive for.