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Bio
Book

ETIENNE DAVIGNON (VISCOUNT)

President of the Board of Directors, Société Générale de Belgique

Born 4 October 1932, Budapest, Hungary (Belgian nationality).
Married with three children.

Doctor of Laws, LL.D

In 1959, Mr Davignon joined the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was Head of the Cabinets of Ministers Spaak and Harmel. From 1969 he was responsible for the Political Department of the Ministry until his departure in 1977 when he joined the Commission of the European Communities.

During his career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was directly involved with Belgium's policies in Africa, the independence of Ruanda and Burundi and the solution to the Belgium and Zaïre conflict.

He was also a key figure behind the report on the future of the Atlantic Alliance (Harmel Report) and he presided the committee which prepared the first proposals regarding the political cooperation between EEC members (Davignon Report) 1974-75.

Following the oil crisis in 1973, Mr Davignon chaired the International Conference which established an oil sharing treaty. From 1974 to 1977, he was the first President of the International Energy Agency created 18 November 1974.

After leaving the civil service in 1977, Mr Davignon was appointed Vice President of the Commission of the European Communities, in charge of industry, research and energy up until the end of 1984. During this period he was active in the restructuring of European industry (steel, textiles, synthetic fibres) and promoting new research cooperative ventures in Information Technology and Telecommunications (Esprit, Race). He negotiated on behalf of the EEC, key agreements with the US, Japan and China.

In the beginning of 1985 he joined Société Générale, Belgium's leading holding company of which he became Chairman on 11 April 1989.

Mr Davignon is a member of the Board of the Générale de Banque, Compagnie Financière de Suez, Fiat, Solvay, Kissinger Associates and several SGB group companies.

He is a member of "Le Comité Monétaire pour l'Europe" headed by Mr Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. He became Chairman of the Association for the Monetary Union of Europe on 30 May 1991.

As a member of the European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT), he chairs the working group on Trade and Investment.

He is a Chairman of the Paul-Henri Spaak Foundation and the Royal Institute for International Relations.