

Obama can be an inspiration to Europeans

Published: November 6 2008 02:00 | Last updated: November 6 2008 02:00

From Mr René Smits.

Sir, The US presidential elections give hope for a transition from times of confrontation and division to times in which unity and self-action come to the fore. Barack Obama's focus on unity, on what binds us together, and his call for people themselves to "make change" may help explain the appeal of the US president-elect across the globe. His insistence that Americans are one and his call for bipartisan solutions could make Europeans look at their own lack of coherence and inspire us to overcome it.

The differences among Europeans, both between nations and between groups in a society whose openness to diversity is far less developed than across the ocean, stand out for reparation. Also, only in unison can the European Union expect the new US administration to take seriously its input in tackling the financial crisis and climate change, and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, a pressing issue in a world where extreme poverty is prevalent for 40 per cent of all humans.

European governments should stop bickering about Group of 20 representation and clinging to overrepresentation internationally. European voters themselves should do as the majority of American voters did: realise their potential when acting in unity and reinvent themselves as both voters and actors.

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from: Financial Times