

Summary of Proceedings, XXIV COSAC

Stockholm 20-22 May 2001

Introduction

The XXIV COSAC (Conférence des organes spécialisés dans les affaires communautaires) took place on 20-22 May in Stockholm. This was the first time that Sweden had organised the conference.

On the agenda was first of all a discussion with the Prime Minister about the Swedish Presidency. Since the conference took place less than a month before the European Council in Gothenburg, this discussion was mainly devoted to those questions that would be subject to discussion at the European Council, in particular the enlargement and the future of the EU. The discussion about enlargement then continued with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Another important item on the agenda was the discussion about the role of national parliaments. This subject had been prepared by a COSAC working group, who met in Stockholm in April.

The last day of the conference started with speeches from the Minister of Environment and the Commissioner for Environment and a debate about the EU's environmental policy.

The last item on the agenda was a discussion about a possible contribution from COSAC. After a long and sometimes heated discussion the conference was able to adopt a contribution. One delegation, from Spain, did not take part in the decision. The contribution stressed the role of the national parliaments in the debate of the future of the EU.

The Swedish Presidency

Mr Sören Lekberg, Chairman of the Committee on European Union Affairs: It gives me great pleasure to welcome Göran Persson, the Prime Minister of Sweden. I now call upon him to address this meeting.

Mr Göran Persson, Prime Minister: Chairman, delegates. First, on behalf of the Swedish Government, I would like to welcome you all to Sweden on this somewhat chilly May morning. We are all looking forward to the meeting in Gothenburg, where we will discuss the future of the Union. It is a future that will be dominated by our biggest challenge to date, enlargement of the Union. This challenge means that we must develop Cupertino to ensure that the Union can still function, even if it is considerably larger. The institutional reforms essential to implement this enlargement process were decided in the Treaty of Nice. Negotiations are currently in full swing, and we have solved a number of key negotiation points, but we still have a long way to go. Now it is time for us in the Union to deliver concrete results to maintain the tempo of the enlargement process. We owe it to the efforts made by the candidate countries to deliver results.

Results from opinion polls held in a number of candidate countries are starting to show wavering support for EU membership and I am now afraid of what will become of the huge efforts our colleagues in the parliaments and governments of the applicant countries have been making, when they are reforming their societies. While they are doing this, they are also receiving signals from us that we are having doubts about enlargement, and this creates a political problem. It is time for us in Gothenburg to send a clear signal to the applicant countries that we are pressing ahead with this process and that enlargement is a process that cannot be reversed.

We must look at all our policies as a whole. I want the EU to move forward and lead the way in development, in which ecological, economic and social considerations go hand in hand and strengthen each other. At the summit meeting in Stockholm in March, we were granted funds for social and economic areas. In Gothenburg, the European Council will adopt a strategy for how EU policies will be adapted for long-term, sustainable development. We will set fixed goals for development, in which all these different aspects are woven together.

We should not forget the global dimension either, particularly with regard to climate. Our task must be to hand over to the next generation a Europe where all the major environmental problems have been solved. The vision of an ecologically sustainable society is all too often seen as a vision in conflict with the targets for justice and increased material well being. It is actually the opposite way around. The ecological dimension in reality represents a modern approach. Development in this area leads to unique opportunities for financial growth on new markets.

We now know that the major environmental problems we are facing can be solved using the technology we already have. However, instead of using this new technology, we are continuing to use the old technology. When we convert to the new ecologically sustainable technology, we must do this based on research and major investment and also be guided by market forces. This will not bring economic growth to a halt. It will be regarded as a driving force because we will be using new methods. It will be something new, and when something is new for an economy, it requires investment. If something requires investment, it promotes growth. If something promotes growth, it creates job opportunities and excellent development possibilities.

Member states must increase their efforts to create a more competitive EU. This includes a Community patent system and establishing a free air space over Europe. We will be looking at these issues again in Gothenburg as well as the 2001 general guidelines for the economic policy of member states and the Community. Close Cupertino between the European Union and the USA in economic matters is also important to ensure that we can manage future fluctuations on the economic market.

It is indeed good news that the President of the United States, George Bush, has accepted the invitation from the heads of state and government of the EU to the summit meeting in Gothenburg in July. The European Union and the USA must work together to reach a decision for a fresh round of discussions in the WTO. The EU will also keep up its efforts to convince the USA to keep to its commitment to the Kyoto Protocol.

Other crucial issues for our future include working to improve the EU's capability with regards to civilian crisis management, to ensure that our military capability can be operative as soon as it is needed, and also to develop Cupertino between the EU and the

UN. During the Swedish Presidency, the Union has taken several steps forward in the development of European security and defence policy, particularly as regards conflict prevention and civilian crisis management. What is particularly positive is the fact that the European Council is expected to adopt a European program for conflict prevention in Gothenburg. This is fundamental for EU commitments and also for the prevention of conflicts in the long term. Work to increase the EU's capability to supply policemen for crisis handling is also moving forward.

Strong support from European citizens is crucial for the future of the EU. What we need now is open, self-critical discussions. These discussions must look at issues that are important to citizens. Issues that affect our daily lives. We need to look at jobs and social welfare, about the food we eat, safety on our streets and, of course, the environment. In Nice we decided to stimulate wide debate about the future of the EU both in member countries and candidate countries. Our target is the Intergovernmental Conference in 2004. We have already achieved a great deal, including a joint website to discuss issues across our borders. Other action is planned in both member countries and candidate countries.

The first issue in the debate must be to decide what we want the EU to do, and we should start with the problems that we solve best at European level. This will allow us to show concrete results and provide the EU with legitimacy in the eyes of our citizens. The second issue in this debate, once we have decided what to do, is to work out how, and to see which tools the EU needs to achieve this. This should form the basis of the issues that will be tackled at the next Intergovernmental Conference. This should also guide us when preparing for the Conference. I think that it is good to have a very wide debate now, covering different policy areas. It is quite possible that it will contain virtually all policy areas. Institutional issues will play a prominent role and will go beyond the four key areas that were specifically named in Nice.

As I have said, the crucial issue is to decide what the people and member states of Europe actually want. Although many different proposals have been put forward to radically change the structure of the EU, I am convinced that behind all the rhetoric, there is still a strong desire to safeguard the role of national states within EU policy. People view national states as an important part of their identity, national parliaments as the major bearers of democratic legitimacy and governments as their natural representatives.

It also concerns the concept of a constitution. As far as I can see, it is not a question of whether we need a constitution in the EU but what kind of constitution we are going to have. As a matter of fact, we already have a set of regulations that in many ways resembles a constitution. Let us develop this, talk more about content, talk more about what we want and not get stuck in a debate about whether or not we should have a constitution. We need to have strong institutions able to make transnational decisions in many areas. The structure we already have, is to a large extent, what we need in the future, but we are also facing new challenges, for which current methods to harmonise regulations are not enough by themselves. You cannot legislate away unemployment or international crime. We still need direct Cupertino between the governments of the member states, Cupertino of the kind we successfully used in the period following the Lisbon summit last year, and more recently at the summit in Stockholm.

As far as institutional matters are concerned, we have decided to deal with the four important issues at the Intergovernmental Conference. We would prefer to have

straightforward treaties – I am sure no politicians are averse to this. However, if complicated treaties reflect political compromise, that cannot be eliminated, then the work to make things easier will become quite a complicated procedure indeed.

We also need to make a clear distinction between the responsibility of the EU and its member states. However, this must not lead us to undoing everything the EU has accomplished over the years. Neither must it lead us to removing the instruments we will need in the future. As well as this, we will discuss how we can proceed with the Charter of Fundamental Rights, but this must not result in us undermining the joint European Convention that is already in place. This will continue to play an important role, particularly with relation to third countries.

It is important to strengthen the influence of our national parliaments. We must remember that the role of parliaments and constitutions vary between the different member countries. A lot of what we need to do does not require any changes in treaties. An important example of this is openness. We have come to an agreement about an act governing the transparency of documents, but this is not enough in itself. The institutions must carry out their daily work in a transparent way, and not the opposite way around.

As I am talking about openness, I must mention the fact that, as I see our friends from the European Parliament here in front of us, the Swedish Presidency would not have been able to bring the question of openness to a solution without the good, constructive Cupertino with the European Parliament. This is a perfect example of Cupertino between the Presidency and the Parliament. I am very grateful for the support we have been given from the Parliament. It was absolutely essential to be able to move forward with this issue.

Dialogue must also be a successful instrument in the future, because the practical working frameworks of our institutions must oversee almost double the number of member states. If this does not happen, there is a risk that decisions will move away from meeting rooms to informal groups without any observations being made or responsibility being taken. One example of this is the issue of language. Of course, all languages of the member states must be regarded as EU languages. EU laws are applicable in the member states and each citizen must be able to write to the EU institutions in his or her own language. No democratically elected politician will be excluded because he cannot speak foreign languages, but we must be able to limit ourselves to a few languages at the numerous meetings at official level. How the balance will be met to ensure that rationality and efficiency in our daily work will be achieved while safeguarding the basic principle that each European citizen should be able to use his or her own language in communication with the Union, will naturally be a very difficult political issue to solve, but it is essential when you see the incredible organisation that needs to be created to handle the issue of language in our European organisations. If we do not solve this in a practical way, it will break us financially.

At the summit meeting in Gothenburg, the Swedish Presidency will report on how the debate into the future of the Union is getting underway. This will allow us to have a more structured approach to discussions into the instruments we will need to prepare for the next change in treaty. There are already many people who believe that we should use a method similar to the one used last year to develop the charter on fundamental human rights. I personally do not think that any single model will be able to meet all the requirements, and that a combination of methods will be necessary. It is certainly the

case that in some areas, technical experts must be included at a relatively early stage.

One package that I, as the representative of Sweden, would be able to consider and one that I think is constructive is to start at an early stage in the proceedings with a convention, or, if you prefer, an open forum. This would include representatives from national parliaments, the European Parliament, the governments of the member states and the Commission. It would work during most of 2002, and its task would be to recommend an agenda for the conference and alternative solutions to the various issues. This work should be completed in good time before the Intergovernmental Conference to allow for the recommendations from this forum to become established in our national parliaments, civilian society and the general public.

Just before the conference, a group of representatives from all member countries should revise the recommendations and any other proposals that have been presented.

I look forward to seeing COSAC's contribution to this debate. One important element in this is to work out how best to involve the candidate countries in this discussion. However, let me finish by stressing that the most important thing is not to introduce new projects or formulate new declarations. We already have high ambitions. Now is the time to see results. You may think that I am being slightly defensive, but I can assure you that the exact opposite is true.

Think what we are currently doing for the Union: the huge challenge of introducing our common currency; the European security and defence policy; the enormous task of gradually expanding our institutions; the whole discussion about the Union's open co-ordination method to combat unemployment; all the issues surrounding demography and the environmental issues too. All of this is on our agenda. It is important that we do not simply formulate problems, but also assign solutions and implement the decisions we have made. I think that this is a crucial way of building up trust among the citizens of the Union for the institutions of the Union.

Declarations and programs are important, visions are important too, but it is essential that these declarations, programs and visions be linked to a change in the every-day life of our European citizens. This is what they expect of us and this is the phase we are now in. At the same time, we must also tackle the huge project of enlarging the Union. We certainly have plenty of issues to address on our agenda. What we must now do is to ensure that we deliver and build institutions in Europe that are democratic and open and that our citizens trust. These are the tasks that we all share.

Mr Matti Vanhanen, Finland: I would like to thank Prime Minister Persson for his very interesting speech before the Gothenburg summit. I would like to ask the Prime Minister about the existing member states' approach in Gothenburg. What are the break-through topics which Sweden hopes to bring forward on enlargement? What are the political pressures within the Union which are preventing the start of break-through?

Another question is about the visit by President Bush to Gothenburg. What will the Union do about the Kyoto Protocol? What are the demands that will be made to the US, and are all member states in the EU prepared to ratify the Kyoto Protocol themselves, if the US decides to do so?

Dr Friedbert Pflüger, Germany: First of all I would like to thank you for the invitation and for your speech this morning and also because the Swedish Presidency

has put so much decisiveness and energy in advancing enlargement. Enlargement is more than a technical measure. It is about the unification of Europe. Enlargement must be led politically. I welcome the fact that the Swedish Presidency has recognised this historical process and has given it new life and new energy. Enlargement is not a favour being made by the EU member states to candidate countries. It is not the case that the other states in Central and Eastern Europe are coming back to Europe. In truth, Europe is coming back to where it has always belonged, to the whole continent, when we get over Yalta. I think it is very important to remember the European Parliament's decision, which says that we should do everything to ensure that the first group of candidate countries should participate in the next European elections. That is a goal for us all. I think that this is a goal that we can reach, if we have the political will behind it.

What you said about the Convention was very interesting. We can discuss the form of this body. The important thing for us is that it does not become a playing field for parliamentarians and that it is not struck off by the pen of politicians. This convention is a body in which representatives of national parliaments, the European Parliament, the Commission and the governments make a decisive design for a constitutional treaty in Europe. Of course the governments of the IGC have the last word, but the parliaments must participate strongly, otherwise what we said about the European citizens and more participation will be nothing more than rhetoric. It is necessary to have a parliament that has acceptance for this important process. I think that all German parties from right to left have made it very clear that they cannot imagine ratifying a constitutional treaty which has only been cobbled together in back rooms and IGC's in the early hours of the morning, and therefore we very much welcome what you said.

Mr Alain Barreau, France: I would like to thank you, Prime Minister, for your speech detailing the Swedish Presidency and underling the important matters at stake both for you and for us. I would firstly like to discuss enlargement. In Nice, we accepted that the issue of enlargement was to be a priority. We would like to have a clear indication that the date of 1 January 2003 for countries and peoples who consider that they are ready to join the Union, could be reaffirmed following ratification of the Treaty of Nice in each of our countries, as has been stated in the COSAC text prepared by the Swedish Presidency.

However, as regards this issue, Prime Minister, I would like to have your views on certain recent statements that have seemed to have slowed down the process of enlargement to some extent, particularly those about structural funds and the difficulties of future free movement. I would like to say, like my friend Pflüger, bearing in mind that we do not share the same political background, that enlargement for us is a political desire not to create a free trade zone in Europe, but to really join together to create an economic, political and cultural European Union that has its rightful place in this world.

Secondly, I would like to discuss the second priority of the Swedish Presidency, namely employment. As you know, your views on this correspond completely with ours. How can Europe act when there are companies that make profits, yet at the same time announce important economic redundancies, that are linked to their national capital, yet are linked to European capitals or international capitals acting on their national territory? I would like to ask you, Prime Minister, if you think that between now and Gothenburg, bearing in mind these problems and the concerns of the public, that European action to avoid this situation, which is having an extremely negative effect on the image of Europe, could be initiated in the spirit of that which we achieved in Luxembourg and then again in Lisbon?

I would thirdly like to touch very briefly on the question of the environment. It is clear that we will not lessen the importance of the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. However, I, to echo the question posed by my Finnish colleague just a short while ago, would like to know how you are going to reconcile the warm welcome made to President Bush, the current American position on the non-ratification of Kyoto and our specific European position, to ensure that Kyoto could effectively be ratified even without the Americans?

And finally one last point concerning method. I think that we must find a conciliation between the very useful work that COSAC can do, the work of the Convention and the work of a future IGC. This is a question of finding the right proportion, but is not a contradiction between these three.

Mr Michael Frendo, Malta: Prime Minister! My question relates to whether enlargement will affect the eligibility threshold for the structural funds and particularly the position of Spain, which I understand is insisting that prior to enlargement there should be a decision of the structural funds programme after 2006. Now we know that the Commission is strongly against this, and my question is: What is your position in this matter?

Mr Eimert van Middelkoop, Netherlands: Relating to what Prime Minister Persson here has said to us I would like to put a few brief questions. First of all I think that it is still necessary to stick to the Lisbon process. In the years to come we need to take account of declining economic growth. Therefore we would recommend that in Gothenburg the Lisbon objectives will be confirmed once again and that this process is not allowed to be bureaucratised.

When it comes to enlargement, something that we will be discussing later, there is a lot of uncertainty that has now emerged. What does Mr Persson make of those countries, particularly the Mediterranean countries that apparently are so keen on their financial achievements and their positions with the structural funds and for those reasons may jeopardise enlargement? Will you have a big problem with that?

Then to the environment. I appreciate that Prime Minister Persson has placed a considerable trust in new technologies. But the question is: Is that enough? I would like to ask what the European Union actually would like to say to President Bush when he pays his visit to the Gothenburg summit.

It was interesting to hear what Mr. Persson said about institutional reforms following Nice. I appreciate his sober views. I would ask: Have I understood him in such a way that Sweden at this stage does not feel a need for a major debate on what the *finalité politique* would be in Europe?

I also want to express my appreciation of the efforts that Sweden has made to try to organize a public openness in the European institutions. There was a need to organize the concepts. There were a number of things that I think reminded us too much of Kafka.

Mr Hubert Haenel, France: Prime Minister, listening to your speech, it is clear that there are three objectives. Firstly, to regain the sense of the European Union, understanding why we are together and what we should be doing. Secondly, to have a

European Union that is expanding and also to give more legitimacy to this Europe, and notably to allow the national parliaments to play a more important role.

So, I would like to ask two short questions. The first is connected to the sense and efficiency of the development of cross-border international crime. It seems that with Eurojust, despite all the discussions, we are still a long way from setting up an effective tool. Do you not think we should be moving more quickly and more successfully in this area to allow us to combat crime more effectively?

My second question relates to the debate concerning the transitional period for the free movement of people following the enlargement of the Union. Could you tell us how these discussions are progressing at the heart of the Council? Something that we should be asking is whether this debate, as it is progressing at the moment is progressing, is insensitive towards the candidate countries?

Mr Albrecht Konecny, Austria: It has often been said that the Swedish Presidency has come to a clear decision to highlight and push forward the issue of enlarging the EU. The information we gained from Nice stated that the EU would prepare itself for enlargement. These issues have indeed played an important role in the period following Nice. I personally believe that here it is politically right to pay attention to the current member countries in the EU so that we do not give the impression that we want to settle everything that needs to be settled in the next decades before the others have had chance to take part and make decisions within the EU.

There is also another aspect that I would like to address. The Prime Minister indicated that the Union is seen as important internationally. Although we are important, I do not think that we carry enough weight. This is the age of globalisation and we are seeing how things are heating up in the Middle East, but we are not really able to play a significant role. I would like to hear how the Prime Minister thinks that the Union can carry more weight in foreign politics?

I also have another question relating to amending directive 76/205, regarding equal opportunities in the workplace. We would have expected that improvements in equal opportunities would take place during the time of the Swedish Presidency, as Sweden is a leading country in this area. In my opinion, I believe that the most important changes to the document should be to define equality in the workplace. I was wondering if you could ensure that this directive is amended during your Presidency.

Mr Manuel A. Dos Santos, Portugal: On behalf of the Portuguese delegation, I would like to thank you for this meeting and for the speech made by the Prime Minister before the meeting. In your introductory speech, you mentioned that there are currently two major concerns in Europe at the moment. Building trust among the European population for Europe, and creating hope for the future. I would like to add some other concerns and mention specific targets that we have to adopt. In relation to this, I have two specific points to raise with the Prime Minister. The first concerns the Charter of Fundamental Rights. In your introductory speech, you touched on this issue, but not in very great depth. The Portuguese delegation thinks that this charter is of extreme importance and that it should play a greater role in the legal context of Europe. We think that it should be binding within a short period of time. We would like to hear what the Swedish Presidency thinks about this matter.

The second issue refers to the reform of the agricultural policy. The Portuguese

Government will soon be putting forward a proposal regarding the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. This is about ensuring that in the future in Europe, there are no taboos and no issues that cannot be raised. We would like to hear what the Swedish Presidency thinks about this matter.

Mr José Saraiva, Portugal: As far as enlargement is concerned, Prime Minister, we believe that we are now at a stage where anything is possible and where everything seems to be working incredibly well. In your speech, you explained the feeling that exists in the general opinion of the candidate countries. It is not acceptable that the candidate countries make enormous sacrifices and efforts while the member states continually delay the process of letting new countries in. This is why we in Portugal believe that the candidate countries must be allowed to play a more important and more active role, and must also be present when issues regarding enlargement and the future of the EU are being discussed. Their strong contribution in COSAC must be mirrored in other areas too. We have a responsibility to these people. This is why Europe and the Union must consider its financing. With our agricultural policy and the other commitments we have, my government and Portugal are not willing to accept any commitments that put at risk, for example, the cohesion needed for Portugal, Spain and Greece, and also Ireland. The Union must urgently rethink the issue of financing, otherwise we will all receive a huge shock in the future. The shock that enlargement will bring must not lead to the less developed countries in the Union being left open. I would like to hear your thoughts on these issues, Prime Minister.

Mr Gintaras Steponavicius, Lithuania: Dear Mr. Prime Minister, colleagues! Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to congratulate the Swedish Presidency, which Lithuania finds excellent. This presidency proves that the pace of the accession negotiations may be kept on a good level. Of course, very much will depend on the EU's ability to find a compromise between the present member states on the issues, which are mentioned at this point already. The next point is that on our own we are very supportive for the Presidency's initiative to foster the co-operation in the Baltic region and the attention it gave to the issue of Kaliningrad.

Mr Jerzy Jaskiernia, Poland: Mr. Prime Minister, we followed your powerful speech with great interest. All the points you mentioned are of great importance. But you understand that enlargement issues are particularly of great interest. You said that the Gothenburg summit will offer the clear signal about enlargement. Can you specify what you mean by that? In the previous summit there was also some expectation of that. Do you mean that would be the set date of the first group, which can join the European Union? Some people do not understand the real meaning of the Presidency within EU. Of course it is important. But would you like to use your power to speed up the negotiating procedures and processes to give a chance to those applying countries to join in?

As you recall, the European Commission offers a so-called roadmap to the candidate member states. Do you think it is something which will now change the roadmap? Do you think that participation in the European election in 2004 is still a real target? We speak about reducing the democratic deficit. I suppose it will be very important if the new countries will join the European election that particular year.

I would like to ask you about the transitional period of free movement of labour, where seven years is a necessary transitional period for some member states. What do you think about it? Should we wait till 2011? It is almost a whole generation. Some would

suggest that would be almost a second class membership if somebody would suggest such waiting for real participation. It was such a worry before Spain and Portugal were accepted. After Spain and Portugal's acceptance, there were less Portuguese and Spanish citizens in e.g. Germany than before joining the EU. We do not understand what sorts are interesting to create such an artificial feeling that everybody would like to leave those applying countries after the accession. Do you think it is possible to change that feeling and to not mobilize the public in that particular direction?

Mr Loukas Apostolidis, Greece: I would firstly like to thank the Prime Minister. He gave us a detailed review in his speech, a speech which I thought was very good. It is important that the Presidency highlights the fact that the European Parliament and our national parliaments must play an important role. The parliamentary institutions are the cradle of democracy. I would like to emphasize what the Prime Minister said, that we need to create new trust among the citizens for these institutions. In Nice, we started to talk about the future of Europe. We have different proposals for the European constitution, a European government, and various changes in the European institutions. Lisbon, and its social agenda, gave another dimension to European cohesion. The countries in Europe would like to see a positive image of the EU.

The fundamental question is how European democracy, through its new design and through the EU, can face up to these new threats. The EU has previously provided solutions to issues concerning peace, Cupertino and economic convergence. We have the new European currency, the Euro. This will change things. But there are also threats. The environment is something that is being threatened. Food and drink, mad cow disease. New kinds of food being created. I have three special questions on this issue. What does the Presidency think about changes to the Common Agricultural Policy? This is also something that affects climate, the environment and food. As far as the problem with uranium in the Baltic States is concerned, I think that we must adopt a clear position in Europe.

We would like to know how national parliaments can take part in the course of the Intergovernmental Conference, as this represents a major challenge. Within this body, there are great opportunities to exchange opinions. We can convey messages, problems and opinions from the people we represent in this body.

Mr David Martin, European Parliament: Firstly I'd like to thank the Prime Minister for his speech, particularly his comments on the Cashman Report on openness. I'd like to return the compliment. Frankly, if it hadn't been for the Swedish Presidency, the chance of getting an agreement on that dossier would have been extremely difficult, if not unlikely. I would like to congratulate the Swedish Presidency on the progress it has made on its now famous three E's. I disagree with some who think that the progress has been slow. It has certainly not been spectacular, but it has been steady in all three areas, and to reinforce the point on enlargement in particular. The European Parliament does think it is extremely important that we have some of the applicant countries in membership of the Union before the European elections in 2004. The Polish Foreign Minister said about a year ago that since 1990 Poland had always been five years away from membership. I think it is now time to send the signal the clock is actually now ticking and that membership is really on the horizon, not still a distant prospect.

On employment, I think certainly Lisbon set the right music and Stockholm reinforced the idea of a knowledge-based economy. The European Parliament still has some concerns that we are not yet making progress on the ground, although the heads of

government and the foreign ministers and finance ministers are all making the right noise, this isn't actually spurring the 15 member states into action. We are also concerned that if we continue the emphasis on knowledge based economy, we have to ensure that the benefits from that are spread across the whole of the European Union. There is a serious danger that the already prosperous regions of Europe will benefit from the emphasis on e-technology and high-technology and that the poorer regions will lag even further behind. We have to ensure that the benefits are spread.

In view of the time zone I would like to mention one other issue, and that is the issue of the Convention. Again we welcome the Prime Minister's comments on the Convention, but I am not sure we share entirely his emphasis. Our view of the Convention is not just another forum for discussing the future of Europe, although we accept it's not the final decision making body either on the future of Europe, that cannot replace the IGC. We think the Convention has to have a status higher than all the other discussions on the future of the European Union, and in particular we want the government section of the Convention to engage fully in the debate. We don't want the governments keeping their powder dry and waiting until the IGC proper before raising difficult issues. Unless the governments fully engage in the Convention process, the issues that already matters to citizens will not be on the agenda. We all know that Nice did not look good in terms of public opinion. The fact that leaders appeared bleary eyed at three o'clock in the morning to announce that they had finally reached an agreement was not good for public opinion. Worse than that impression was the fact that the Nice process created a feeling that Europe was a zero-sum game. When you reform the treaties, as one country benefitted another country had to lose. The Convention method has the advantage of holding a wide-ranging debate, reaching conclusions that ensure all member states benefit from the reform of the treaties.

Ms Elisabeth Arnold, Denmark: Mr. Göran Persson, thank you for your very visionary and involved speech. At the start of this COSAC meeting I was very glad for your points about public opinion. We have not one public opinion in Europe. We have 15 different opinions in the member states, and we have 12 further opinions in the candidate countries. It is very difficult to have a common European debate. The European Parliament hasn't been able to do this in the member states. The horror scenario in many of our member states, even including your own, is that the construction of Europe will fail because of a lack of public support. It is important that we who are representatives of more active participants in the public debate in our member states today remember that we should be active in the debate at home to ensure that the need for European co-operation is rooted in the population. I hope you go to the summit in Gothenburg to take this demand to the representatives of the governments. They have a responsibility for the debate in Europe to function.

Finally I would say that in Denmark we are very keen for enlargement to take place quickly. I very much agree with the concern from the Polish representative that the candidate countries mustn't feel that they are sort of second rate members. They are welcome as full members. It is the biggest chance that Europe has had in many hundreds of years to bring together democracies under one umbrella.

Mr Guillermo Martinez Casan, Spain: Allow me to thank the Prime Minister for the statement that he made. Quite excellent. I would like to reassure him of the unqualified support from the Spanish Parliament and Government when it comes to the enlargement process. As His Majesty the King of Spain said during the official visit last week in Poland, Spain does want enlargement of the European Union. The European Union

today, however, involves a CAP for all and the four basic freedoms that we all enjoy. What we do not want is a Europe that is different compared to the one we have benefited from so far, the one that attracted us in the first place. We do not want to have a Europe with several speeds, a Europe of the rich next to the Europe of the poor. When our family becomes larger when the new children come to the fore, well perhaps the household will have a greater budget. It is going to cost a bit more to keep things running. The existing member states may perhaps have to tighten their belts even in order to allow the newcomers to go to proper schools, to have access to good institutions, basically to enjoy the kind of Europe that we have enjoyed.

Minister Vedrine said in January that each country has its sensitive issues, and it is true. In Spain, what we find important may be different compared to Germany when it comes to immigration. But if Germany and other countries respect French sensitivities when it comes to the Common Agriculture Policy I think there is a way forward. What we cannot do is to tell the accession countries that we are going to enlarge the European Union and then we'll take away from you the freedom to move, freedom of establishment and you are not going to get the existing CAP, nor will you enjoy a cohesion policy.

I think, that it is important for us to have this debate now. The accession countries have agreed to make huge sacrifices, and they still are making these tremendous sacrifices today. They need to know that when they come into the European Union, it is going to be the very same European Union as the one that was created 40 years ago, and not some new European Union that is suited to the needs of the rich who are not prepared to give anything when it comes to their advantages. All they want is a big market for them to enjoy, a big market of consumers.

Mr Göran Persson, Prime Minister: Chairman, friends and colleagues. I now have the advantage of having 43 questions to answer. This means that I can choose the ones I am going to answer. Luckily, they can be grouped into a few different areas. It is not surprising that everyone has talked about enlargement. We have now entered a critical phase. We are in the middle of very difficult negotiations with the applicant countries, while internally the members of the Union are formulating their own positions for the negotiations. Each government has to try to manage its own national opinion. Even if there is fundamental support among the whole of the present European Union for enlargement, certain negotiation issues occur that are controversial to a greater or lesser extent for each current member country and also for the applicant countries.

We are going through quite a risky stage at the moment. It feels as though we are encountering major problems in our negotiations. These problems concern, of course, the transitional period for the free movement of labour. They concern the link that has been made between this issue and the structural funds. They concern the reaction these proposals have been greeted within the applicant countries. These problems have shown themselves today as well. Our friend from Poland stated clearly that he feels as though this is a way of dividing the Union into first and second-class citizens. The governments of some existing member countries say that it is essential that these issues are taken into consideration otherwise there will be no public support for enlargement. This is a classic conflict in negotiations. If everything goes well, we will be able to solve this conflict. Then we will be able to make a breakthrough in Gothenburg. I hope, and still believe, that this is possible, but I will readily admit that I am not as sure as I was a few months ago.

I would like to add at this point that this discussion does not only concern the transitional periods that the current member states want to have in order to accept new member states. This also concerns transitional periods for the new member countries to adapt their laws and their life. The transitional period for the free movement of labour can seem just as unreasonable to a candidate country, as the demands by candidate countries regarding environmental issues and environmental protection can seem to current member countries. This is another classic conflict in negotiations that we will have to solve.

I share completely, with all my heart, the opinion of the first speaker, Dr. Pflüger from Germany, from the German Christian Democrats, who said that this is a political issue. Of course it is. What is lying in the balance is that we can finally, once and for all, put a stop to the division of Europe into East and West. For those of us who fought against Communism and for those of us who rejoiced when the Berlin Wall fell, we are now entering a phase when we can completely remove the traces left behind from the oppression that many of these countries were exposed to for such a long time. We are now on the way to becoming a joint union, which Europe has always represented in many different kinds of groups. This is what we should be doing. If on the one side we have this task, which we as politicians accept, while on the other we have structural funding and reforming agricultural policy, I hope and believe that the politicians who will eventually have to balance these issues will recognise the different importance that each of these sides has. This historic process on one side, and on the other matters like budgetary issues and political decisions that we are used to dealing with both within and between member countries. The difference is very clear indeed. We should not let minor issues become more central and gain more importance than the things that really matter. These are the values that I would like to stand for. We should be able to unite on this. If we have the motivation, we will be able to handle the negotiations.

Then there was the issue of the free movement of labour. I can fully understand that political pressure exists in countries such as Germany, Austria and maybe also in Finland, to find ways of creating a transitional period. I can also understand that on the other side in countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, it seems as though Europe is being divided into two teams, A and B. My own position on this matter, and that of the Swedish nation, is that we have always been against transitional periods of this kind. We do not think that they should exist. However, this is another matter. We are now in charge of the Presidency and we want to make sure that this issue is tackled and that we find a compromise. There is also another perspective that lies beyond this. What will happen in an open Europe, in which there is enormous strain on the level of economic development between member countries? This will result in an even greater lack of people in the workforce. The future of Europe will not see a surplus of labour, rather the opposite. In five to ten years, we will be taking part in another debate about how current member countries, with their high economic growth and their ability to offer attractive working conditions, will be able to attract the best-trained workforce, the younger people, who will carry the future of the applicant countries to their own local market. This is a much more realistic discussion of future movement on the European labour market than we are currently experiencing. How this will be handled in a Europe that unites will be difficult, but should not form part of the enlargement negotiations.

I still think that it is realistic that new countries will be able to take part in the elections for the European Parliament in 2004. This is my ambition and the ambition of our Presidency. As I have already said, it all depends on what happens in the next few weeks. This is a political process. You can support the Presidency with your

commitment, and I hope that you will do this.

Let me say the following about the agricultural policy. It is clear that we will reform the European agricultural policy. We have already decided to do this. Our outlook for the future was shaped when we adopted the budget in Berlin. In 2003, the first assessment will be ready. Preparations regarding financial matters will continue until 2006. No-one, in all honesty, cannot be worried about the concerns of our citizens for the most fundamental part of our daily life, namely the quality of our food and the way it is produced. There is strong political opinion in many countries. However, we also know that we have an increasing surplus in production, and that profitability problems in the agricultural industry are getting worse. We can keep these problems at bay using a system of subsidies for a while, but this system is not sustainable in the long term. Farmers in Europe are aware of this, and so are we. The time has come for us to discuss this. I think that the basis for these discussions will be the demand of consumers for safe food and for the demands of consumers that our food should be produced in a way that is ethically defensible. This is something we have learnt during the past six months in European farming and food policy. Let us open the way for this discussion. It will be difficult and complicated, but it is essential.

Our friend from Austria, Herr Konecny, asked what the Union could do in foreign politics. This is a very key issue. The Union will play a role in foreign politics. This is clear. We will actually start to play a more significant role in foreign politics. Soon we will have our own institution for security and defence policy. This will naturally provide the Union with its own strength and capacity in this area to be able to handle crises and maintain peace, and will also be a definite, competent partner, particularly for the United Nations, the UN. This will increase the importance of the Union within foreign politics. However, this is not the only issue at play here. We also see a process of development in which foreign policy will go hand in hand with trade policy and economic policy. Our Union will be the leading market in the world. The Union will expand to contain around 500 million people. We will be the most important trading partner in every single part of the world. It is clear it will be even more important to link trade policy with foreign policy. It will also become clearer that as far as foreign policy is concerned, there will be an even greater need to create dialogue about values. Human rights, democracy, equality between men and women, and our standards. These values, which people use to build societies, are becoming even stronger.

This is an area on which the Union is united. It is essential that when we speak to people in the world, that we speak with one voice. I myself recently led a mission on behalf of the Union to North Korea to express our support for the reunification process which Kim Dae Jung has started and which the north side has responded to. I was able to go there with the full backing of all member states, and in no way in competition with the USA, and call attention to human rights and economic reforms, but also, of course, to offer our Cupertino for aid. We are also the major aid provider. Of course, we play and we will continue to play a role in foreign politics. The way the world is developing, with more integration, call this globalisation if you want, and more joint economic growth, indicates that the role of the European Union in foreign politics will grow and become more important. This kind of development is to our advantage. We also have individual problems to solve, for example the situation in the Balkans. The Union is there, on site, and is doing all it can to help the situation. We can see that the chance of future European Union membership for many of these states is something that puts into action political processes, creates hope and provides them with a vision.

Can we play a role in the Middle East? In Stockholm, it was decided that Javier Solana should be given the task of reporting to the summit meeting in Gothenburg on how the European Union can play a greater role in the Middle East, as a Union. We are in the quite remarkable situation that although every member country within the Union has excellent relations, often with both sides in the conflict, as a Union, we have not been able to construct the same kind of relations. We are now facing the moment of truth. We are starting to see the internationalisation of the conflict in the Middle East and it is becoming clearer that it is not just up to the USA to create the momentum in this process. It is not just the bordering states that will create a momentum. It is not Russia and it is not the UN. It is not just the European Union. However, and I am convinced of this fact, the European Union and all the others must work together to give their support to moving this process forward. In this instance, we must be clear about what we want within the EU, that we all see the process in the same way, and that any small issues that may divide us must be put to one side so that we can move forward and create a Middle East policy based on the international resolutions we acceded to. This is something that we must do. Solana is there in the region this week for talks to prepare the groundwork so that when we are in Gothenburg, we will be able to hold discussions, maybe together with Bush, so see how we can work with the UN and other bodies to guide these negotiations. A week ago I was at the annual EU-Russia Summit and we discussed this issue with President Putin and his staff.

It is clear that we can play a role in foreign politics, if we want, and if we can unite and create policies based on the values and standards of the European family. If we can do this, we can play a role. Although we have slightly different backgrounds, we share the same values. It will be these values that will form the basis for our foreign policy in the future. This is what we should be concentrating on. Then development will move forwards, with time working in the favour of the European Union for the importance it holds in foreign policy.

Now I will say a few words about all the questions about Gothenburg, Bush, Kyoto, etc. I would like to state that the ambition of the Swedish Presidency is get the Kyoto process moving forwards. I am not exactly sure what all the countries in Europe will do as regards ratification. I am assuming that Europe will ratify the protocol, anything else would be unbelievable. There are some people who say that Kyoto does not go far enough. This is true, but it is what we have at the moment. And if we cannot manage the little we have, then we will end up completely empty-handed. I believe that our citizens are fully aware of the fact that international cooperation is essential to limit the emissions of harmful gases into the environment. It is our aim to get this process back on track, in other words to persuade the USA not to withdraw, but to come back on board. I am not prepared to discuss today how we will go about this, but I will say that this is the basis of our work.

I have provided some general answers to all the questions you put to me. I know that my State Secretary, Mr Danielsson will deal with the remaining questions in three minutes. If there is anything that he does not have time to answer, you will be able to take these matters up with my Minister of Foreign Affairs, particularly regarding enlargement. I would like to thank you for listening so patiently.

Mr Lars Danielsson, State Secretary: I would like to briefly touch upon three issues. These are the institutional issues, issues regarding the area of employment and finally issues concerning our legal conscience.

Firstly, let us look at the institutions. The Swedish Presidency is delighted that we have been given the opportunity to open up the wide debate concerning the future of the EU. For once, we have quite a lot of time on our hands before the next Intergovernmental Meeting in 2004. We are currently preparing a report for the summit meeting in Gothenburg. At the moment, we are still waiting for two important contributions to this. One of these will be taken from this conference, which will be very important for us. The other is the resolution from the European Parliament, which I hope we will receive towards the end of this month. I would like to assure David Martin, who asked a question earlier, that irrespective of the model chosen by the governments for the preparatory work, it is clear that all government representatives must whole-heartedly, and at all times, participate in an open and constructive way to the discussions about what should be contained in a future treaty. This is clearly essential.

Some questions were also asked about employment. Herr Barrau raised the important issue of how we can improve the situation for employees in multinational companies. This includes the Directive on information and consultation, which is currently under discussion at the council. We, as the Presidential country, hope that this final relevant council meeting will be able to make a decision on approving this directive. This also applies to the question Herr Konecny asked about the Equal Opportunities Directive. We hope that a decision can be reached about this at the final Council meeting in June.

Herr Haenel raised the important issue of Cupertino in the legal area. I can tell you that we are quite frustrated that during our Swedish Presidency we have not been able to achieve good results with relation to legal Cupertino and Cupertino on asylum and migration. This is largely due to the fact that the work has been prejudiced to such a large extent that concrete results will only be seen later this year during the Belgian Presidency. However, we recognise the importance of being able to give a clear political signal about the importance of increasing the tempo of Cupertino in the legal area. We hope that we will be able to agree on giving this political signal at the summit meeting in Gothenburg in the middle of June.

Mr Sören Lekberg, Chairman: I would like to thank Prime Minister Göran Persson and State Secretary Lars Danielsson for being here today. We are very grateful that they have given us their time and answered our questions so fully.

PAUSE

Enlargement

Mr Lars Tobisson, Deputy Chairman of the Committee on European Union Affairs: Colleagues. It gives me great pleasure to be able to introduce our Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anna Lindh. The enlargement of the EU has been the issue that has been given the highest priority during the Swedish Presidency, and it is an issue that interests all of us here. Following an introduction by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, there will be a chance for you to ask questions and make comments.

Ms Anna Lindh, Minister of Foreign Affairs: A few weeks ago, we had an informal meeting of foreign ministers. At a joint lunch between the member states and the candidate countries, we discussed the future of the EU. It was an extremely good and constructive discussion about the future, and it became clear that the differences in views on the EU, which still remained, had nothing to do with whether they were

candidate countries or member countries. This week as well, when we discussed the EU's joint security and defence policy and the Balkans, there were 28 of us around the table and it worked very well. At the end of these meetings, it really felt as though enlargement was already a reality.

As you know, enlargement is the main priority of the Swedish Presidency of the EU. This has also received extremely strong backing by the Swedish population. The Baltic links us with many of the candidate countries. We share the same sea, and there is an extremely strong feeling that we also share the same future. There has been extremely strong local Cupertino around the Baltic, with Swedish municipalities, schools and companies developing an extended contact network. I believe this is why enlargement has received such strong support and feels so natural for us.

Our citizens can also clearly see the advantages that enlargement will bring. These advantages do not only concern peace, democracy and common values in Europe. There are clear benefits to us all if we have a market with 500 million consumers. It is also important for us to be able to tackle the problems and dangers brought about by globalisation, such as crime, environmental problems and drugs, and that we can combat them together across our borders.

I can understand that some people are worried that the many benefits of enlargement are now being overshadowed by the problems during negotiations, which you have seen in the press. The most important thing to remember is that this is also a natural part of the process. As we get nearer the time that enlargement will actually become a reality, it is only natural that matters close to the hearts and interests of different countries, both member states and candidate countries, will be brought to the table. Conflicts can also be viewed in a positive way. Conflicts show that breakthroughs are starting to be made in the negotiation process and that these negotiations are very intense.

During the Swedish Presidency, we have managed to open a number of new chapters with a number of countries. We have made breakthroughs in several difficult areas, including member states for the first time accepting transitional periods for the candidate countries, and candidate countries too accepting that they cannot ask for as many transitional periods or transitional periods that are too long. Thanks to this, we have managed to close and finish negotiations around some of the most important areas. Settlements that serve as a model for this include those regarding environmental and energy issues with Slovenia, company law with Hungary and the Czech Republic and the free movement of capital with Cyprus.

The issue that is now at the top of the agenda for the Swedish Presidency is the free movement of people. You have in all probability been involved in the heated debate that has been going on about this issue within the EU. In this debate, different interests are opposed to each other. On one side, we have the candidate countries, which naturally want the right to look for jobs throughout the EU when they become members. On the other side, we have Germany and Austria, which are afraid of the consequences this might have on their own labour market.

We have now, in principle, come to an agreement about a model for the member countries, in which we will have an initial transitional period of two years, when everyone will be able to adapt their national regulations. Countries will then be given three years to either choose joint European regulations or national regulations. If there are significant, clear examples of disruption on the labour market, some of the countries

will be able to have a further extension of a maximum of two years. This means that an extremely flexible system will be in place for movement on the labour market. We also believe that very liberal regulations will be put into place in the large majority of member states. This will result in much more liberal regulations than were in place when Spain and Portugal became members.

This is perhaps the issue that has been debated most strongly, but it is clear that there are other issues that include transitional periods as well. These concern, for example the acquisition of agricultural and forestry property in the candidate countries, for which many candidate countries have asked for extremely long transitional periods. The majority have asked for ten years, with Poland asking for eighteen. The Commission is now proposing a transitional period of seven years but with a review after three.

We also have heated issues that do not concern transitional regulations. The current issue concerns Spain's demands for us to solve the problems it has with regional policy. Other member countries have not chosen to discuss this now, but want instead to wait until the discussions on regional politics or the budget in a few years time. I am fully convinced that we will find a solution. In my opinion, it is important that we recognise that countries may have problems, but that we cannot anticipate the exact nature of the Union's future budget, regional policy or agricultural policy.

The final issue, which has, of course, be the subject of heated debate during the Swedish Presidency, is the issue of having a more precise timetable. We would like to have a more definite timetable for the continued enlargement process. Considering the great leaps forward that we have made and the great efforts of the candidate countries, and the fact that we have managed to open and close a number of new chapters, it is only natural for us to be more precise when talking about timing.

There is also an important political reason for us to do this. At the moment, it is clear that public opinion in several of the candidate countries is starting to waver regarding support for the EU. This does not only have an affect on the candidate countries that are faced with this negative public opinion. It also affects the EU project as a whole, the credibility of the EU and the reputation of the EU if public opinion in the candidate countries turns against the EU. I think it is therefore important that we draw conclusions from the situation we find ourselves in today.

The first conclusion is that all of us in member countries must take the responsibility of trying to show and prove the advantages of enlargement to our own citizens. We must not get lost in discussions about negotiation techniques and exceptions. We should be able to concentrate on the main discussion at hand with our own citizens.

The second conclusion is that we should take joint political responsibility for enlargement and not exploit this either nationally or between countries.

The third conclusion is that it is now time, for the sake of the credibility of the whole EU project, for us to provide candidate countries with even clearer signals. This is why we have to solve the issues at hand and specify a timetable as soon as possible.

Ms Andrea Manzella, Italy: The Presidential Country has talked about commitment and responsibility with regards to enlargement. This means that at a time when the whole Union is gathered together, a certain amount of solidarity is needed. We can see the benefits of this, both economically and morally. We need to get past the Jalta period

and try to create a new economic and continental dimension to show the real value of Europe, our EU, with its many different regions. We also have a charter for fundamental rights in place now. These are three real reasons that should help overshadow the problems we are currently faced with. As the Prime Minister said, we must ensure that we achieve the correct balance, not just with regards to the transitional periods for the new countries but also for strengthened Cupertino.

Mr Kimmo Kiljunen, Finland: As the Minister for Foreign Affairs stated, enlargement into Eastern Europe is a major challenge. It is the greatest change during the entire history of the Union. Ten central and eastern European countries will now enlarge the population of the EU by 30 %, which represents 100 million people. The number of people working in the EU will double. However, GNP will at the end of the day only increase by 4 %. This shows us the major challenge we are faced with. As we have all stated, this is a political process, a historic challenge.

I think that it is extremely good that the candidate countries are able to be present here in our debate. This is not just about having an open debate about the various business within the Union, it is also essential that they learn how national parliaments follow up work within the EU. This is extremely important if we want to ensure that the decisions we make have real legitimacy.

The third point I want to raise concerns the discussions about the future of the EU. It is extremely important that all applicant countries are given the opportunity to take part in discussions centring around the future of the EU, and also at parliamentary level. We are now creating the future of our Union which will include more than the current 15 member states and no matter whether we decide to have a convention or another body, the candidate countries must be fully represented in this process.

Mr Frans Timmermans, Netherlands: We have noticed that an increasing number of citizens in the EU and in the applicant countries are becoming even less convinced of the advantages of being in the EU. Why is this happening now? Well, we, as politicians, are guilty to a certain extent of political opportunism, and not just those who have painted an all-to-rosy picture of enlargement.

Ten days ago Vaclav Havel said at a meeting in Bratislava that we must now stop using the terms Eastern and Western Europe. These should only represent geographical points and not have any political content. I believe that there should be guidelines laid down for us when we are talking about enlargement.

As well as enlargement, we must also look into how we will finance the EU after 2006 and also the European institutions.

The Copenhagen criteria must be applied, to the letter. Secondly, there should be no more obstacles to free movement or the structural funds. Thirdly, we can find no real solution if we are trying to get a greater slice of the cake. What we have is what we have. And fourthly, we must review our agricultural policy and the structural funds.

Mr Karl Schweitzer, Austria: The Minister of Foreign Affairs talked about transitional periods with regard to the free movement of labour. I am interested in the free movement of services. It seems clear that there will be no transitional period with respect to this. I come from an area that is 20 km from the current outer border, and this issue presents a real problem for Austrians living in this area, as there are no measures

that we can take to protect the area with respect to the free movement of services.

Verheugen talked about border areas and a special program for them. However, I have not seen any specific content in this program. Could you tell me what this program will mean for border areas, what it will mean for people living in these border areas and what is the likelihood that we will be able to solve these problems?

Secondly, I am interested in the transitional periods for environmental standards. If these are not put into place, it could result in a deflection of competition. My question is therefore this: How long are the transitional periods for the environment going to be?

Mr Tunne Kelam, Estonia: I think we should never look aside from the historic goal of the enlargement to put an end to the division of Europe into East and West but also to the North and South. I would like to thank the colleagues here for their expression of support of this historic goal.

Negotiations have been taking place now for more than three years, but they are not moving on, unfortunately, as efficiently as we would like them to. Estonia is ready to complete negotiations by the end of this year. However, on several issues of substance the situation is still unclear. Therefore I would like to appeal to the representatives of the member states in this room to try to help to harmonize more efficiently their common positions on such crucial issues as environment and agriculture.

Setting our eyes on Gothenburg, I think we should show a clear political will to achieve a breakthrough in the final stage of negotiations. Therefore I would propose that the final declaration of COSAC should encourage the EU summit to agree on a concrete timetable how to end the accession negotiations for the first group of candidate countries. The criterion of 2004 to participate in the elections to the next European Parliament is clearly a very positive goal. I am glad that Mr. Persson has said that it still could be considered as a realistic goal.

Mr Manuel A. Dos Santos, Portugal: Enlargement of the Union is essential when you look at the historical legal position. We in Portugal believe that enlargement really is a priority, but we also realise that there are issues that must be raised about it. We are aware of the political dimension of enlargement as the basis for consolidating the project for the future of Europe. Secondly, we believe that joint solidarity is completely fundamental to creating this joint future. Thirdly, we think that it is fundamentally important for enlargement to take place for the benefit of the candidate countries, and that the basic foundations for all the various chapters must be consolidated and reviewed in depth. We must also ensure that all logical future consequences are investigated before we approve the various chapters. We think that enlargement has a role to play in unity. Financing this enlargement is also a fundamental issue.

The Prime Minister talked about Agenda 2000 and its financial perspective, i.e. the budget plans. We think that what has been decided is insufficient. If we really want to affect an enlargement that works and if we want to have social unity, we must sooner or later address these issues.

Mr Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Poland: We appreciate how consistent Sweden has been in its support of enlargement, but we are also aware that we are currently at a critical stage in negotiations. We really need to make a breakthrough in these negotiations to help us to improve public opinion. I agree with the speakers in front of me on this issue.

The most important issue is the free movement of labour. Scientific establishments agree, both in Germany and Austria, that it is disproportionate to believe that such a large number of people will move to another country. It is up to politicians to decide whether they want to make populist speeches or whether they want to take the responsibility of explaining to their people that there is no reason to be afraid of enlargement. We have discussed the possibility of using other methods instead of transitional periods, for example protection clauses, that could be used if a real need actually arose.

I would like to stress how important it is to prepare the way for membership before the European elections. These preparations must be made on both sides, both within the European Parliament and in our countries. This includes technical preparations, of course. If we then decide to have further discussions about the future of the EU and the idea of a convention – of course, if there is a convention, it is important for candidate countries to take part as well – it will be clear to us that you are listening to our opinions with regard to the future of the EU.

Mr Philippe Mahoux, Belgium: I would like to congratulate the efforts made by the Swedish Presidency, despite the difficulties that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have taken time to explain to us in a very objective way. As far as enlargement is concerned, we are clearly in agreement with their position.

My second remark on this issue is that the countries that will belong to the European Union must have all the rights and obligations of the other countries. Welcoming people into this house is not like a host inviting a guest. They should be seen as also forming part of the household.

The third element should perhaps be inspired by the fact that it has taken some time for us to go from 6 countries to 15 countries. We have used methods that have proved successful. Maybe we should now use these methods as our inspiration.

Furthermore, there are also problems that are currently being raised with regard to enlargement, or more precisely the internal organisation of the European Union. Of course, everything must take place in its own time. We must first ratify Nice. Secondly, we must address the aims of the European Union, problems surrounding justice, employment, and social security.

As far as the convention is concerned, one method has already been used. It has been used in a very specific case with a clear, defined mission. This was the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Maybe we should be careful not to give the system a field of application that would be too large to enable it to succeed. The purpose of a convention is to allow either the intergovernmental or the community method to succeed and be reinforced.

Finally, Minister of Foreign Affairs, may I ask a more precise question concerning the meeting with President Bush at the Gothenburg summit, partly concerning the Kyoto Protocol. What is the position of the member states that the Swedish Presidency is going to defend at this meeting with Bush? What position is the European Union going to take regarding the anti-missile defence system? What position is the European Union going to take with respect to European defence considering the position that the Bush administration has taken during recent weeks and recent months, and also the fact that

the European Union is often perceived by the American administration as a competitor rather than an ally?

Mr Gintaras Steponavicius, Lithuania: In the process of enlargement negotiations the catch up has become a reality. The Republic of Lithuania will have up to ten chapters closed during the Swedish Presidency. It is an important achievement and a demonstration that the new Lithuanian Government has placed EU membership among the very top priorities.

Among the current issues of negotiations free movement of labour is the most topical. Here we must see look forward. We don't think that a transitional period is necessary. The four freedoms are the core values when we speak about the internal market. Lithuania does not ask for a major transitional period in this field. We find it hardly possible to explain this initiative from the EU side to our citizens.

Having in mind that we are for free movement of capital without transitional periods, including the acquisition of land by foreign nationals, of course, we understand concerns that have driven the EU to consider this transitional period. Thus Lithuania expects that the EU shall be consistent in acquiring the case-by-case treatment of the candidate countries in this area.

On the other hand, regardless of the position of the EU and the member states we should now explore the possibility of more liberal bilateral arrangements among the member states and the candidate states.

Finally, I would like to tell you that we keep our optimistic expectations as regards the pace of negotiations during the coming presidencies. But we do think that a timetable could be set up during the Gothenburg meeting.

Mr Guido Podestà, European Parliament: Once again, the European Parliament has, with a clear majority, confirmed its commitment to allow the first countries to enter the Union before 2004. This means that we must now take action to create the infrastructure. Furthermore, bearing in mind the many new languages, we must now take action to ensure that we are ready to receive these countries. We are talking about seven to ten countries. I would also like to add that this is not just about free trade or an inner market, but rather a way of meeting new joint targets and the fact that we stand for joint values. This cannot be compared with anything that happened back in our history. This is why we have to acknowledge the major responsibility we have in this area. We must really ensure that we have a common vision and understanding with relation to these issues among our citizens.

I would like to ask Mrs Lindh what the council is planning to do to create better understanding and to ensure that people really understand why we have made these choices and what lies behind this choice of project. There are problems we must deal with concerning cohesion, structural funds, the Common Agricultural Policy, etc. These issues must be taken up in parallel with this, but they must not be seen as a tool to delay enlargement, which is now a historic commitment that we have all made.

Lord Grenfell, United Kingdom: We attach the highest importance to enlargement and would like to congratulate both the Swedish Presidency and the accession countries for the progress so far made in the negotiations. We wish to see no slowing down of the process and are therefore concerned at any attempt to link the securing of agreement on

transitional periods for the free movement of labour with demands for assurances on levels of structural funding after 2006. The enlargement process is too great a political imperative to be exposed to the risk of delay by linking one issue for negotiation with another.

We share the view of colleagues who insist that there will be new members acceding to the Union in time for the next parliamentary elections in 2004. We hear what our Polish colleagues are saying: There must be no second-class membership. We also recognize that support for Union membership in accession countries may be wide, but may not everywhere be as deep as it was. That should be a serious warning to us all.

Mr Alojz Peterle, Slovenia: We are definitely approaching decisive phase of the process of enlargement. I think that the best way to maintain the credibility of the project is to keep the pace of the process. It seems that free movement of persons is the most difficult issue. Here we should prove the ability to agree on compromises, because this is very important for the chapters or the issues which will follow. Here the principle of flexibility is very important. I would like to say that for Slovenia this is not a problem. I would say that we count on a final *yes*, not on too many transitional periods or many "buts".

Mr Edvins Inkens, Latvia: Latvia, as well as other countries, is currently in a very active phase of accession negotiations. Therefore I would like to express some of my concerns regarding this process, which are rather similar to the ones expressed by my Estonian colleague Mr. Kelam.

Sometimes we feel that the applicants and the EU institutions are not only sitting on the opposite side of the table but also have a very different sense of importance of timing in this process. We understand that the pace of negotiations depends only on how successfully we manage our homework. The whole state administration apparatus is working to establish our positions and providing EU institutions with other additional information that is required, because it is the only possibility for Latvia to catch up with the first group of countries.

At the same time our negotiation partners on the EU side tend to divide this process in separate segments. For example, the European Commission has informed us that certain chapters can not be opened as planned because the Commission does not have the capacity to draft their common position on time. This leads to a situation where currently there is an empty negotiation table. The ball is on the Commission side, and we have no real possibility to advance in our negotiations. Of course, we can explain at a national level that the negotiations are currently not advancing, but I don't think that it would be the best signal to send to our population.

Mr Guenter Gloser, Germany: We parliamentarians must use our rights in parliament to clarify to our governments the common basis with relation to the progress that has been made or has not been made. This historical goal must be achieved. When the 15 member countries come to the summit, they must work to achieve this common goal.

On to the next point: the transitional periods. There are two possibilities here. You can either link new countries quickly, which would mean that we would not be able to have everything in place by the membership date without needing transitional periods, or you can wait until everything is ready. However, we do not want this, because we have

made a pledge to the people and candidate countries that they should not wait any longer. I have been extremely open with regard to the German standpoint. We must not attach any problems relating to the structural funds or agricultural policy. We have to make these points clear. Everyone is committed to this historical goal, and we must not link other issues to this with the accession date.

Mr Jozsef Szájer, Hungary: I would like to make two points. The first is obviously connected to free movement of labour. I am coming from a constituency representing 60,000 people from the western edge of Hungary, at the Austrian border, and I can tell you that in north western Hungary in general there is little or no unemployment. The Hungarian general rate is 6 %. We have very big difficulties as to moving people from the eastern part of the country to work in the western part, so it is not something which someone should fear. If there is a problem between certain countries, if there is a concrete problem of mobility, then according to the case-by-case issue you have to address the problem by that method, not by a general thing.

The second point is connected to the Nice resolutions, namely about the distribution of the seats of the European Parliament for different countries. In this respect we are very happy that Hungary has already been allocated the future seats, but not that happy about equalities not working in this sense. Hungary has 10 million inhabitants, but we have been allocated only 20 seats in the European Parliament, while with the same population Portugal, Belgium and Greece have 22. The same case applies to the Czech Republic.

Is there any consideration to changing this violation of horizontal equality of representation? We have been negotiating on this question with many of you in this room, and there has been a general agreement that this was a mistake, which should be corrected.

Mr Frantisek Sebej, Slovakia: I would like to address another issue that has already been frequently mentioned: the free movement of persons. I have three statements to make.

Firstly: This freedom, once granted, is not going to be really used by many. But if not granted, it is going to poison the minds of millions.

Secondly: Free movement of persons, unlike the other three fundamental freedoms, is a very emotional one. I have to stress that the identity of capital, services or goods is actually changing easily and painlessly – not so with personal identity. It is actually a psychological basis of being at home somewhere; in this case in Europe. It is hard to feel European when you, unlike other Europeans, have no freedom to do this.

Thirdly, already mentioned by Frans Timmermans from the Netherlands: Concerns about labour markets are actually not concerns about labour markets. There is hardly any evidence that markets are really being threatened by free movement of persons. There are more concerns about the fears and prejudices on the part of the population. These fears and prejudices are often not only reflected in attitudes of politicians but also intentionally used in getting domestic support. The temptation to do so is simply too strong to be resisted.

I would ask for something, which is probably not easy to fulfil, but anyhow: I strongly advise you to rethink those transitional periods in the case of free movement of persons

because this is a special case, not to be compared with any other chapter of European Union negotiations. The request for this transitional period is for me easy to understand, but very hard to admire or even to respect.

Mr Elmar Brok, European Parliament: I believe that enlargement is everyone's political goal. Enlargement is in our common political and economic interests, except for certain points here and there. Political and psychological arguments have led to there being a discussion on the free movement of labour. People should look at the short-term transitional periods proposed by the Commission. These transitional regulations are not discriminatory, but completely normal when talking about enlargement. They must only relate to as few areas as possible and be as short as possible.

The Copenhagen criteria must be met. The EU must also do its homework. This is something we did not do, either in Amsterdam or in Nice. We now have a new round. I personally think that the Convention method is the best method, for us and for the applicant countries. They can also do their homework for this preparatory work to ensure that the EU is effective with 27 or 28 members.

Ms Anna Lindh, Minister of Foreign Affairs: I would like to start by thanking everyone for their views and for so many interesting contributions. I will now make some brief comments on what has been said.

Italy, Belgium and some other countries have not played a part in the discussions about enlargement either for or against in any great depth. Is there a contradiction between enlarging the EU while at the same time deepening integration? I would like to say 'No' to this question. Unfortunately, this is a misunderstanding that occurs if we look back at the history of the Union. Throughout our history, we have added several members and dealt with several issues. I think that this is something we will manage to achieve in the future too.

The principle is that new members should be with us from the very beginning. Several people have mentioned the principle issues regarding transitional periods, but let us also remember our history: we have always used transitional periods and transitional solutions to make it easier for new members and for member countries.

As far as regional policy and agricultural policy are concerned, it is important that we respect the problems of other countries. I can guarantee that there will be a heated debate about these issues, with or without enlargement. This will be clear to all members who have previously taken part in these debates in the Union. We must therefore return to these issues when looking at the future budget, when we have to finance regional policy and agricultural policy.

Certainly, the free movement of labour is a sensitive issue but I think that the proposal that is now on the table, two years, plus three years, plus a possible extension of two years, is the best compromise possible. This means that countries such as Germany and Austria can have a longer transitional period, while other countries can open their borders in principle from day one.

Which transitional regulations should be put into place with regards to the environment? Well, in principle, countries should abide by EU environmental laws. If major investment is required, we have accepted transitional periods, but it must also be made clear how the environmental regulations will be met in the future, how investment will

be made and how EU demands will be met later on. This is a good, clear way of showing how transitional regulations can be used for the environment.

We also have a few questions that do not concern enlargement. One question was about President Bush and what will be discussed at the summit meeting with the USA. Of course, the EU will defend the Kyoto Protocol. This is one of the areas where we and the USA have different opinions.

Two questions were also put to me, which I am not able to answer on behalf of the EU Presidency. One question refers to missile defence. Different European countries have different opinions about this. If I put my Swedish hat on, I would express my views in a very critical way. Another area where we must put on our own national hats in the future is the number of seats in the European Parliament allotted to Hungary. This is something that I cannot, and will not, pre-empt with my EU hat on.

I have tried to comment very briefly on all the extremely important issues that have been raised. With that, I would now like to wish you a very enjoyable lunch at the Stockholm Town Hall.

PAUSE

Continuation of the discussion.

Mr. Lars Tobisson, Deputy chairman: We have to start concluding the discussion on EU enlargement. Six intending speakers were unable to do so before the lunch break. I promise that you will be able to express your views to the Swedish presidency.

Mr Andreas Mouskos, Cyprus: We are also pleased with the intensification of the accession negotiations and the progress achieved so far during the Swedish Presidency. We expect that the rate of the negotiations will be accelerated during the Belgian Presidency, resulting in the closure of a substantial numbers of chapters. This will be an important step and will give the possibility to conclude the negotiations during September 2002, thus permitting the countries under accession to participate in the elections for the European Parliament in 2004.

As it has been said this morning one important aspect relating to the success of the enlargement process is a public concern of the process. I would like to assure that in Cyprus the overwhelming majority of the people are supporting the enlargement process. For this reason we are doing our best, and in total 21 chapters are provisionally closed, and 8 chapters are under negotiations, placing Cyprus in the first position as far as the progress in the access negotiations is concerned.

Mr Bernard J. Durkan, Ireland: I think that it goes without saying, and we have mentioned this on various COSAC meetings over the past numbers of years, that the ways in time for the applicant countries seems to get longer rather than shorter, and those who may express concern about that do so rightly. Delays have two negative effects, the first on the people in the country, the second on the parliamentarians.

It is very difficult for parliamentarians to go back to their people again and again and say: "I am very sorry, but that date has been postponed. You will have to wait a little longer." Europe has to make up its mind as to where its future is. A divided Europe cannot function. It is unsustainable in that context, and the sooner that the countries

which are within the Union at the present time are in control of that destination date, the sooner that they come together and recognize that Europe is for all of us, including the people of the applicant countries now, the better for Europe as a whole.

If that does not follow true, the likely consequences are that the parliamentarians who have that view will falter, and as a consequence their electorate will do likewise. In conclusion I can just say that we in Ireland have our referendum on the Nice Treaty on the 7th of June. All the main parties are supporters. Regardless of what reservations there may be, we believe that it is in the interest of all in Europe to walk with Europe, and we hope that everybody here will do likewise in their various contexts as the time arises.

Mr Knud Erik Hansen, Denmark: My experience of the negotiations with the applicant countries is that the EU has been very strict as regards applicant countries doing their homework with regard to the *acquis*. They are involved in a competition to become first new entrant. At the same time, I have found the EU very much in arrears on its own homework.

The EU has a number of problems, which it is important to solve. One example is the agricultural structural funds. I find that the EU has been very slow in initiating a process to deal with its homework. If we are to manage the changes, the EU needs to make it clear whether the applicant countries can be offered access to agricultural structural funds.

Mr Alain Barreau, France: Our discussion on enlargement shows clearly that it is now a political issue and it is on the basis of the political choice that we have to act. Enlargement is not a reward for the candidate countries, it is justice, since these are European peoples who make their particular and specific contribution to the common European culture and will bring our Europe a number of positive elements.

Secondly, all the current obstacles to completing the negotiations need to be lifted. A responsibility for us in France under the French presidency was to ensure that the question of the state of the Union's existing institutions, not the future organisation, should be no obstacle. Despite the difficulties, despite the inadequacies that we readily admit, the existence of the Nice Treaty, which is going to be able to be ratified soon, did not end up delaying the enlargement process.

Third, issues must not be raised on the basis of their being put forward by the technocrats. Far from it. The problems of freedom of movement, the issues pertaining to structural funds, those pertaining to agricultural policy, are all matters raised by our peoples. No elected politician can go around pretending that the Union has no internal problems.

This leads to my conclusion: Why keep on discussing this issue of enlargement with a constant budget? If we make more common policy, if we do more things with more participants, it is perfectly possible to imagine larger budget contributions from all EU countries for achieving this result. I do not think that starting to reform only the Union's current common policies is the way to deal with the matter.

No, let us discuss among ourselves the necessary reforms of our common policy, let us build our common policy on social and environmental matters, but above all let us go forward and, why not, call into question the Union's overall financing.

Mr Josep Borrell, Spain: Spanish opinion is quite in favour of enlargement as a whole, and so is the overwhelming majority among the parties, too. Spain does not want to stick out as a country that wishes to stand in the way for this process. That is why I want to open a question that will inevitably be arisen in this process at one point or another, the need for more cohesion in social terms. It is clear that enlargement will add a hundred million citizens to an EU with only 4 % rise in GNP. Nobody leaves his country because he wants to. You do it because you have no other choice. Nobody in the eastern countries wishes to leave his country to go to Germany or anywhere else, if he had possibilities to live at home as we do within the current European Union.

To protect ourselves against migratory flows that the society would find it difficult to absorb, I think that the best remedy is to assist the countries to develop their own territories by strengthening cohesion mechanisms, which are providing excellent results at the moment in Spain, Ireland and other countries. When Spain applied to join the Union a lot was said about migratory flows, but the movement of people did not happen, because Spain and other countries had the opportunity to develop and keep their populations with them.

So, ladies and gentlemen, let us not try to aim at the wrong solutions. We want free movement for people, services, capital and commodities. This is fundamental for the Union. Another objective is a cohesion between the countries of the EU.

Mr Liviu Maior, Romania: There is another motive for the popular attitude in favour of enlargement. After 1989, when the communist states collapsed, the power of the states collapsed. The peoples in these countries are looking towards the EU as a better organized union of states with a rule of law and with better social structure. I think that for most Romanians this is the main reason for supporting the idea of enlargement.

In the EU countries and in the United States there are already over 12 000 Romanian hired specialists in various fields working in large companies in the soft industries. Nobody is complaining about this. The fear that eastern work force is going into various countries of the EU is not realistic.

The Role of National Parliaments

Mr Sören Lekberg, Chairman: The next item on our agenda is the role of national parliaments. We decided at a troika meeting at the beginning of the year to propose that our delegations discuss the role of national parliaments at this COSAC meeting here in Stockholm. With the help of the French presidency we had also previously done a survey of the parliaments of member states which had yielded a great deal of information, particularly about how they handle EU issues.

We called a working group meeting in Stockholm on 8-9 April. It was attended by a delegation from each chamber in the member states and from the European Parliament. We had a political science expert, Andreas Maurer, as guest speaker. He presented a research report on what had happened since the tabling of the draft treaty, which includes provisions concerning national parliaments and also regulates COSAC activity. His report provided us with a very good basis for discussion at the working group meeting. The resulting discussion document was further developed and was disseminated in good time ahead of the present meeting.

The discussion document contains a description of how things have gone so far and also considers how national parliaments can more actively participate in the European debate and can, above all, anchor the European debate in the member countries. It also covers controversial issues such as whether a second chamber is required, and the various reasons for and against. It also emphasises that COSAC may be a suitable forum for the continuing debate. COSAC is now unique in actually being a gathering that is committed to a treaty by a draft treaty. Moreover, all parties attend COSAC meetings, which have been held very regularly during our presidency. This results in a kind of continuity. We suggest that over the period up to the IGC of 2004 we have the possibility of discussing future issues within a COSAC context, which we consider enormously valuable in constantly providing us with a variety of views from the respective presidency countries.

At the same time we do of course appreciate that COSAC cannot take any binding decisions, but the debate is important and may powerfully inspire many members of national parliaments. We consider that if COSAC is to function in such a way as to make it easy to follow the work up to the IGC, it is of course also preferable that the working group that can be added according to our constitution become more or less permanent so as to provide continuity in the work.

The document also indicates that it is of course also possible for COSAC members to communicate without meeting. The Internet and homepages now make it easy to keep dialogue going as a supplementary element between meetings.

Ms Outi Ojala, Finland: We often see that the democratic deficit has to do with the weak role of national parliaments and their inability to influence EU affairs. But it is more a case of citizens not being able to keep up with what is going on in the EU. It is very important that governments, national parliaments and the media bring up the things which are being dealt with in the EU, so that citizens can actually see how these things affect their daily lives. We all know that the mass media are not always interested in the things which the parliaments are dealing with in the EU.

One parliament alone cannot be dynamic, but some are more active than others and some are more passive. If one is dealing with EU affairs on an *ad hoc* basis, you cannot have a real effect or be a real force in the EU. In Finland we have set up a good system, where all the specialized committees which are involved in dealing with EU affairs take them up to the Grand Committee, which is our EU affairs committee. One committee is not able to keep pace with the great number of affairs, all the details and developments in Europe.

This points to the impossibility that we see in Finland as regards a second or a third chamber. It seems impossible that some new body, which would be composed of the national parliaments, would be able to keep up with what is going on in Europe. So COSAC is a good discussion forum, and we can develop it, but in Finland we are not very keen on the idea of turning COSAC into a second chamber or of creating a new body composed of the national parliaments, which would be a second chamber.

Very briefly on the future discussion. The Convention model has worked well, but I would like to emphasise personally that it is important to have broad political participation if the Convention model is used. There is a risk that with one or two national representatives participating the political representation will be very narrow.

Ms Andrea Manzella, Italy: I think that following the Amsterdam Protocol dealing with the national parliaments, the expression of a democratic deficit really does not mean so much any more, because through that protocol we have in fact created a parliamentary system made up of the European Parliament and of the national parliaments. If this system does not yet work it is because we have not started this system. We should be able to get a mechanism going without necessarily taking to the absurd conclusion of a third chamber.

I would ask you to consider four methods in COSAC. The first is the Convention method, which quite simply is an institutional reform replacing an interparliamentary method with an intergovernmental method. The second method is that of the benchmarking procedure, i.e. best possible practices being used of respecting each chamber's constitutional independence. The third method could be that of transforming the General Affairs Council into a full-fledged council, which on a weekly basis would have the presence of the European affairs ministers from each member state.

The fourth method of reform could be that of strengthening COSAC. You could have two meetings instead of just one: one at the beginning of each presidency period and the other towards the end. You could also create dynamic working groups. The other difference would be to define COSAC by its difference compared to conventions. A Convention should be something like a task force created for the purpose of institutional reform, whereas COSAC should be a kind of key, a procedural and standing body called upon to ensure the relations between the national parliaments and the European Parliament.

Ms Maria Eduarda Azevedo, Portugal: Many questions on the political dimension in the Union are still open. The next IGC must look at these major topics. The Union must take a first step to send out a signal about which political goal is to be set up for this century. Europe must realise that the populations will not accept that chances to build things up are missed. I think that we can't leave it at that, because with such a big project in the future the Community can't give up to reshape the national parliaments.

We must have an active political will and see to it that the national parliaments initiate a fruitful dialogue with the national populations and engage them in the European project. In this context all the complex facts which concern the citizens must be taken up. It is necessary to make the national parliaments more active participants and not just observers. We therefore must think of a revised model of the treaties. For this you must use e.g. a convention.

The national parliaments already now must engage themselves in deep discussions, which clarify the situation and aim at questions that affect the citizens and the civil society. This debate must contribute to a feeling among the European citizens in the various countries that they have a key role. The national parliaments must also reinforce their contributions to creating a co-operation between the parliaments, and this clearly must be founded on the work that COSAC has hitherto done, which is very valuable in order to more regularly be able to take care of European matters on the parliamentary plane.

Mr Giorgio Napolitano, European Parliament: The constituent process which is spelt out in the annex to the Nice Treaty should be finished no later than 2004, and in this process the national parliaments are recognised as playing an essential role. This is

fully recognised alongside that of the European Parliament. The most significant forum for really bringing together the various points of view represented in the national parliaments is COSAC.

At the same time we say that the creation of a Convention can be necessary to allow us to bring together the various positions of the Union's parliaments and to compare them with the positions of the government and the Commission. We hope that we can get a convention. It is a necessary mechanism for working together on a project for a new institutional scheme

Let us go back to the document of the working party. Fundamental matters that need to be addressed in the document and that call for further details can be listed like this: First of all the relationships of the national parliaments with the respective governments, secondly the relations of the national parliaments with the EU institutions and thirdly their relations with the European Parliament.

We take upon ourselves without restrictions to call for something that has no precedent in previous enlargements. We are talking about a project for reunification, and I think that the Community that was born in the fifties is about to be born a second time. However, for that to happen we need to be hard-hitting in our vision. It is in that spirit that we can work on the problems of the future of the Union, of the parliaments of the member states and those in the candidate countries as well. The national parliaments and the European Parliament can pave the way for this together without getting confused in our respective responsibilities.

Prof. Dr Jürgen Meyer, Germany: I would like to look at the role of national parliaments in the preparations of the IGC of 2004. We are very happy that Mr. Göran Persson this morning took up the proposal that a convention should meet in 2002 and should have a key role. In a new convention there are four actors: the national parliaments, the European Parliament's delegations, the Commission and of course the delegates of the governments.

We think that the work of the Convention should start in January or February next year. Only so there will be enough time for a draft that can be ready in 2002. After that there should be a public debate, and before the IGC the Convention could work through the various public suggestions, analyse those and work them in. I think that the proposal laid forth by Mr. Persson that the Convention should set out alternative solutions is very good. I think that the new convention unlike the old one should vote and should perhaps have alternatives with a slim minority, which should be handed over to the Council for decision. The applicant countries should be delegates with full rights, because the Convention does not decide, it only makes proposals.

COSAC should not be played out against the Convention. In Nice we had two procedures, one following the old model behind closed doors, not very positive in public, and a convention, which was not just more democratic but also much more efficient. Of course you do not know if a convention would be equally efficient in its work. That is only an idea, but without ideas we cannot win the future.

Mr Lars Tobisson, Sweden: In the Swedish parliament the Nice Declaration made us form a special committee based on the standing committees on the constitution and on foreign affairs. This committee unanimously decided on a report, which then was brought to a broad debate in the Chamber of the Swedish parliament. My remarks today

will be based on this already accomplished work.

The EU treaties and any amendments to them are ratified by the parliaments of the member states. Therefore I think that our national parliaments should have more influence in these matters than the right to approve afterwards what has already become a foregone conclusion. Many people are in favour of a convention. I was a member of the Convention, which dealt with the charter on fundamental rights. I am not sure that we can copy that model right off. There are questions concerning the representativity if you have only two parliamentarians per country. There is the problem whom you actually represent, on whose mandate you are acting in a convention of that sort.

To form the future of Europe is a much larger and broader task than the one that the former Convention had. Therefore I think that it could be wise to organize this debate in separate fora to begin with. The governments will feel a special responsibility for the review of the treaties and the catalogue of competences.

The European Parliament will for obvious reasons discuss all relevant issues, and it already has an existing structure for doing that. The role of the national parliaments is basically a matter for these parliaments themselves. If anybody should discuss it, it is our parliaments which should do that, and we already have a forum for co-operation in COSAC. Here we have 6 representatives, not just 2, from each member country, and 3 from the applicant countries. We have set up a working group for this purpose already, and what we need for a more continuous debate is a stronger, more permanent secretariat. It might very well be that we also need to organize more working groups than the one that we already have.

A debate on the future of the European Union has already started. A more structured phase will begin next year. If we get organised then, we have at least one year for our deliberations, and after that in 2003 the Government Reflection Group, the relevant European Parliament committees and the COSAC working group could be moulded into what we might call a convention. The duty of this body would be to work out proposals for the IGC in 2004, but I do not think that the Convention should decide on the formulation of articles in the new basic treaty for the European Union. That job must necessarily be left to the IGC itself.

Mr Antonis Skyllakos, Greece: National parliaments are losing their power on the way to a federal Europe. Therefore the decision-making centres are going away from the workers and from the poorer strata of society. Why? Because the European Union is mainly governed by the concept of competitiveness, more economic profit and so on. How are you going to handle that? You are going to have to cut labour costs. This means that the workers all over Europe are going to lose more and more power.

In Greece there are huge problems of social insurance which are being discussed at the moment. The workers have tried to get in touch with the national parliament. Why? Because the national parliament is still there in Greece, and it can take decisions. It can influence the government's policy. But how do you expect similar things to happen on a European level? It would be rather impossible.

Our view is therefore that we should fight as much as we can to keep the national parliaments strong and powerful. Any further move towards political integration in Europe, any further move towards a federalist Europe will diminish the power of national parliaments.

Mr Ben Fayot, Luxembourg: I think we have to make a distinction between what goes on at national level and what goes on at European level, i.e. the role the national parliaments play in each of the member states, which does not directly affect the common thinking, and the role that national parliaments play on the European level, which obviously does affect our common thinking.

The essential point that should be concentrated on is trying to distinguish the particular benefits of COSAC and the possible particular benefits of a convention. The composition of COSAC obviously changes from year to year. It is also a gathering that concerns itself with many topics, is a forum for discussion and, above all, passes on political wishes to the European councils.

For me the nature of a convention is therefore highly specific due to a number of characteristics. First of all, a convention has a precise mandate from a European council. Second, it is a gathering that will meet for a precise period, enabling members of national parliaments to disengage for six months, nine months, and concentrate on European issues. It is also a gathering that works with the same persons, who can therefore become more expert in the topics referred to them.

It is important to have a small convention rather than a large gathering, since the essence of such conventions should be real discussion and not successions of speeches.

I also think that expertise should be gained as the work proceeds. Here I agree with a number of previous speakers in that it is clearly necessary that the four elements contained in the convention for the preparation of the charter of fundamental rights should be there, particularly the governmental representatives, so that what we achieve as a result in this convention has already been discussed before within governments and what we will do in the convention is not merely art for art's sake.

COSAC and a convention can very well cohabit in that each has its own functions, its own objectives and its own methods, and there is nothing to prevent our continuing to do good work in COSAC and having a convention that strongly involves national parliaments in the preparation of our ideas for the future of the European Union.

Mr Bernard J. Durkan, Ireland: One of the things that are becoming more serious is that in a number of member states in the past five or six years there has been an issue in the general elections of "taking the power back from Brussels". This is something that will happen not only in one country but in several countries, and it will happen in many more countries unless the issue is discussed and dealt with. I and the other members of our committee would agree with the idea of having a convention on a lesser scale than the one which dealt with the charter of fundamental human rights, but that COSAC should be upgraded and play a meaningful role in the discussion that takes place between now and the next IGC.

There are a number of reasons for that. All of our parliamentarians at home complain about legislation that appears to have been passed by them but in actual fact has been passed by governments in agreement with the European institutions. It is true that the government is assumed to be working on behalf of the parliament, but the government does not always consult with the parliament.

What is likely to happen in that situation is that there will be competition emerged from

various political groups that will not stand for the European idea and that do not have good will towards Europe. They will compete at local level and beat the existing national parliamentarians in elections. We cannot allow that to happen. The way to deal with that is not by a second chamber, which would be ultimately a forum for talking. Let us face the fact that nothing that happens in the European Parliament is of import to the national parliaments. We know that that is not correct, but those in the national parliaments have this view.

So we would feel that COSAC should be upgraded, that it should have more regular meetings than it has, that the working group should meet on a more regular basis, at least three meetings in the six months period as opposed to the present situation, and that there should be a permanent and properly financed secretariat which should have access to the European institutions.

Mr Claus Larsen-Jensen, Denmark: In our European committee we give instructions to the government in EU matters. We have started a process similar to that in Finland with quicker integration of the respective specialist committees relative to the EU process. I think that when we discuss the future it is important for us also to focus on what the objectives are for an increased role for the national parliaments.

I can see four such objectives. The first is that the European decision-making process and the debate on it should be brought closer to EU citizens. The second is to incorporate EU policy more strongly into the democratic process of national parliaments. The third is to support collaboration across national boundaries between national parliaments and parliamentarians. The fourth is to support national parliaments' combined role and influence on EU institutions.

In discussing the role of national parliaments, we realise that there is perhaps an increasing concentration purely on the fourth aspect, the combined influence of national parliaments. Within COSAC we should concentrate much more on trying to find out how we can give national parliaments a role whereby we can learn from one another and naturally allow this to influence us.

The question is whether we strengthen national parliaments best by shifting parliamentarians away from their national context into a new European chamber or whether it is better to increase the influence of national parliaments by shifting EU politics into national parliaments, which have closer contact with the population. I think that this decisive question has a practical connection with discussions we have had previously in COSAC. We must have time for full discussion of the various phases in the policy here concerned at national level.

The worst that could happen in discussing a new treaty is that while we still have hundreds of other matters on the agenda we put the population under stress and give them a feeling that the items on the agenda keep on moving on without being properly discussed. If we create a new balance in European Cupertino, we gain benefit in areas where we cannot manage this ourselves.

I wish to express a slight reservation as regards the convention that discussed the rules about fundamental human rights. I am not sure it is possible to persuade the public to give the backing that would be desirable to the idea of a convention.

PAUSE

Continuation of the discussion.

Mr Maurice Ligot, France: Listening this morning to the Swedish Prime Minister, I noted two essential opinions expressed by him. He said that national parliaments are the carriers of national identity. And he added that the influence of national parliaments should be strengthened.

While indirectly present in the European process through their dealings with the executive of their country, national parliaments are in fact directly and collectively absent. This clearly raises a real issue: Can the national sovereignty expressed by each national parliament be indefinitely ignored by the Union without the latter suffering a democratic deficit and without the citizens, i.e. all of us, becoming indifferent to Europe? Some are becoming Eurosceptics, sovereigntyists. It is a real issue that is perhaps merely evaded by the answer that the European Parliament is the democratic expression of the European electors.

It is normal that COSAC should consider this topic, as it has already done repeatedly with regard to what the European legislature and executive should be like. Let us also note in this respect that under the present scheme arising from the Treaty of Rome there is a confusion of functions. Thus the Council of Ministers, which emanates from the governments of the member states, claims both a governmental and a legislative function. In contrast, the European Parliament, which is a legislature, is far from having any legislative power.

It may therefore be logically concluded that it would be more in line with democratic logic and with the principle of separation of powers between legislature and executive that this function of taking decisions and voting on general rules be exercised by the elected representatives of the peoples, i.e. the European Parliament, and, why not, by the representatives of the national parliaments, the expression of national sovereignty, i.e. people collectively within the scope of a system of two assemblies.

A first objection is that a second assembly would have hardly any usefulness and effectiveness, an objection that looks a bit odd in a Europe in which 12 countries out of 15 have two-chamber legislatures. It is therefore an objection that seems to have no great justification.

A second objection is the risk of conflict between the two assemblies, the European Parliament and representatives of national parliaments. In any bicameral system there is necessarily one chamber that has priority.

A further objection is that such a second assembly would have hardly any competence. This has yet to be determined, but it is already very clear that a competence that might pertain to it would be to protect the rights and powers of states relative to the Union.

Finally, some say that duplication is unacceptable, yet in many parliaments there are double mandates, cumulative mandates, and this has never been much of a hindrance.

To sum up, the question of the place of national parliaments in European institutions is important. It calls for debate in depth and with all the desirable attention. This is notably COSAC's task. I think it would be desirable for it to decide that the working group

should continue its work, its consideration of the collective role of national parliaments, up to the IGC meeting scheduled for 2004 and that this point be amplified in the draft contribution of the COSAC chairmanship, i.e. the Swedish presidency.

I would add that it would be useful for the proceedings of COSAC and its working group to be used by a convention that might meet with a view to preparing for the IGC. The task of that convention would be not to decide but to think about and present options for achieving, if possible, a new architecture of the European institutions, incorporating notably the national parliaments.

Mr David Martin, European Parliament: The European Parliament regards the European Parliament and national parliaments as partners in bringing more democracy, transparency and legitimacy to European decision-making. We in no way see the two different sets of institutions as rivals but as collaborators, ensuring that governments and European institutions are held to account for the actions and decisions taken on European level.

As regards 2004, I think this time around national parliaments have a chance to play a unique role. The role can be separated into three stages. The first stage is of debate and ideas, a second stage of formal proposals and a third stage of ratification.

In the terms of debate and ideas, I accept that national parliaments and indeed regional parliaments are close to their people and should be the vehicle for conducting as wide a range of public discussion as possible on what the future shape of Europe should be.

The second stage, having got the debate going, having shared the ideas, should be the stage of making formal proposals. The Convention is the obvious vehicle for doing that. Unless the governments are engaged in this debate, then it will just be yet another general contribution to the future shape of Europe. If through the Convention method we have the parliaments, the Commission, the governments, all sharing ideas and all forced at the end of the process to come to a series of conclusions, even if these conclusions themselves contain options, then that is a proposal that would have to be taken extremely seriously by the Inter-IGC. A convention would carry far more weight than any rival body. I am afraid that also includes COSAC. COSAC is an important vehicle for the discussion, for the exchange of ideas, but COSAC lacks that governmental dimension the Convention would have integral to the governments.

The third stage, of course, is where the national parliaments play an absolutely unique role, and that is the stage of ratification. If having engaged the population in debate, if having been part of making the formal proposals, the national parliaments then found that the final document adopted by the heads of government didn't contain their ideas, then of course national parliaments would be in a very strong position to reject any treaty.

Mr Tino Bedin, Italy: Recently Andreas Maurer said that national parliaments not only have not been on the train to Brussels, the tendency seems to be that there is a move away from parliamentarianism to a more national approach and a bureaucratic approach. This conclusion is something that should lead us to think twice, and should lead us to a renewed commitment to find a common statement, working individually and together to confirm the central role that parliaments should and can play – national parliaments setting the sights in the way governments should act in the European Union. It is particularly important, particularly in the Protocol on the national parliaments, and

this should be reiterated in the conclusions of this COSAC meeting.

We are all convinced that there is a need to get public opinion involved in the current phase of thinking of the future of Europe. I think that there is a need to avoid that in this table we have various NGO's and other non-parliamentary people speaking within an equal footing. National parliaments must be recognised as the organizer of this round table, if you will, dealing with the future of Europe at the national level. In particular, I would say that national parliaments need to be able to move in order to be at crossroads institutionally speaking, representing the full range of democratic forces acting in Europe, a meeting place where parliamentarians can meet from Europe and also a place for local and regional governments to be able to meet as well. I think it is important that there are bilateral links between the individual parliamentary assemblies on these subjects.

Mr Hubert Haenel, France: I would like to mention that in the debate which is opening on the future of the European Union national parliaments have a fundamental role to play in helping to provide the construction of Europe with a renewed sense of direction and legitimacy. It may to some extent be said that national parliaments have to some extent to take over the European debate.

As regards COSAC, I fully endorse your proposal that COSAC participate continuously up to 2004 in the debate on the future of the Union. Before we go our separate ways tomorrow, we therefore need to make up our minds to say yes, we COSAC wish to be very much present continuously in the European debate up to 2004, and establish, without any doubt, the most pertinent method.

Regarding a convention to be entrusted not with participating in the whole European debate but with preparing the IGC of 2004, it is doubtless the Laeken summit under Belgian presidency that should determine the mandate and establish the method of the convention, a new formula. That's as far as I wish to go. We must not purely and simply transpose what we knew when we prepared the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

This morning we discussed the problem of enlargement. It seems to me that it would be a good signal to candidate countries to assure them that they will participate fully in that future convention on an equal terms.

Finally, some statements have given the impression of "opposing" both convention and COSAC. COSAC and convention are institutions of different kinds. An overloaded convention to which everything was supposed to be entrusted might render COSAC superfluous. I think not. There is no duplication. A convention is a Council mandate on a precise topic, with an ad-hoc composition and for a specified time. COSAC draws its legitimacy from a treaty. It is a permanent institution where only representatives of the national parliaments of members countries, of candidate countries and of the European Parliament are present. It is free to discuss all topics and to establish its method and procedure for itself.

Mr Bogdan Barovic, Slovenia: We have heard that in quite a few candidate states people's will to join the EU is not as strong as it was. One of the reasons for such situation is that there is not enough strong link between each person in a particular country and the EU. The strongest link would have to be the national parliament. National parliaments will have to open more political debate in their countries. A very important role is the role of members of parliaments who are present at EU committee

meetings. They should co-operate with committees in the national parliaments, and members of committees in national parliament should have to co-operate more intensively at EU committee meetings.

Mr Liviu Maior, Romania: I want to raise a problem which is of great interest for the candidate countries, i.e. the problem of JPCs (joint parliamentary committees). The links between the national parliaments in the candidate countries and the European Parliament are these committees, which are doing in many ways the work specific to the parliaments in the member states.

I want to ask you if it is possible for the next COSAC meeting to have a discussion about this matter and maybe to create some branch of COSAC in which the presidents of the joint parliamentary committees from the member states, the European Parliament and the candidate states can have some sort of organization of their own. I think COSAC is the best way in which such a branch can function.

Mr Kars Veling, Netherlands: There is discussion as to whether we should promote legitimacy at a European level moving towards strengthening the European identity, or if instead we should focus more on reinforcing the role of the national parliaments. In any event, democracy in terms of scrutiny of power and the policy for that is of essential importance. For this democratic legitimacy it is equally important to have greater transparency and uncomplicated decision-making structures, as well as thorough procedures along with the input of national parliaments to be able to follow developments.

Today some people are calling for new forms of reinforcing democratic legitimacy. Some people are advocating strengthening COSAC toward that end. I am convinced that strengthening a new body with a view to democratic legitimacy does not necessarily produce the result expected. Some people have advocated that we opt for the Convention instrument in paving the way for the upcoming IGC. Of course such a convention is a good instrument, because various parties can be involved in important matters. I agree with the Swedish Presidency in office that as soon as a convention deals with such important matters, whether it is a change of a treaty in any form or shape, the question of legitimacy of such a convention will also come more into question, meaning that the national parliaments and the way in form that this convention will have to be reconsidered. My conclusion is that with a view to strengthening democratic legitimacy we don't have any guaranties that it will happen through a convention. Transparency is an important cornerstone in determining the legitimacy of the European institutions and procedures, whatever they are.

Mr Silvio Rui Cervan, Portugal: There is no European public opinion, rather there are fifteen public opinions in Europe. Of course that enriches the construction of Europe and makes this construction central. I think the model of the Convention is a model, which should be seen as complementary to the work of the national parliaments, otherwise the fifteen public opinions would be taken further apart from each other. The question is important in the construction of Europe. Either we can activate our parliaments and public opinions by making them more active actors in the construction of Europe, or we will have a model which is exclusive in character – the elites and the public opinion.

Another point for those who think, like I, that bodies like COSAC are important and decisive. What I am concerned about today is to see that at the most 3 % in my country

know who are their representatives of their country here today. It may not be so important, but it could help us to reverse the situation. In order to reverse the situation it isn't possible for us to do that by treating it through mechanisms like the Convention. Therefore I am making this warning. I think this discussion can't be conducted on this basis. If we don't involve the national parliaments it will be fruitless, I think.

Mr Panos Kammenos, Greece: What we are discussing today here will be understood by our people, in reality in three, four or five years. In the meantime we will have to take into account bad mentalities, bad intentions and different points of views. I say this, because let's say in Greece, 95 % of the Greek population and all the parties, except the Communist Party, believe in tomorrow's Europe and they are working for tomorrow's Europe.

This role that should be played by the national parliaments should be supported by us through COSAC, but also through other initiatives that aren't on an inter-parliamentary level.

Concerning the new technology and the communication between parliaments I will give you an example. If a Finnish MP wants to see what happens in the meetings of the Greek Parliament, he should know the topic, so he requires the minutes, i.e. translated minutes from Greek. I believe finally this MP will not be able to collect the elements he wishes to collect. The same will happen with our parliament and all other parliaments. We should support and turn into reality electronic communication between parliaments and transmission of information between our parliaments.

In Greece today we have a very interesting case that is in the court. We are talking about corruption and money laundering, where the German Parliament has resolved this problem since 1997. We do not have the possibility to have the files of the committee of the German Parliament of the tenth and eleventh month of 1997. Here we see how important this communication between parliaments is.

Finally I would like to ask my colleagues, the representatives present here in the COSAC meeting, to adopt as national parliaments and as COSAC the proposal of the French President, Mr. Chirac, for the abolition of the death penalty in all countries, which has been abolished in the member states of the European Union but also for the countries that are candidate countries to become members of the European Union. This should be transferred as a point of view of the totality of the national parliaments in the meeting we are going to have with the President of the United States.

Mr Knud Erik Hansen, Denmark: Drawing up a charter is different from discussing the EU and the structures. That is a very big task. I think there are two different wishes for a convention. There is a wish that in reality to use the Convention to move influence from national states, from the IGC, to the Convention, for me that would be problematic. A convention or a forum is a good body if we leave it to the states, to the IGC, to take the decisions. When we have democracy, democracy is not about taking positions, rather to have a dialogue and a debate. Here we have a forum and a convention. It is therefore a very big task. Therefore we must prioritize and have an open process. The task of the Convention, or the forum, shouldn't just be to have one proposal, rather there should be different views. If there are different views, which can't be reconciled, the task is to describe these different views so we have a good basis for the debate in Europe. It also means that to a greater extent than the Convention we can incorporate various national interests. Two representatives from each country will be

too few to incorporate various interests. There should be a broader representation, so we can have the different wishes covered in the various countries. That leads me to say that it isn't perhaps the Convention experience which is the most important. The experience we have from COSAC and the composition in COSAC could be the basis, and if we can build on the experience in COSAC we can perhaps build up a forum where we can deal with the various views.

Ms Maria Arseni, Greece: I think there is something that is rather going wrong between the citizens of Europe and the European Union. There is no question that today's member states have made huge attempts for a very, very long time to be good member states in this European Union. The same efforts have got to be made by the candidate member states. But nowadays the citizens of Europe, at least in the member states, have the feeling that they should take part in whatever is going on at the European level and even at a global level. If they want to be able to benefit from globalisation they have to use the only instruments that there are at an international level, i.e. international—supernational co-operation.

Today's citizen feels that there are discussions going on above his head. The European citizen has the feeling today that things are happening for him but without him. Today's citizen quite naturally feels that he or she would like to participate fully in the procedures going on in Europe. COSAC is very important in today's Europe, but the national parliaments are also extremely important. The national parliaments are the link between the public opinion and whatever is going on at the European level in the European Union. The national parliaments have got the means to inform, they can help citizens, they can inform the European Union about whatever the citizen wants to tell the European Union.

National parliaments can institute an internal dialogue with the citizens with youth organisations, representatives with local government, with NGO's, with the whole of civil society.

Mr Krzysztof Majka, Poland: I would like to mark a few problems which are looked upon more from a point of view of the candidate countries.

Point no 1. From the Nice document one can draw a conclusion that the candidate countries have secured a voice in the debate of the IGC Conference 2004. The countries, which will sign the accession treaties, will participate directly in the conference and on equal terms. Those, which will not be able to sign the Treaty before this day, will have a status of observer. It is not clear, however, what will be the candidate status before it, i.e. this year, next year and 2003, i.e. when the most important stage of preparatory discussion will be taking place. A quick decision in this matter is necessary. Concluding: The national parliaments of the candidate countries are to be incorporated on equal terms into the discussion preparing the decisions, which will finally be taken during the IGC 2004.

Point no 2. National parliaments of the candidate countries during the pre-accession period are incorporated into certain platforms of discussion like e.g. COSAC and the joint parliamentary committee. JPC is, I believe, a powerful instrument for external contacts of candidates and integration with EU institutions. After the accession candidate countries will gain, of course, the right of being elected into the European Parliament. It is very good. But they lose JPC, an important information and participation in this discussion channel. To improve the situation COSAC should be

strengthened and its role be developed. But to make COSAC a more powerful instrument the rules of procedures should be changed, especially in order to improve the decision-taking procedures, to introduce perhaps different procedures, then reaching consensus procedures.

Point no 3. The national parliaments of candidate countries are definitely doing a tremendous job incorporating the *acquis communautaire* into the national law systems and at the same time working on the scrutiny of the negotiating procedures being in touch with the societies. This requires a sound and effective system of internal co-operation between parliament and government.

Ms Fientje Moerman, Belgium: First of all I would like to make a preliminary comment. The problem of parliamentary control is not confined to the European context, as stressed in the excellent study submitted to us. The technical nature, complexity and rapid rate of change are speeding the decrease in parliamentary control that national parliaments are undergoing following the transfer of competence to the European level and, in certain countries, including mine, to regional level.

The first thing to do is therefore perhaps to reassess parliamentary work as such both in the European Parliament and in national parliaments.

Second point: Organising the next intergovernmental conference. We obviously think that it is necessary to involve national parliaments in the preparation of the next IGC. But that will not suffice. There needs to be a generalised debate in each of our countries and the organising of such a debate is the responsibility of each of us. The discussions concerned must not, yet again, take place over the heads of European citizens.

Thirdly: We support the convention idea. Parliamentary representation in such a convention needs to be broad enough to allow all shades of political opinion to be expressed. However, the success of such a convention will depend very largely on the content of the Brussels-Laeken declaration, which ought to define clearly the agenda, the procedure and the items on the agenda of the convention and should also, by raising the question, already trace the outlines of the institutional (I would even say constitutional) debate.

Finally, we think that the idea of a second chamber composed of representatives of the national parliaments will not help to eliminate, on the contrary it might even increase, this distance between citizens and European policy. Not only is it almost impossible from the practical point of view but this third chamber, which is what it really is, will further reduce transparency vis-à-vis citizens.

Mr Guenter Gloser, Germany: On many occasions we have talked about the European citizens. If they were in this room today they would ask what the members are talking about. They are talking about the role of national parliaments. These citizens would ask themselves why. Do these parliamentarians not have their rights in their own parliaments? Why do they not exercise their rights vis-à-vis their governments? That would be the first point.

If we were to give our draft to citizens – national parliaments are closer to the voters, as it says, we are closer than the MEPs – these citizens would ask: "Why do we vote for European Members of Parliament if the others are closer to the voters? Why do we need them?" Putting the question the other way around, I think there is no misunderstanding:

Everybody says it is not against the MEPs. What are we doing at the European Parliament to ensure that these European parliamentarians get their rights so that we can talk about a true parliament?

The citizens would ask themselves: I have no idea who is responsible for what. My conclusion from many debates is to say: Here too there must be transparency about the decision structures. Who is responsible for what?

We shouldn't have any contradictions between COSAC and its field of responsibility and the Convention. I think the Convention is one possibility with a limited task with all actors in the European process to put forward a result. We must be critical towards ourselves. I can see in Germany. I am just saying for my own position, from my observations of the Convention for a charter of fundamental rights. More has been said in the newspapers in Germany about other institutions in the EU. Since we are interested in transparency we should take that aspect into account too.

Mr Elmar Brok, European Parliament: I think we realise that we have the common interest of parliamentarians against the executive of the member states. I think it is necessary to strengthen national parliaments in the European integration process, in particular vis-à-vis the national governments as members of the Council. Also the European Parliament must be strengthened in its role. There isn't a contradiction whether we are close to the populations or not. We are all voted by the citizens, and all votes are equally valuable. COSAC has a role in terms of exchanging information, so that we are up to this task.

I have taken part in IGCs twice as a representative of the European Parliament, in Amsterdam and Nice. The preparatory work that I was involved in I think isn't the work that would make sense in the future. Working up to Nice there was better work on the Charter on fundamental rights than in the IGC. This was because of the interaction of the European Parliament and national parliaments. Based on that experience, we should take the Convention forward. There isn't any contradiction between the Convention and the COSAC.

I'd like to make a point when it comes to legitimacy and legislation. We should see together that all European institutions who are involved in legislation aren't public, and that means it is an obstacle in the way of national parliaments and citizens being informed. I am talking about the Council of Ministers. All those who are involved in legislating should meet in public, and the Council of Ministers must be subject to parliamentary monitoring. Here e.g. the proposal of Chancellor Schröder moves towards a position that ought to interest us parliamentarians. That is also a position we ought to support.

Ms Liia Hänni, Estonia: I want to recall your attention to the role of national parliaments in candidate countries. The most important aspect of our role is to ensure the public support to the accession process. In Estonia we have decided to share our responsibility with the people and to have a referendum on the accession.

In Estonia Eurosceptics are a growing movement. People ask a lot of questions of what will await us being a Member of the European Union. We do not have definite answers to all questions. It is necessary to explain to people that the European Union is a process, a changing process and democratic process, and a science, and it can be done now when we negotiate about the conditions to be a member of the European Union.

We can all give evidence that democratic values are very important for all of us.

Speaking about the future of Europe, very often federalist Europe is mentioned. It is one of the main arguments of Eurosceptics in Estonia against the European Union. Therefore we need to very clearly define what we mean when speaking about federalism. We understand that the federalistic approach is a very useful tool to have more transparent institutional set-up, but we hope also that it means that the basic values of the European Union, among them national identity, and the national states will be maintained in this process.

Ms Tuija Brax, Finland: There has been a lot of criticism of the representativeness of the Convention. From experience I can tell you that the problem can be reduced if the national parliaments or their committees are listened to in the Convention.

I was the representative of the Finnish Parliament in the Convention. I was an expert in our national parliament, in the EU Committee and the Committee on the Constitution, on many occasions. In many issues I got a very clear de facto mandate for what issues I should bring to the Convention. The mandate wasn't based on the Constitution, but it is clear as a loyal MP in my parliament I stuck to it.

I just wanted to say it is very important that if we will have a sort of convention we should organize ways in our own parliaments how representatives get their mandate, what they do and also how they are monitored as they do their work.

Environment

Mr Lars Tobisson, Deputy chairman: Good morning, dear colleagues! This morning we are to devote ourselves to environmental policy. We will turn first to Swedish environment minister Kjell Larsson who is preparing on behalf of the Presidency what is to take place in this respect at the summit meeting in the beautiful city of Gothenburg. I say this because that is where both the environment minister and I are originally from. As Kjell Larsson has unfortunately to hurry off to another engagement, he has to leave us immediately after 9.30 this morning. We shall then hear from environment commissioner Margot Wallström. She too has environmental issues as her speciality but has agreed to respond also to other questions concerning the Commission's work. But let me now call upon Kjell Larsson.

Mr Kjell Larsson, Minister for the Environment: Good morning! I feel it a great honour for me to be able to address this select gathering. This is a fascinating time to be environment minister and to be chairman of the EU environment committee. I have thought about what we are really dealing with, with a view to looking more deeply. For many years I worked with former Swedish prime minister Olof Palme. The main orientation of his speeches and thinking was of course very much concerned with international solidarity and democracy, but a concept that often recurred was our need to have belief in the future not only on a personal level but also as a basis for what we want to accomplish together with others in our neighbourhood, in national movements, in organisations, in nations and for the whole world. Belief in the future needs to be a driving force for measures that spring from democracy and from political work. Environment work just now in the Union, but also in the world, is very much concerned with how we are to achieve a belief in the future, not least among young people in the world today.

When we had a meeting in New York a fortnight ago on international climate policy, ambassador Slade from Samoa was as usual the leading representative of the small island states. During the long discussion we had, a discussion with a gloomy tone due to the new US administration's decision not to participate in the Kyoto process, ambassador Slade said that the Kyoto protocol was their lifeline to the future. It is natural for a representative of the small island states that are particularly threatened by ongoing climate change to look at the matter in this light. Ambassador Slade made his point very emphatically, backed by the weight of all his experience. But what he said applies not merely to small island states. I think it also applies in the highest degree to all other countries that are in various ways threatened by climatic change, which is not merely a remote threat to us but is taking place right now.

When the EU troika visited Japan, I tried to base what I had to say on our having started building a metaphorical house in Rio when the climate convention was adopted nine years ago. We built more of the house in Kyoto when we decided on the Kyoto protocol. Since then we have tried to equip the house properly in order to make it as appropriate to its purpose and as cost effective as may be desired and as effective in other respects as possible. At the autumn meeting in The Hague we had little equipment work left to do, but we had not really finished. We had built the house because we sensed that a storm was on the way. In The Hague we not only sensed the storm, we could already see it above the horizon. Then one country decided to stop participating in the building of the house and to try instead to build a completely different house. I am telling this story because there was a different house at the meeting we had in Paris a few days ago, the house described by the American negotiator. He said that when we become aware of smoke from a fire, we don't immediately jump out of the window. We try to see where the smoke is coming from. In other words, we've got plenty of time. We can spend much more time on finding other solutions than those in the Kyoto protocol.

My answer to the American delegate was simple. I pointed out that it was at least 15 years since we had first smelt smoke. By now we no longer merely smell smoke, we actually see the flames and feel the heat from the fire. Then one member of the family, instead of using the quite good equipment available to us for beginning to extinguish the fire, does some kind of market research into fire extinguishers to find out which is the best possible. We have no time for that. We have a Kyoto protocol that took us nine years to work out. That is the equipment we have. It is good equipment designed by us to try to meet all the problems and achieve good solutions. It is the only possible way of meeting what is presumably the greatest threat to our common future.

It was therefore natural for the EU, and the Presidency, to put a great deal of effort into keeping the Kyoto process going during the spring, with a multitude of contacts, visits to various major capital cities, and considering how to develop a good negotiating strategy before the meeting in Bonn. The outlook is of course sombre. It is difficult to achieve a global solution to a global problem if the largest and most powerful country declines to stay on board. It is also the country that certainly generates, not only as a whole but also per capita, the largest output of greenhouse gases. We have to try to continue the work, try to unite all other countries behind the Kyoto protocol and achieve a result in Bonn in the summer that enables us to live up to the target the EU has long had of ratifying the Kyoto protocol next year.

We have also to develop in our various EU member countries, and in the candidate

countries, good methods of our own for dealing with our own share of the problem, our own discharges of greenhouse gases. In this connection I view in a positive light the efforts being made by the Commission to develop a European climate programme. I naturally also view in a positive light the many efforts being made in various member countries, including Sweden, to reduce the climatic impact. This is of course an area that needs to be central both in the EU's sixth environmental action programme and in the strategy for sustainable development.

Regarding the sixth environment action programme the Commission has got the priorities right. It is no secret that the Council of Ministers would like to have more concrete objectives. We are now working on seeing whether this is possible in close collaboration with the Commission. I think we need to be able to take decisions about the environmental action programme at our next Environmental Committee at the beginning of June so that the environmental action programme will provide the basis for the ecological part of the sustainability strategy at the summit meeting in Gothenburg. Let me on this occasion here express my particular gratitude to the European Parliament, which has worked on the programme under enormous time pressure and has done a fantastic job in this comprehensive document and has really accepted its responsibility for it being possible to have a good basis for the summit meeting in Gothenburg.

This is an exciting time to be environment minister. The same also applies to the work chemicals, which is closely related to the environmental action programme. One of the environmental action programme priorities is the connection between health and environment. With regard to chemicals we are facing something of a change of paradigm in that we shall now transfer to companies far more of the burden of proof in respect of chemicals. We shall ensure proper risk assessment of the very large quantities of chemicals that have long been in use. We have to ensure that consumers and other users will be able to have access to proper information on the content and the risks pertaining to different chemicals. This is a strong Swedish priority. We have also to ensure that we handle brominated flameproofing agents and other persistent and bio-accumulable agents in such a way as to enable us to avoid the problems we now see in this connection. This requires strong measures, including the development of substitute chemicals that do not have biological characteristics.

The chemicals issue applies not only at EU level. Here in Sweden we have worked out a new chemicals policy on which our work on EU chemicals policy is of course based. Global chemicals issues are also topical. The reason why I have to leave here rather quickly is that I have to attend and open a conference on POPs, *persistent organic pollutants*. Tomorrow I shall be signing a new global environment convention, the first in this new century, on prohibiting and phasing out twelve highly toxic and dangerous persistent chemicals. This is an expression of the activity taking place at global level. There is no doubt that it is the most important step that has ever been taken globally on chemicals issues. It is important not least because chemicals have a frightening ability to spread across the surface of the earth. As they migrate more easily in warm than in colder environments, the result is a steady accumulation of chemicals in the regions around the Arctic. It is among Inuits and polar bears that the highest concentrations of chemicals occur, despite the hundreds of miles that separate them from the locations where the discharges of chemicals occur. This in itself is good reason for being very strict about chemicals.

Another aspect that is exciting is that we are working in a completely different way

from previously in trying to achieve an integrated policy, trying to apply a comprehensive view when forming policy. I am thinking here, as we all realise, of sectorial integration and the work on developing a strategy for sustainable development. We are looking at all this not merely sector by sector, we are not merely considering economic, social and ecological factors, we are trying to weave all this together into a sustainable policy steeped in comprehensive thinking.

We have reason for optimism, based on good support from the Commission, that the summit meeting in Gothenburg should be able to establish a durable strategy, thought through in concrete terms, whereby we shall also ensure that this thinking remains high on the agenda of the European Council for a very long time to come. This can be a long-term endeavour in our work to achieve good development for our citizens.

What in concrete terms is involved? There are primarily four sectors to be covered if sustainability is to be possible. One of them is of course transport, the increasing amount of which does not fall within the scope of what is sustainable in the long term. We have to achieve various strategies for shifting from road to rail, for introducing new fuels, for imposing system taxation and kilometre taxation, possibly congestion taxes, for ensuring that technology can be developed so that transport becomes more ecologically acceptable. All this will require a whole spectrum of different measures. It will take a long time.

The second sector is energy. The most important element in reforming this sector is constantly to increase the use of renewable energies, not least for climatic reasons. In this respect Europe is making quite good headway. Much more can be done, and much more needs to be done. I look forward to working with concrete objectives on how development towards renewable energies should progress. I think we have in this respect to try to produce a concrete and strong response to the American energy policy set out last week which is largely based on increasing use of fossil fuels, which clearly confirms that the USA does not take climate issues as seriously as it should. We have to produce a concrete and sound answer in this respect. We have to create the conditions required for technical development. We have to create the conditions required for incorporating environmental costs into energy prices in order to encourage the development of renewable energies, and do so in a manner that is also economically sustainable and can meet a modern society's energy needs.

Agriculture is also concerned. I think it is now high time to put serious effort into shaping development trends towards more quality-oriented agriculture, more environment-friendly agriculture, and to incorporate some of the biodiversity issues into agricultural policy. There should be a golden opportunity for doing so now. It is a particular aspect that concerns the candidate countries. The EU tends to regard the candidate countries as somewhat inferior on environmental issues. It is clear that there is some environmental legislation which is slightly more advanced in the EU and which candidate countries are working hard to adopt. But in one respect the candidate countries are ahead. They have far better conditions for good long-term biodiversity within their territory. They have more wetlands, more potential for maintaining the biodiversity that we have in many ways destroyed. I therefore consider it important to incorporate the candidate countries into the EU in a manner that protects the existing biological wealth in many of the candidate countries. This is a major challenge for us when discussing enlargement.

Then there is fishing. I have said many times that if people had seen what we are doing

with large parts of the sea off Sweden's coasts and off many other coasts, there would have been something of an environmental revolution in our countries. If we had treated our forests and fields and other land areas in the same way as we treat the bottom of the sea, if we had treated the biological diversity on land in the same way as we treat the biological diversity in the sea, there would have been something of a revolution. I think it has to be a major priority to rectify this, not only for the sake of the environment but also for the long-term livelihood of fishermen and others.

On a visit to Kenya last winter, I went to Kitale in northwestern Kenya. We drove through a landscape that showed signs of potentially infinite fertility, but we also saw how the land was grazed bare, how erosion had blown away the soil, how water erosion had washed soil in ravines down into small rivers and on to the sea. We saw clearly how the desert was beginning to approach and was already almost there. We met a farmer who told us about his life on a smallholding with three huts and a family of 8-10 persons. He said they had no pasture in the vicinity because it was grazed bare and the desert was near at hand. He had to take his two cows and walk a long way to reach pasture. He sometimes had to be away for months. His sons had to look after the cows and look for pasture. As they were away so much they could not go to school. His daughters stayed home. As the cows were with them, his daughters got no milk. This is an extremely striking example of the close connection between environment and poverty experienced by billions of people on our planet.

This is also a driving force for our preparations for the major meeting in Johannesburg next year, ten years after the important Rio meeting and 30 years after the 1972 global environment meeting in Stockholm that actually marked the beginning of global environmental work. The connection between environment and poverty has to be a central issue at the Johannesburg meeting. The most important thing to be achieved before the meeting is to overcome the present mistrust between the developed world and developing countries, a mistrust arising largely from a feeling that we are not accepting our responsibility for climatic effects. 80% of all greenhouse gas discharges since 1950 have come from the industrial world. The mistrust is based on our not living up to our aid targets and on our having unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. There is of course reason for our being mistrusted in relation to many aspects of the development of poor countries, e.g. corruption, bribery, poorly functioning systems, money that disappears. This mistrust needs to be overcome for us to be able to establish a real partnership between the rich and poor worlds. Without such real partnership we shall not be able to develop the world towards greater sustainability. Not for one moment should we imagine that we can create sustainable development in our part of the world and that such development is really sustainable in the long term if we cannot also achieve such development in other parts of the world. There is no partial sustainability. To have real sustainability we have to have the rest of the world with us.

This means that we have to prepare for proper development of comprehensive environment management worldwide. There is more to be done. There is a need for stronger organisations, stronger conventions, more conventions, ratified conventions, conventions that have come into force, enabling the real environmental work to develop positively. Effort is also needed as regards writing off debts and increasing the development aid actually promised by the development world during the Rio conference. Measures are also needed in many other respects.

Under our presidency, a conference is being organised in south-eastern Sweden for 250 young people of 18-20 years of age from 110 countries. What I would like to give them

is the belief in the future I mentioned previously. We have possibilities for developing good solutions not only in our own countries and in our own lives but also for development throughout the world. If we can achieve and spread belief in the future to all similar young people worldwide, we will have gone a long way. I can therefore still say that this is an immensely exciting time in environmental policy. So much of what we do is of significance for the future. So much of what we do can affect development. So much of what we do can lead to better, richer and healthier lives for future generations. It is of course an enormous source of satisfaction to have such tasks and such possibilities. Thank you for your attention.

Mr Lars Tobisson, Deputy chairman: Thank you very much, Kjell Larsson. We now go straight on to hear what Margot Wallström has to say on the same subject. Questions about the Commission's work in other respects may also be put to her. Over to you, commissioner Wallström.

Ms Margot Wallström, Member of the European Commission: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I likewise wish you good morning and welcome to Stockholm. Thank you for inviting me to this important conference, which certainly aims above all at seeing in what ways, the role of national parliaments can be strengthened within European collaboration. Your discussions and the resolutions that will be adopted are a major contribution to the ongoing general debate about the EU's future. I hope that COSAC will continue to be active in the process, which also involves preparing for our next major intergovernmental conference in 2004.

I am particularly glad to see so many representatives from candidate countries, hopefully soon to become new EU member states, and the fact that you are participating in the debate on how to shape future European Cupertino is extremely significant in already increasing knowledge, interest and commitment at local, regional and national levels in your countries too.

I wish to focus my remarks less on what we hope to achieve and more on how we are to live up to the ambitious environmental targets we have set and how we can overcome unsustainable trends. New challenges call for new solutions. A possible starting point is the fact that there are new environmental problems. An evaluation by us of the fifth environmental action programme revealed major shortcomings on environmental policy within the Union, due to defective implementation of our environmental legislation and shortcomings in new methods, ways of working and involving all the various parties concerned, winning their commitment. We also notice that the nature of environmental problems is changing so that instead of concentrating on individual large discharge sources as we have done previously in terms of legislation, standards and discharge limits, we have to look at our lifestyle, our everyday way of life. What is creating the really big environmental problems is the patterns of consumption and production we have developed, our use of cars instead of buses (more and more of us have not just one car but several cars contributing to carbon dioxide discharges), how we consume and what products we consume. The nature of environmental problems has changed. There are many small discharge sources, our lifestyle and what we consume and produce from day to day have become matters of concern.

We have done very well in many respects. We have adopted solid environmental legislation over the last 30 years, with more than 200 legal enactments. We have had good success in improving the quality of, for example, air and water. But we also see new problems. One of the biggest is the refuse problem, as in the rest of the world. The

growth of refuse and garbage is certainly much greater than the growth of our economies. It is on the point of becoming a major worry as regards transport. 15% of all transport in France is of refuse. There are also concerns about enforcement. Having good and ambitious environmental legislation is not sufficient, it needs enforcing. Everyday measures in this respect are needed in member countries. A legal enactment is only as good as its enforcement.

We need new modes of working, new instruments and new forms of management. These needs are clearly expressed in the way we have written the sixth environmental action programme. To bring about the changes required for achieving sustainable development, we have to change our way of life. Everyone has to be involved. We need to create pressure from below, from electors and consumers - and of course in the production chain, i.e. how we make various products. One of the most difficult messages to convey as politicians is about people having to make changes in their day to day behaviour and their way of life. It may sound easier to change some laws. That's how the environmental problems look, and the big challenge. We have to realise that we all depend on having active consumers, and on having active producers and companies prepared to take responsibility. So how are we to ensure that we can mobilise broadly enough?

The first thing needed is more knowledge, better information and communication about the issues. I am naïve enough to think that it has to begin with children and young people. We have to put far more effort into ensuring that we encourage those who should be tomorrow's ambassadors for sustainable development and for a better environment. It would be interesting to find out how you in the national parliaments see your role and whether you can help in this respect.

The second need is for the Commission, the EU, to acknowledge that we do not each have any competence in this respect or particularly great resources for putting in the required education and training effort. What is concerned is fundamental insight about ecological relationships and how to create sustainable development. The foundations have to be laid in children and young people. Much still remains to be done. Think whether we might create alliances between member countries and candidate countries to learn from one another about methods, possibly with exchange of both teachers and pupils, to achieve really effective communication of knowledge about the environment and sustainable development.

The third need is to facilitate participation in decision-making and understanding when the various measures have to be implemented. We need to increase access to environmental information. We need to clarify and open up our decision-making processes. As you know, we now have a new Openness Act. The Commission is preparing a proposal entitled *good governance*. It concerns how to ensure the achievement of better organisation of decision-making, how better to prepare our decisions within the Union, how to anchor them more effectively at all levels, how to achieve better and more effective legislation, and legislation of higher quality. There are currently twelve working groups working on various aspects of how to really achieve further democratisation of our decision-making. This will be an important step in facilitating participation in decision-making and implementation processes.

We do of course also need to strengthen the means of economic control. This is particularly clear in the area of the environment. It is easy to talk grandly about millions, but we know that we have to ensure that we have effective control instruments

and tools. Real effects are needed where they will be felt most. They need to be in the wallet. We aim to create stronger economic control instruments that make more effective environmental policy. We need to achieve correct pricing. We need to create processes that result in our producing greener and more environment-friendly products. We need to encourage consumers to choose green products, to become aware in their choices and purchases.

We have also achieved new possibilities for a number of member countries to move forward, show the way, collaborate, in order to avoid letting the most reluctant decide the pace of change with regard to the environment.

We will also more clearly emphasise the importance of using public purchasing to achieve a greener profile of our products. This represents great economic value. If public purchasing is used at various levels in member countries, we can quite clearly see a movement towards sustainable development and greener production.

We need better collaboration and more partnership between different power levels. In this respect the role of national parliaments is important to achieving the right structures and having enough time for preparation, deciding when to obtain information, when to become involved in a decision-making process.

These issues are more important than ever in the light of the coming enlargement of the Union. The environment chapter will be one of the most difficult areas. We have been aware of this from the outset. Not only are there more than 200 legal enactments to be incorporated in national legislation, we also require candidate countries to present enforcement plans, including funding. There is a requirement for broad participation. Also required are appropriate arrangements at local and regional levels to ensure that responsibility for enforcement is gradually disseminated in the respective countries.

We have come a long way. I think that it was correct that the environment chapter be closed first for Slovenia. Slovenia has met the challenges that face all the candidate countries. There is often an existing old industrial structure with industries highly detrimental to the environment and major discharges. There is lack of infrastructure for dealing with water, waste, and wastewater. A great deal of investment is needed and will take time. This is taking time in member countries too. This is the greatest worry common to all the candidate countries. There are also a number of candidate countries that face particular problems of heavily polluted areas of land, including remains of military installations where there are special problems to be dealt with. In this respect we in the Commission have said, and the Council shares this view, that we can accept transitional rules for areas requiring heavy investment involving building up an infrastructure to take care of, for example, water and waste, but otherwise we are trying to keep transition periods as short and few as possible. We do not accept any transition periods for horizontal directives that have to do with the way environmental issues are handled, e.g. making environmental impact assessments or consulting citizens in various organisations in the processes. Nor will we allow exceptions for nature protection. So far we have succeeded. Candidate countries that have requested transition rules have withdrawn them.

An important point to make is that in describing candidate countries and environmental problems we have to be fair and mention that we are gaining access to fantastic biological diversity in the candidate countries. There are many systems we would have wished to have retained, I don't mean for nostalgic reasons, but many candidate

countries have public transport systems which certainly need modernising and updating but which have prevented many of the discharge problems and traffic congestion that member countries have in most of our large cities. How do we go about this? It is an enormous challenge. Most people's dream in the candidate countries is to get their own and a newer car. How do we handle this environmental challenge, i.e. both maintaining a properly functioning public transport system and coping with the increasing environmental problems and discharges from many more private cars?

The most important point, one which must guide us in our work, is that we have a living and committed vision for achieving successful European collaboration. I think we have to communicate and work with such a new vision. This is in order to be able to involve young people in European collaboration. I think we have the vision within reach. Remember that the idea of sustainable development, the concept that is so heavily criticised for being vague and difficult to convert into practical action, is still alive after 15 years. How can it be that Gro Harlem Brundtland succeeded 15 years ago in formulating a concept, an idea, that is still alive today? The fact is that the sustainable development concept makes it possible for us to reconcile economic and social policy with environmental policy in a unique manner. We see that it affords possibilities for the future. It is precisely with a global view that we can create a vision for the future, something that can hold good for a long period, a new form of enhanced quality of life incorporating not only the economic and social but also the ecological.

We need your participation and strong support for the preparations for the summit meeting in Gothenburg and thereafter so that we can succeed in implementing this. You are of course needed now to help to bring the candidate countries closer and into the EU in a successful manner. Your role is absolutely crucial in the environmental area. This is of course because you are democratically anchored and have democratic legitimacy, which it is important to create for the whole decision-making process that we shall have in the European Union. I wish you success with the conference and thereafter and hope that we shall achieve good collaboration. Thank you for listening to me.

Mr Lars Tobisson, Deputy chairman: We thank commissioner Margot Wallström for her input. Let us go straight on to further input from participants.

Ms Tuija Brax, Finland: Thank you very much for minister Larsson's speech. Ecologically speaking, the Baltic Sea is in danger. A lot is being done, but unfortunately a lot has not been done yet. It is very important in Stockholm that we are able to reach an agreement on the wastewater treatment plant for St Petersburg. It is very important for the Gulf of Finland. Saving the Baltic Sea involves a lot of bodies and that we don't have efficient means to save the Baltic Sea. I don't know what the level of knowledge is in the EU countries about the ecological state of the Baltic Sea. A third of the seabed is dead. It is the biggest desert in the EU. I am not sure whether the EU can see the fact the seabed in the Baltic is the Sahara of the EU. The Swedish Presidency has stressed the Northern Dimension and the environment, but we are far from the EU developing sufficient measures for protecting the Baltic Sea. Partly the EU countries don't know how much more vulnerable the Baltic Sea is than the Mediterranean. The Baltic Sea is more shallow and its salt content is lower than that in the Mediterranean. It can't take as much pollution as the Mediterranean. We in the EU have to save both seas. Therefore I'd like to ask the minister, or his representative, what the role of the EU is going to be in saving the Baltic Sea. I think we are still missing one efficient link in saving the Baltic Sea, and I think that the EU could be this link.

Mr José Eduardo Martins, Portugal: I would like to thank the efforts of the Swedish Presidency in this area. The various ways to turn the tide is to develop a common environment policy as defined in Cardiff. We have a strategy of sustainability, which is based mainly on ecological measures and legislative measures to develop models and structures so that the environment aspects can be taken into account in the economy as a whole. There should be a balance between economic dynamism and sustainability of the ecosystem. The EU is a bloc of worldwide importance, and we must be a pioneer vis-à-vis the other blocs. Therefore we have a big responsibility. The responsibility of the US isn't being shouldered. We listened and agreed with minister Larsson about the USA. But this assumes that the Community takes action rapidly as regards the Kyoto Protocol. Environmental points should be implemented having to do with emissions as regards the Commission document being discussed at the moment and which we support. The important chapter on public health hasn't been given much attention in terms of environmental awareness, and we would like the policy of the Union to be more ambitious. The conclusion of the Gothenburg summit should lay weight on environmental questions in education. We are all passengers on this earth, and we must remind the citizens of the EU of this. As regards the strategy of sustainable development we must take into account the overall European perspective. We have environmental diversity, and that will increase with enlargement. Therefore the chapters on environmental protection are very important in the negotiations with the candidate countries, and in the name of economic and social cohesion we must take into account the precautionary principle. It is difficult to have a transversal policy and recognise the need that the goals and tools should be implemented throughout Europe to protect these areas. Environment policy and cohesion policy must be incorporated in order to recognise the economic dimension.

Mr Hans Blokland, European Parliament: First of all, as the Chairman in office of the Environment Committee I would like to start by thanking Kjell Larsson as well as Commissioner Wallström for their very stimulating presentations reflecting their policies, something in broad terms the European Parliament can whole-heartedly agree with.

Next week on Wednesday and Thursday the European Parliament will be considering three reports of great importance when it comes to this move towards the Gothenburg summit on sustainability. First of all, Mrs. Miller's report on the sixth environmental programme. The Environment Committee of the European Parliament greatly appreciates the value of the sixth environmental programme, and we agree with the priority areas avoiding climate change, maintaining natural diversity, promoting the link between health and the environment, and of course these are the most significant environmental problems of our day and age. However, in the European Parliament we would like the sixth environmental action programme to be characterised by a greater sense of vision, more attention going to policy lines for the future, and more attention going to strategies. The operational secondary objectives must be more specific in order to shape an environmental policy. Furthermore, it is not sufficiently clear where responsibilities lie and what the timetable is for implementation of this programme. More attention needs to be paid to enlargement. And that is the reason why the Environment Committee last week on Monday tabled 245 amendments, sending them to the Parliament as a whole. These and many other points do call for more stringent measures and clarification.

The second report of importance when it comes to the summit on sustainability is Ms. Hulthén's report on environmental policy and sustainable development. The resolution

on this subject that will be submitted next week in the European Parliament observes that the Commission has gone through a thorough and honest analysis of existing policy. In a number of areas the Commission quite rightly draws attention to the negative trends that are caused by the current policy of the Union. The Commission made the right choice when it comes to the choices health, climate change, clean energy, managing natural resources, avoiding social exclusion, demographic figures, increasingly old population and agriculture. I think the policy of the Commission has to put right the lack of certain dimensions and sectors being covered. If you don't establish that connection with the rest of the world you cannot have a truly sustainable policy. The Commission document is too unilateral a view in the opinion of the European Parliament. It focuses too much on the economics. The European Parliament thinks that the economics can be a point of departure for analysis, but not alone.

The third report that the Environment Committee will be submitting to the Parliament involves the communication with the title *Our needs and responsibilities*, and brings the two in line, integrating environmental considerations in policy. In this document the question is raised whether economic growth and saving the environment are inherently contradictory. At the very least we can conclude that there is at least an exciting connection between protecting the environment and economic policy. If we want strong economic growth, negative environmental impact has therefore to be avoided to a sustainability policy.

I think that, ensuring that economics and the ecology can be done together, means we need to change our policies in new directions. I hope that the national parliaments will support the approach of the European Parliament, and this will be reflected in the summit in Gothenburg on sustainability.

My final comment on Kyoto: I think it is of extreme importance that we as a European Parliament and as national parliaments jointly act where possible through our parliamentary contacts to put more pressure on the Americans and explain to them clearly what our intentions are. The policy of the ministers and the Commission can be strengthened if we do that.

Mr Pierre Fauchon, France: I would like to put a question to the ministers we heard from a short while ago. I also wish to say that I do not thank them for their statements, since I think that ministers should come here less to make speeches in which there is nothing much that is new than to answer the questions that we who have travelled so far to come here wish to put to them and which they should answer.

My question is as follows: Mr. Bush has been invited to Gothenburg. Questions concerning Kyoto will once again be put to him but his answer is already known. It would be a miracle if Mr. Bush changed his position. Now what do the ministers do in response to his answer? Do they have to content themselves with bemoaning the situation, saying it's a pity that America continues being America and what else can one do? I think Europe should be capable of making America realise that it cannot stick to its present position. My question therefore is whether Europe will adopt in its own name and in the name of all creation a language that is responsible but also firm, and I would say a constraining attitude to the United States. The question I would like to have put to the minister who has left is whether he had arranged what their reaction would be to Mr. Bush's predictable position.

Mr Loukas Apostolidis, Greece: I would also like to agree totally with what our

French colleague said. In our global village the US position creates enormous problems to our citizens. Also the failure of the Environment Conference in The Hague is a very negative event. Thirdly, the visit of the troika to the US and the fact that they came back without any concrete solution is also negative.

Let us come to the European Union now. I personally think that the European Union could be a pioneer in environmental issues, provided our legislation and our plans really do materialize. In certain countries, for example in my country, there is an increased sensitivity vis-à-vis the environment. I think it is extremely important for the Gothenburg Summit to give a response that could influence things globally. I think that we should show that the European Union and its institutions really mean what they say.

The Commissioner talked about education and training, that makes people more sensitive to environmental issues, helps in creating new relations between industry and consumers, citizens etc. Now I would like to ask: What are the concrete measures you are going to propose in the education and training sector that could help the environment?

The second question to the Commissioner is: Does she believe that a voluntary movement among citizens could lead to certain results? Could it make our citizens more sensitive vis-à-vis the environment? We are not talking about Greenpeace or these kind of organisations. We are talking about a movement of volunteers. Do they think it is a possibility?

The third question: In Southern Europe we have got a huge problem with forest fires. We do take a lot of measures. We do make huge efforts. But I would also like to ask the Swedish Presidency whether they have thought about this problem of Southern Europe and whether there could be a harmonised European policy that could help us with forest fires, the same as it could help with France, for example, in other parts of Europe.

Both in the Mediterranean, in the Adriatic and in other places we have had huge problems with depleted uranium. No solutions and no answers were given. Just some very vague positions were taken. I would like a concrete answer: Does the Commission do anything about depleted uranium? The impact is not clear now, but it will be clear tomorrow.

Mr Nicolae Leonachescu, Romania: My remarks are intended for minister Larsson. We are here concerned with a delicate and complex issue of the environment that affects everyone.

The whole of our country, Romania, is situated within the Danubian hydrographic basin. This situation is both lucky and unlucky. The lucky aspect is that the lower Danube has been the cradle of remarkable ancient cultures and civilisations. The unlucky side is that the waters of the Danube bring cross-frontier pollution to our territory. We wish Romania not to become a member of the European Union with such conditions concerning the environment in the Danubian area. We want a clean Danube. The Danube is currently blocked by bridges destroyed during the war. A question for minister Larsson: Do you have a vision, a project concerning the clean Danube? During the Swedish presidency, did you, the minister, speak out for limiting the pollution of this major European river, an artery of the future European Union?

Mr Josep Borrell, Spain: I think Europe could be a pool for environmental

development. We have got the environmental wealth and culture to do that. In the face of the US, who have the money but don't have the political will, the rest of the world unfortunately does not have efficiently high level of development. Sometimes we get a bit tied up in our own rhetoric, and I think maybe today we are witnessing an example of that.

We talk about the development of the EU and the rest of the world, but we keep talking about the application and the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. We in Europe are fighting for this to be applied. The European Energy Commissioner was in Madrid recently presenting the green paper on the Commission's energy policy. She did not hide the fact that Europe cannot today live up to the Kyoto Protocol. Of course we may criticize the US for not wanting to live up to it, but we cannot, because of the current structure of our production system for energy. This problem is going to become increasingly acute as we move away from nuclear power production in many countries, which is going to make the job of living up to these commitments in the EU even more difficult. I would like to hear from the Swedish Presidency and from the Environment Commissioner about their views on this particular issue. Do you not think in fact that we are being rather hypocritical, given that we are criticizing the US for not accepting the Kyoto Protocol, but we are not an awful lot better than they are?

Mr Lars Tobisson, Deputy chairman: I have asked commissioner Margot Wallström to stand in and answer the questions to Kjell Larsson from her point of view.

Ms Margot Wallström, Member of the European Commission: Many thanks for the interesting and important questions raised. I will try to answer them briefly.

Starting with Mrs. Brax from Finland, who asked about the situation in the Baltic Sea, I may say that what Finland did with its initiative for the Nordic dimension and what Sweden carried on during its presidency is naturally immensely important for the Baltic Sea. Examples include investment in a treatment plant at St Petersburg and measures to achieve better water quality in the Baltic Sea. Mrs. Brax was also correct in pointing out why the current problems of the Baltic Sea are so important. The EU is involved by means of various projects and structural fund money, inter alia for financing the enlargement of the treatment plant at St Petersburg. We have a number of other projects with Russia for cleaning up the Baltic Sea and preventing discharges into it. We are very much involved in various collaboration projects with Russia. This is no easy matter, owing to the lack of knowledge to help to drive these issues and the lack of resources at local and regional level, but we are definitely involved and committed and we are also putting in direct economic support.

All I would like to say to Mr. Martins from Portugal, who commented on sustainable development and other issues we discussed earlier, is that with regard to, for example, the quality of indoor air and training policy we end up in a discussion about subsidiarity. What is the extra value of taking measures at EU level? We do not have full competence at EU level to take measures in these areas, it is member countries themselves that have to drive such a policy. But it is also correct, as you said, that we need to incorporate environmental aspects in regional policy and how we use structural funds. This we already do, and we do it at the direct request of member countries. For them to be able to receive structural fund money they have, for example, to do environmental impact assessments. We also ask them to supply lists of protected nature areas. This has produced results. Hitting the wallet also brings us better results.

Mr. Blokland made many important points both about the sixth environmental action programme and our strategy for sustainable development. All I can say is that I shall be attending discussions in the European Parliament on these issues next Thursday. We have of course also taken into account a number of criticisms, although I would say that I have been consistent in my view on what form the sixth environmental action programme should take. I don't want there to be more of the same, not another fifth programme, but a programme that is brief and strategic and action-oriented. It is called an action programme and that describes accurately the sort of measures we should adopt. Thereafter we can of course discuss how to formulate the objectives, but I am most interested in our producing a set of measures that we can set in motion as soon as possible.

Mr. Fauchon from France asked what the ministers will do when President Bush gives his expected answer in Gothenburg. I think the ministers have to continue precisely as they have begun, and show that they are trustworthy, by deciding on national measures, measures at home level, for reducing discharges of greenhouse gases. Negotiations within the framework of the Kyoto protocol must continue, as also bilateral contacts to ensure that we can ratify the Kyoto protocol.

I would like also to take the opportunity to tell Mr. Borrell from Spain that it is absolutely incorrect that the EU will not be able to fulfil its commitments under the Kyoto protocol. I hope that this was a misunderstanding. The European climate programme we are to adopt at the beginning of the summer in conjunction with the proposal we put forward about the trading of discharge rights should, when we continue the international negotiations, lead to our being able to fulfil our commitments. There is no doubt in this respect. It is true that it will be tough and that it is a challenge for all the member countries, but if we said now that we cannot fulfil our part of the Kyoto protocol we would lack all credibility and would have no right to criticise others. Obviously we shall fulfil our commitments.

I received three questions from Mr. Apostolidis from Greece. One question concerned concrete measures, and I think the climate issues were involved. I have already mentioned that we are preparing a European climate programme in which we shall be proposing measures in all these areas, which are the most important for reducing discharges of greenhouse gases. Voluntary movements, citizen movements, are themselves the basis for environmental work. And remember that environmental organisations that are formed and voluntary movements that arise often also do practical work. They count birds, they protect particular nature areas or help us to map and gather information on what is happening in the environment. We would not be able to do our work without these voluntary movements. Forest fires, on the other hand, are of course primarily a national matter and a national responsibility, but we have strengthened our civil preparedness so that we now have joint training exercises involving specialists from each of the member countries and enabling us to reach out and help more effectively than before. Regarding depleted uranium, we have arranged all the investigations that are possible on our part to find out the possible reasons for alarm in this respect and the health problems that have been detected. The World Health Organisation has also done many studies in this respect. It is unfortunately not possible to establish a clear relationship between the use of depleted uranium and the health problems that have cropped up. Close monitoring of further developments will of course continue but there is no simple answer and checking the health of the soldiers concerned has to continue.

Regarding Romania, all I can say is that the new framework Directive for water will also help to clean the Danube. I was myself in Romania when the mine dam burst at Baia-Mare. We then quickly deployed a special task force to look at the effects, what had happened, the residual effects and how to collaborate along the whole Danube in order to tackle the environmental problems. The idea of the framework Directive for water is to cover the whole length of a watercourse or river, from source to sea, and to get countries to collaborate with plans for managing the water and achieving better quality. We have already done this successfully for the Rhine and other rivers, to which fish have returned. The same is also possible for the Danube. I think the new framework Directive for water provides us with a good tool for doing so.

Mr Eimert van Middelkoop, Netherlands: We have great expectations in the sustainability summit in Gothenburg. As far as we are concerned there are three matters that deserve attention. First of all, of course, it is Kyoto. It would be good if at the summit a declaration of support could be given to Jan Pronk, a declaration stating that the European Union is unanimous. That negotiations have not succeeded yet is partly due to the poor negotiating tactics of the European Union in The Hague.

Secondly, it might be good if the EU gave a signal to the US that we in Europe are still on track with ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

Thirdly, I would like to express my appreciation for what the Commission has done and the communication that was submitted not too long ago on the precautionary principle. We would advocate that you continue in that direction. It is anchored in the Treaty, but it deserves a more scientific definition, and it needs to be acted on in a more operational way. If this precautionary principle had been implemented earlier, I don't think the kind of issue would be quite as threatening as it is today, in any event, this sort of principle, and no others, should be pursued. I think it can give rise to further economic development and economic growth in Europe. Any commissioner dealing with economic policy should also have to consider the environment, not just sustainability. Europe has a bad track record as far as that is concerned. Produce in the internal market first, and only then starting to think "oh yes, what about the environmental impact". Of course we have to turn that entirely around. I would advocate that we say that the business world has to be involved, and international discussions under way on a socially responsible business. Governments should force manufacturers to report on how their production fits in with a sustainable development.

Finally, in the Netherlands we have a government agreement stating that if economic growth in a given year was more than what we thought was necessary given the population growth, a certain percentage of that economic growth would be allocated to a recovery. I think that billions are needed to clean up our land and our water. We live in days of prosperity, more and more economic growth. Let us earmark part of that growth towards these ends. If the Commissioner can spread that message to the rest of Europe I would highly recommend it.

Ms Maria Santos, Portugal: What happens in Gothenburg will have great political significance. We don't doubt that. But the strategic instrument will depend on how the community deals with the sustainability of its policies. So, I have some concern when I see that the environment dimension in other political initiatives is not sufficiently represented. We have the various dimensions of the councils and ministers in various areas. There are very many different approaches and decisions. Therefore we think that it is necessary to beef up these initiatives with additional measures and timetables and

with regular reviews. We should not have just the Lisbon tendencies as regards social cohesion and employment. There must also be flanking measures to advance the development policy of the community. We think that a deeper evaluation of sustainability must be made, for example at the spring summit. I think that the discussion between the economy and the environment must be strengthened. Also the topic of globalisation must be involved. The Union must be a pioneer, must accompany the globalisation of the economy and must have an ambitious environmental flanking programme. It will only make sense if we have clear goals which are quantifiable with a closely defined time framework.

In connection with the Johannesburg Conference I would like to say the following. I think, as regards the US attitude towards the Kyoto Protocol, that the American administration is not alone in the world. I think the discussion in Canberra went in this direction, to say that people are not willing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, even if the population of Australia are in favour of this, 100 %. In 1992 the father of George Bush said at a summit that the American style can't be questioned on the negotiations in Rio. Now Bush junior is refusing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and would like to boost nuclear power against the background of the Johannesburg Conference, where sustainability was on the agenda.

Dear colleagues! We live in an open Europe, in a Europe that is open as regards the candidate countries. As Jacques Delors already said, Europe must bear its responsibility. Here we are talking about an important challenge. That is to say we have a political goal, and we must give answers. We have the responsibility to find an answer to what the European population is looking for.

Mr Jean Huss, Luxembourg: First of all I would like to thank the Swedish presidency for having restored to the agenda the question of the environment, in fact the major ecological problems such as climatic warming, nuclear risks, chemical risks and others that we began to become aware of in the 1980s and 1990s. These major problems have yet to be solved. The latest scientific data even suggest that some climate change phenomena are worsening. All of us together need therefore to react more vigorously in our own interest and that of future generations and, above all, to act more preventively in order to apply the steps and, specifically, this precautionary principle.

Mr. Göran Persson said yesterday that a more ecological policy including and developing new technologies should not be regarded as an obstacle to economic development but rather as a new opening for economic development, creating new employment. I entirely agree with Mr. Persson but I think that there is still much, if not everything, to be done to convince the main political and economic players, particularly the leading personalities of the big multinationals that continue to run on essentially contrary lines, notably in pursuit of short-term profit.

On the political level, the new American administration does unfortunately likewise seem to want to block such positive and responsible trends, and this applies not only to the case of the Kyoto agreements. If Mr. Bush comes to Gothenburg, I therefore think that the EU should make it very clear to him that some of his stated policies, the Kyoto question, the so-called strategic defence issue, certain WTO negotiations might well lead to growing alienation between Europe and the United States, an alienation which is already becoming notably perceptible in the media and public opinion in Europe.

I will close with some brief questions and comments on Mrs. Wallström's statement

concerning relationships between the environment and public health, and in this context regarding the new environmental programme, the objectives and concrete instruments of which strike me as too unambitious and too unconstraining with regard to the activities of certain polluting industrial sectors. This critical comment applies also to the Commission's new policy on the evaluation, approval and control of chemical substances. In my opinion that policy does represent some progress but remains quite far from the expectations not only of ecologist circles but also European consumers. In this area do you not think that the short-term interests of European chemical industries remain too predominant?

This policy on chemical evaluation and control does in my opinion remain too unsatisfactory and does not seem really to ensure safe public health for our European fellow-citizens. The same comment also applies to the biological effects and public health risks induced by ever-increasing electromagnetic pollution due to the frantic and uncontrolled spread of mobile telecommunications which is likewise taking place without any real concern for the precautionary principle, side by side with the calling into question of food safety by the BSE crisis and other food scandals. In my view there is therefore a need for all our parliaments to discuss seriously and regulate chemical safety and electromagnetic safety.

Ms Elisabeth Arnold, Denmark: Thank you, Commissioner, for what you said. I would like to come back to one point in connection with our consumption patterns. You said that families should be able to regulate their consumption pattern and we should all change our life style. But the question is whether we have a chance to change our life style. In the EU we had a moratorium on foods containing GMO's. In Denmark we are happy about this, and other countries are working for the same. A couple of days ago I heard that you, Madam Commissioner, are working on new rules for acceptable limits for pollution of food with genetically modified organisms. That means that the Commission is easing the moratorium that we had on these foods. I would like to ask the Commissioner if it is correct what has been said about the GMO's. I would like to ask whether the Commissioner is considering something which leads up to the precautionary principle. I would like to ask how this can be combined with the philosophy about Europe as a pioneer in this area vis-à-vis the USA in particular.

Mr Håkan Nordman, Finland: I am very pleased that Sweden is giving its environmental policy a central position as far as we politicians are concerned. The waste emission volumes are high and are giving rise to a growing problem. Efforts should be made to reduce the amount of waste by rendering the raw materials and products more efficient generally. However, we should make an effort to sort, and above all recycle the waste which cannot be avoided. One objective should be to be able to recycle sorted waste as an energy product. We know that technology is enabling this to be done and better on each occasion. For example, incineration together with other products, wood or other materials, is conceivable, but rules would then need to be established, of course, to determine the conditions under this may be achieved, and encouragement should be given for efforts to be made to recycle it for production only. I shall now ask Margot Wallström what is being done on this question, and particularly regarding recycling for energy.

Ms Martine Dardenne, Belgium: I should like to concentrate on the question of agriculture and food safety. In fact, Europe has just gone through several crises, all of them associated with food safety, but also in my view to the method of agricultural production currently favoured by the Union. The Swedish Prime Minister, Mr. Persson,

has underlined here how essential ecological conversion was to future economic development, and I think that in doing so he has highlighted what must be sustainable development, which, incidentally, is the kind of development everyone is talking about but about which we have by no means obtained all the information we require as yet.

Here too reference has often been made to the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, admittedly in veiled terms, as well as to cases that may be classed as taboo subjects. It is true that the budgetary stakes are considerable, but for me the essential question Europe faces is this: What kind of agriculture do we want, what method of production are we going to promote if we really want to reform agricultural policy whilst considering human health, respecting the environment and animal well-being? Europe must necessarily answer this question if it wants to emerge from this in a clear, strong position in a context of sustainable development. In Sweden a real battle is going on, and I commend the Swedes for this, for the deadlines that are being announced, and particularly for the negotiations of the agricultural lobby at the WTO.

Food safety demands that we go beyond proliferating the control procedures, which are always controllable and impossible to generalise in any way by practising reasoned, even biological agriculture. We must move toward the principle of eco-conditionality in the remission of sins, toward the suppression of release for export. These are, incidentally, two measures which could put an end to intensive, surplus production which we still practise. What is also needed is a plan to re-introduce the production of vegetable proteins in Europe.

In fact, it is not possible to refer incessantly to sustainable development whilst at the same time allowing an American style agricultural model in Europe under the pressure of the WTO (World Trade Organisation), the result of which is in fact the intensification and, in the long term, the contraction of European agriculture, a really sorry picture. As far as I am concerned I believe that ecological conversion is the very condition of the survival of European agriculture, and the stakes as far as food is concerned are the same as for human health.

I am obviously aware, Ms. Wallström, that you are not a commissioner for agriculture, but I think that this agricultural dossier is a true example of the diverseness of the problems and that of sustainable development. I believe that you really do have a role to play in this definition of the new agricultural policy Europe ought to establish. I thank you.

Ms Tuija Brax, Finland: The charter of fundamental rights in the EU was adopted in Nice. As a member of the convention I took a lot of trouble, and I am very happy that one of the articles in the charter has to do with the environment. A high level for our environmental protection is part of the thinking in the charter in the EU. Now the Commissioner has an internal letter, and there must be a reference to this in the regulations. The Court of Justice has referred to the charter on several occasions. Some courts in the member states have made judgements based on the charter. I would like to ask Commissioner Wallström: What plans do you have yourself to strengthen and make references to the environmental article in the charter? What methods do you use, and how do you see this environmental article in your own work?

Mr Claus Larsen-Jensen, Denmark: Thank you for the effort from the Commissioner on the environment. I have a question basically on production of waste and transport problems. I would like to ask the Commissioner: Where is the emphasis?

Is it basically that consumers should change their attitude when they choose transport as regards waste? Or should there be more requirements placed on producers? When we speak about waste production it seems that the amounts of waste are increasing. We introduce charges. Couldn't we work for border systems, re-use and recycling in terms of packaging, so that we don't get growing mountains of waste? We could use it for heating.

Another question is on the transport sector, which touches on areas of other commissioners: Couldn't we have more emphasis on developing new fuels, new engines, rather than changing attitudes? The number of cars is increasing all the time, and we are not putting sufficient pressure on the producers.

Mr Guillermo Martinez Casan, Spain: May I begin by thanking the Minister, who is not here right now. I also would like to thank Commissioner Wallström. I'd like to thank them both for their presence here. It is an extremely important topic for the future of Europe.

Commissioner! I am still extremely worried. I am not entirely sure that the European Union is going to be able to stick to its commitments, the Kyoto ones. Of course this worries me, the more so because, as you said, if we don't live up to our commitments then our credibility will be at stake. As regards to CO₂ emissions by the European Union it is part of a global commitment, as you yourself said. Targets have been set for each of the member states of the European Union. But it is not just a question of targets. These are commitments, and the Commission cannot force the member states. As we see in recent statistics the most high polluting countries of the Union have managed to continue to pollute thanks to periods of grace. The reason why I say this and that I am worried is that the discourse in the European Union seems to be factoring in the possibility that we may not succeed. I don't know whether the Commission has envisaged certain instruments that will allow the commitments made to be upheld, but I'd like to hear from you about that.

Could you also tell us in clear terms what the Commission's position is on the use of nuclear energy? We have spoken at great length about that, but we do now need to adopt a position, a clear and unequivocal stance. Certain of our neighbouring countries are building new nuclear capacity, and it seems to me that, given that, we do need ourselves to adopt a position. That in turn takes me on to the question of the storage and destruction of nuclear waste. This is another issue for which no solution has been found. I wonder whether you have the remit to tell us about that. I don't know whether maybe there are decisions in the pipeline with regard to the storage and destruction of nuclear waste. That was my second question.

My third question is: Do you think we will be able to keep to the Kyoto Commitment without the nuclear element? As far as I know sustainable energies, renewable energies and alternative energies won't be sufficient. They depend on time of year. They tend to depend on weather conditions as well.

Finally, many countries like Portugal, Spain and Greece, and also the south of France for that matter, including some of the candidate countries, are not familiar with acid rain, but we suffer from forest fires and desertification as results of that scourge. In your reply to the Greek question, I wonder if you could pay more heed to the forest fires issue. It is not just a national problem, it is not a problem that we can solve for ourselves.

Mr Ismail Bozdag, Turkey: I would like, Commissioner, to draw your attention to a possible national catastrophe in Kazakhstan, in the Tengiz area. Oil is pumped to the Black Sea and is then brought to world markets. This oil is brought to markets in big ships. All these ships travel from the Black Sea through the Bosphorus to the Mediterranean and from there to the various countries. In the Bosphorus there is a great movement of ships. In the Bosphorus there have been accidents leading to great environmental destruction. If a big ship is wrecked in the Bosphorus that is a great risk, first for Istanbul, where there could be human lives put at risk, secondly the pollution of the Black Sea and thirdly pollution in the Mediterranean. In the Bosphorus the water is not still, but it is flowing. In the upper levels it flows into the Black Sea, and since the Black Sea is a closed sea the lower water flows back into the Mediterranean. So there is a risk that both seas, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, could be polluted.

As you know, in the Mediterranean area we don't have just Turkey but also many other countries. I would like to ask whether the European Union wants to do anything about this. In the international agreements from 1923 there are only ships of 14,000 tons, but today there are 500,000 ton ships which can transport oil. Finally we would like the Mediterranean and the Black Sea to be recognised as seas which are useful for people and not a possible source of accidents. I would be interested to hear whether you could do something there.

Mr Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Poland: I would like to underline that in Poland we ascribe great importance to the problems of ecology. We have a poor inheritance from the era of communism. It is not just our problem, it applies to many candidate countries too. Industrialisation in the communist system was carried out without any respect for ecology. What was started in Western Europe in the sixties to incorporate ecology into the economy, is what we have been doing only for eleven years, since the changes in 1989. But the changes are big. You can see the role played by ecology. Our constitution contains the Rio Principle, which is a balance between ecology and development. But generally speaking, in the Union, in European policies, one must recognise that it is necessary to have certain asymmetries in favour of these countries who have such a poor inheritance since the time of industrialisation without ecology.

Minister Larsson and Commissioner Wallström said, referring to environment problems as a problem of the quality of life, that it is a point of principle. We very much appreciate the Swedish position, that they have seen this in such terms. We want to grow into that position.

I would like to make a point. There is ecology affecting nature, but there is also ecology in terms of people. In the Union we don't have the awareness of this ecology. The brutality in the media is an example that people are confronted with. We need a different sort of ecology in culture, in the media. That goes beyond the interest of the Union, as I see it.

Poland has, in its negotiations for accession to the Union, modified its position on transitional periods for the environment. I think there are three transition periods involved. Unfortunately the Commission is saying you have to look at that in depth. I took part in the modification of the position of our country, but the Commission says they must study it for a long time. Permit me, Commissioner, to address my request to you that the Commission looks at this issue very quickly, because we need signals.

Ms Margot Wallström, Member of the European Commission: Thank you for your valued points of view. I should just like to say a few words to Herr Middlekoop from the Netherlands on the principle of caution. Here we have an ongoing dialogue, with the USA in particular, which has difficulty in accepting the principle of caution. We tried to explain how we would apply the principle of caution in a communication, and I believe this was extremely useful. We are continuing our discussions with the USA in order to explain how we view the application of the principle of caution. I do not believe that the principle of caution can be defined scientifically because it is a political instrument. It entitles us to take measures when science is not entirely clear or is able to provide us with results that are absolutely conclusive and complete. I think we must derive satisfaction from the fact that we have progressed so far in our communication and our attempts to describe this principle of caution. Perhaps we cannot hope for a more scientific definition of the principle, but it is nevertheless important that we keep alive this dialogue with the USA to show how we look at different problems.

Mrs. Santos from Portugal said it is important to regularly evaluate progress made in following the strategy of sustainable development. It is precisely for this reason that we did well in establishing such a process for sustainable development, for environmental matters and for reporting on the ecological aspect of sustainable development, along with economics and social questions, in the document we voted on in the commission. Now at last the environmental questions are also on the table, the same table at which decisions are taken on all the other factors. I believe it is incredibly important for the procedure itself to be established. Of course I agree that the EU must play a leading role in this.

Herr Huss from Luxembourg said that we are not ambitious enough in the health area and in connection with chemicals. He also mentioned electromagnetic radiation. We can definitely think that, and we can definitely become more ambitious and taken even further steps. But what we do, and what is decisive for us now, is that we also establish a system that enables to evaluate chemicals and provide information on chemicals so that we obtain more detailed information on the chemicals that are already in general use in Europe, so that we have the possibility of controlling them and so that we are able to deal with the most dangerous and environmentally hazardous chemicals. The questions of health and the environment have not been embodied in our policy until now. I have made this area a priority. We must therefore also issue a communication and develop a strategy in this area in the course of 2002. One of the biggest problems is that we lack data and statistics, particularly comparable statistics. For example, insufficient research has been done on the cumulative effects of all the chemicals to which we are exposed. We need to clarify this link between environment and health in far more detail so that we are also able to propose measures that are sufficiently effective. Here we require more research and better education.

Mrs. Arnold from Denmark asked me about GMO and on the moratorium. I believe that this is a misunderstanding and a misinterpretation which I have seen reproduced in the European Voice. Quite the contrary, we must make in the new directive that we must do everything in our power to protect consumers, the environment and human health and to guarantee that we are able to handle the risks that may be associated with genetically modified organisms. This is why we are putting in place legislation which is much tighter than we have so far seen. In addition we shall be taking a decision, in a few weeks' time, on a system for marking and detecting genetically modified organisms. What is worrying is that we are dependent on around 25% imports to ensure continued

supplies of animal feed. Most of it comes from the USA, which is where most of the world's genetically modified crops are produced. What should we do, for example, if a silo contains, sometimes inadvertently, residues of genetically modified crops? We now know that this will happen – and it has already been detected in Europe – i.e. what is called a “non-permitted” proportion of GMO. What should we do with it? Should we set a zero limit, so we do not tolerate it at all? (Zero tolerance). Or should we establish a reasonable level for it, and in that case what would be the reasonable limit? We need to tackle the problem, and that is what we are discussing just now: how we should tackle the problem and whether we should also have legislation in this area. So far no rules or regulations have been established. It is not a case of our backing off, we are merely saying that we know that the concern is there and that we need to deal with it.

I was asked a question about waste and energy extraction and recycling. In the last few days we have been taking a look at our packaging directive, which is an important matter: How should we set the targets? How much do we want to recycle from say glass, paper and plastic? How should we tackle the question of energy recovery? In a few weeks we must make up our minds about this. I can say that this has also been incorporated in our fundamental waste hierarchy, where we say, for example, that having incineration with energy extraction and energy recovery is of course preferable to the alternative of having incineration plants without it.

I would say to Mrs. Dardenne from Belgium that the whole debate on the agricultural policy is now in full progress. The crisis we have witnessed with mad cow disease, dioxin scandals and foot and mouth disease has brought the agricultural policy into sharp focus. The last time the agricultural policy was reformed a possibility was introduced of spending more money on ecological agriculture. Not all the money has yet been spent by the member countries, so there is some leeway here. But I expect this discussion to result in more environmentally friendly agriculture and that the entire structure will be called into question. It is also important for the applicant countries to know the agriculture and agricultural policy they are called upon to adapt to. We do not want to interfere with an agriculture that is already absolutely perfect ecologically and is environmentally friendly.

I was then asked whether we should impose greater demands on the producers rather than allow the consumers to shoulder the responsibility. We must do both. We must of course provide the consumers with an instrument with which to go green and which enables them to go about their daily lives so that they feel they are living in an environmentally friendly way. However, it is obvious that in future the producers will perhaps have the greatest responsibility. This is why we are also introducing a clear producer responsibility. After all, we have already done this with electrical and electronic products. We have done it with cars to be scrapped, and we can also conceivably do it in other areas where we can show that the producer must think about the entire production chain of a product.

It is self-evident that we must at the same time concentrate on producing new propellants, new car engines and new fuels. I believe that new alternatives will be developed quite soon. They already exist of course, but they are not yet commercially viable. We also know that there is a physical limit beyond which we cannot cram more cars into a city centre, for instance. Quite simply there are too many traffic jams and associated problems. We must experiment with different methods and systems instead.

Mrs. Brax, who asked how reference is made to the article on the environment. It is a

fact, of course, that in all our proposals we must indicate the article on which we base our proposal. We therefore try to apply the environmental article as much as possible and in doing so refer to a high level of protection in the environmental field – if I understood your question correctly.

And once again a question from Spain: What is the present position, will we be able to fulfil the Kyoto undertaking? We want to ratify the Kyoto Protocol as early as next year. When we do this I will mean that we will also be making binding the distribution of loads we now have internally between the member countries. This means that the commission may also ensure that the respective member states fulfil their undertakings. We already have such a distribution of the load, the –8% we have taken upon ourselves. It is obvious that we must make sure that we reach this target. We have already reached the first target, which was to stabilise emissions of greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000. It is clear that this will be hard work, because if we look at the distribution among the member states there are a couple of them which are responsible for most of the progress made and are helping us, so to speak, in achieving this target. What has happened in Great Britain and what has happened in Germany has helped us to maintain this balance and get closer to the target. But it is here that the work really starts. With the aid of our climate programme and our work on emission laws we must make sure that each of the countries is able to achieve its targets. The national parliaments must of course ensure that the governments do what we have undertaken according to our distribution of the load and that they are moving in the right direction. This will be very demanding.

In order to fulfil our Kyoto undertaking we do not depend on investments in additional nuclear power. A number of countries in the EU already have nuclear power in their energy mix. We consider that we know roughly what is being planned in this regard. But to meet the Kyoto targets we are not dependent on a major expansion of nuclear power. With the present mix of different energy sources we shall be able to fulfil our undertakings. There is no uniform attitude to nuclear energy because we do not have competence in this field. It is the member states themselves who decide on their own energy policy, and when we express an opinion we must do so in very general terms. Different commissioners have different opinions on nuclear power. I am one of those who believe that we actually create a waste product that we leave our children and grandchildren to take care of for thousands of years to come, we cannot call this a sustainable source of energy. It is precisely this that actually defines sustainable development, the fact that we must not let future generations carry the can. This is where I believe the limit to nuclear power lies. But I accept the fact that many countries have chosen to use nuclear power and my colleagues have differing opinions on this. We have therefore only produced general documents on the energy question. It may become a question in which the EU is given more competence, but for the time being it is up to the member states to decide.

What are we doing on the question of the Black Sea? I cannot present all the details on what we are doing and on the projects we have in relation to the Black Sea, for this is of course part of the bilateral negotiations and discussions we are having. However, we do of course also have international conventions. I know that work is now being done on this, and we are also doing a lot on oil emissions. We have recently put forward two major proposals called Erika I and Erika II packages, after the ship which ran aground resulting in a major oil spill. Here we are trying to ensure that ships with double propellers are manufactured to a higher quality and that better port facilities are provided at which tanks etc. can actually be drained and cleaned. I cannot give details

straight off the top of my head about how much money we are talking of or which problems are actually involved, but it is an incredibly important question. Just as the representative from Turkey pointed out here we must continue working on these matters.

Finally I would say to Poland that I was extremely critical of Poland, among other countries, at an earlier stage and I said that it was necessary to show that the environmental questions were being taken seriously and that they should be put high on the political agenda. Fine words are not enough, the Poles must show on the basis of concrete plans of action how they intend to implement the EU environmental legislation and that they are prepared to find the economic possibilities and funds for financing investments, etc. Of course we shall work as fast as we can, and it is a major challenge for us. We shall not delay the process any longer. But we have also had to rely on obtaining information from the candidate countries, including Poland, on these very implementation plans. When we obtain such information we will work as quickly as possible to ensure that Poland can also be welcomed into the European Union.

Mr Lars Tobisson, Deputy chairman: We thank commissioner Wallström for her precise, exhaustive replies to the questions put to her.
