

# SUCCESS OF EURO 'HAS TAUGHT SCEPTICS A LESSON'

**Madrid, January 9, 2002**

At a press conference with Commission President Romano PRODI following their meeting in Madrid yesterday, the new President of the European Council, Jose Maria AZNAR, said that the European people's reaction to the euro has given the sceptics an "extraordinary lesson".

But it was "absolutely indispensable" for the successful introduction of the euro to go hand in hand with intensified economic reform. That was the precondition for growth, competitiveness, and creating more jobs. The goal was "full employment by the end of the decade, Aznar said.

He restated that the "very top priority" of the Spanish EU Presidency was the fight against terrorism remained.

"The extraordinary progress made over recent months in this field must be transposed into national legislations, and we must intensify our cooperation with all countries", he said.

Asked about the situation in Italy following the resignation of Italian Foreign Minister Renato RUGGIERO (*right*), the Spanish Prime Minister said he had "no doubt" about Italy's European orientation.

Italy's Prime Minister Silvio BERLUSCONI would unquestionably continue to pursue a policy of European integration, he said.



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## ...WHILE BERLUSCONI STANDS FIRM ON EUROPE



In an interview with the newspaper *Corriere della Serra* Berlusconi himself reaffirmed that Italy supported a united and integrated Europe.

"We are firmly convinced that the future of our country lies in a Europe that is stronger and knows how to speak with one voice, and knows how to follow up economic integration with political integration, with a new constitution," he said. Berlusconi also indicated he would remain foreign

minister - a portfolio he has taken over temporarily - for at least six months.

He explained that Ruggiero's repeated questioning of Italy's European policies had made life impossible: "It was no longer possible for us to go forward like this, with us being forced to have our Europeanism tested every day."