



# THE STATE OF THE UNION

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FLORENCE  
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## **EUROPE LOSING INFLUENCE SAYS PRODI**

Europe is under threat of losing its importance on the global stage due to the sluggish recovery and a disjointed foreign policy according to Romano Prodi, former President of the European Commission.

“We are losing soft power,” said Prodi, “India and China will not wait for us.”

While China has a coherent continent wide policy towards Africa, Europe is still relying on a piecemeal approach based on the imperial legacies of member states.

“Africa is waking up, it is growing at 5 per cent,” said Prodi “Europe has been the most generous donor to Africa, but our policy is divided. China has relationships with 54 African countries, they have a continental policy.”

In an hour long debate opening the State of the Union conference in Florence, Prodi called for a shift in strategy to dealing with continuing European recession and a more integrated foreign and defence policy.

“We have to complete the process and that means a defence and military policy,” he said “We don’t have to spend like the US, but our defensive capacity is one tenth of what it could be with combined defence.”

With no combined defence and a sluggish economy Prodi declared: “There is no way for Europeans to be actors.”

Prodi called for a reassessment of Europe’s austerity programme saying it was “absolutely incredible” its policies had been dictated by the undemocratically elected European Central Bank and said the continent’s response had been “curiously German.”

Laying out his vision for Europe, Prodi called himself an “ugly federalist”. He said he expected to see a two speed Europe in the immediate future, but would welcome the idea of having 30 or more members of the Union, including the UK despite the possibility of the country holding a referendum on membership in the near future.

“The British people will decide on Europe, but we can’t go on waiting for Godot.”

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