

**XXth Conference of the European Affairs Committees of the National
Parliaments of the Member States of the European Union and the European
Parliament in Berlin
31 May to 1 June 1999**

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Opening of the Conference

Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER opened the Conference and welcomed participants. In particular, he welcomed the representatives of Austria and thanked them for their excellent work during the Austrian Presidency. He also welcomed the delegation from Finland, the next country to hold the Presidency, and the representatives of the European Parliament. He reserved a special word of welcome for the delegations from the applicant countries. He stressed that it was urgently necessary to open the European Union to new members. This had been demonstrated recently by the events in Kosovo. In future, the task of the EU would be to export stability instead of importing instability. Within the European Union, conflicts - should there be any at all - would no longer be resolved on the battle field but around the negotiating table. From their new seat in Berlin, Germany's Government and Parliament would pursue an unequivocally European policy.

He recalled the XIth COSAC in Bonn on 24/25 October 1994 at which the ratification of the accession treaties of Austria, Finland and Sweden had been on the agenda. Today, the European Union was no longer conceivable without these countries. He was full of confidence that he would soon be able to say the same about the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The fact that Berlin was now the venue of COSAC was not only of political but also of symbolic significance. Berlin stood on the seam between East and West. The division of Europe had had particularly painful repercussions for the city, which during the period of détente had nevertheless acted as a pivot between East and West. Now, Berlin had become a driving force behind the enlargement of the European Union, allowing the focus to shift to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Co-Chairman noted that, with the exception of the discussion on COSAC's internal rules of procedure, the Conference was open to the public. The agenda had been set by the Troika. As a supplementary item, the Chair had drafted a public appeal to voters in the elections to the European Parliament which would be considered and adopted by the Conference following the debate on institutional reforms. Since at this meeting of COSAC the representatives of the applicant countries had for the first time been given the right to speak on all items of business, speaking time would be limited to four minutes per participant.

He then asked Co-Chairman Willi STÄCHELE to assume the Chair and to provide an introduction to the first item on the agenda.

Institutional Reforms following the Amsterdam Treaty

In his introduction, Co-Chairman Wille STÄCHELE stressed that although the Treaty of Amsterdam, which had entered into force on 1 May 1999, was a major step in the development of the European Union, it had not resolved a number of important institutional questions - the so-called "left-overs". This included the size and composition of the Commission and the weighting of votes in the Council. The modalities and timetable for dealing with these unresolved institutional questions were to be agreed upon at the meeting of the European Council in Cologne. The General Affairs Council had also addressed this issue on 17 and 18 May 1999. The German Presidency had proposed, inter alia, that an intergovernmental conference, prepared by independent experts, be convened in the first half of 2000. The necessary changes to the Treaty would then be made in the second half of 2000. However, the discussion in the General Affairs Council had shown that there were substantial differences of opinion, especially on the question whether the intergovernmental conference should be restricted to the questions "left over" at Amsterdam or whether it should encompass all relevant questions, including a more comprehensive review. He emphasized that the issues he had mentioned at the outset would have to be resolved before new members could be admitted to the EU. Moreover, consideration would also have to be given in future to further enhancing the role of the European Parliament, to extending the co-decision procedure and to the questions of establishing a catalogue of competences for the European Union.

He then welcomed Co-Chairman Elmar Brok, Member of the European Parliament, and asked to him to deliver his introductory paper.

Elmar BROK (European Parliament) emphasized at the outset that, as the nineties drew to a close, the European Union confronted a dual challenge: to consolidate the achievements of the last forty years on the one hand and, on the other, to prepare the transition to the next millenium with a clear vision of the EU's future. The aim was to achieve an widened association of states organized in line with the principles of democracy, efficiency and transparency. The first steps towards this goal could be taken at the European Council meeting in Cologne. The European Council was expected to issue a mandate for convening the next intergovernmental conference at which the reform of the EU's institutions would be discussed. In addition, the Cologne summit would see initial reflection on the drafting of a constitutional treaty and a charter of fundamental rights.

He believed that the reform of the European institutions should not initially extend to an amendment of the treaty but should be effected by means of internal consolidation. The crisis in the Commission over the last few months had shown that owing to their internal structures, which had remained unchanged for forty years, the institutions of the European Union were no longer equal to the EU's current tasks. In particular, they showed a lack of efficiency and transparency. With regard to the Commission, the first step must be to restructure the portfolios. The Commissioners should head their directorates-general in the same way as ministers their departments. Moreover, each Commissioner should bear individual political responsibility for his or her sphere of competence and should no longer be able to hide behind collective decisions by the Commission as a whole. He thought that the call, already voiced in a number of quarters, for the number of commissioners to be reduced was unlikely to succeed; it would mean that it would no longer be possible for each member state to appoint a commissioner. The member states affected would no doubt block the ratification of any corresponding Treaty amendment. He was of the view that a solution should be found which avoided changing the number of commissioners whilst ensuring that the Commission was capable of performing its tasks efficiently and that each country retained the right to appoint at least one Commissioner.

With regard to the reform of the Council, the first step should be to eliminate the existing overlap between legislative and executive powers. He therefore proposed that the Council be

divided into an executive council and a legislative council. In addition, the Council's work must become more transparent; citizens must be in a position to comprehend its decisions. One way to achieve this would be, for example, to publish the minutes of Council meetings.

As far as the reweighting of votes in the Council was concerned, agreement must be reached on the basis of a double majority; i.e. decisions would require not only a majority of member states but also a majority of the population represented by them. On grounds of democratic legitimation in particular, population should also become a factor in the decision-making process in the European Parliament.

The most important aspect of the reform, however, was the extension of qualified majority voting. This procedure must be applied in all fields with the exception of constitutional matters such as Treaty changes, the financial system and enlargement; otherwise, the Council would no longer be capable of effective decision-making. With a view to the European Council meeting in Cologne, thought should therefore be given to the possibility of making the fields of justice and home affairs subject to QMV immediately rather than in five years as currently envisaged. The Berlin summit on Agenda 2000 had provided the most recent proof that an extension of qualified majority voting was urgently needed and that the power of veto should only apply in exceptional cases. An extension of qualified majority voting would foster the EU's ability to forge a consensus and take effective action; out-voted member states would have to fear being isolated if they insisted on their positions.

He was also of the view that the European Union did not need any additional powers for the time being. Rather, it must be endowed with the instruments it needed to make the best use of its existing powers. One essential step in this direction was the extension of qualified majority voting.

In conclusion, he commented on the issue of an EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Such a charter could not be made a precondition for enlargement; otherwise, this process would be subject to considerable delay. The charter should be drafted by a convention of European parliamentarians. He did not believe that it would make sense for the intergovernmental conference to address this issue as individual member states would attempt to assert their particular national interests. A convention would also be an appropriate forum for the drafting

of a final constitutional treaty. This was essential if the EU was to find greater acceptance amongst the public and to take a further step towards completion.

Co-Chairman Willi STÄCHELE thanked Elmar Brok for his comments and opened the debate.

Alberto BORIN (Belgium) pointed out that the Commission's resignation had strengthened the position of the Eurosceptics. Only time would tell whether the new President, Romano Prodi, would succeed in silencing them. At any event, the European Parliament must in future be given greater rights; the EP was still far removed from any form of sovereignty. Moreover, the Commission had yet to become a genuine executive force. Although Europe was still not supranational, it was nonetheless a peaceful and democratic construct par excellence which must be safeguarded from local separatist forces.

Gérard FUCHS (France) was of the view that the implementation of institutional reforms would strengthen democracy, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness and the capacity for decision-making within the European Union. If decision-making powers were to shift from Europe's capitals, a corresponding capacity for effective decision-making must be created in Brussels. With regard to the composition of the Commission, he believed that each member country should be represented by one commissioner. However, a hierarchy should be established among the commissioners, and each commissioner must shoulder more responsibility. Furthermore, majority voting must become the rule in the Council; otherwise, important legislation, in the field of taxation for instance, could be blocked by the need for unanimity. He was also of the view that the introduction of a double majority in the case of decision-making by the Council was urgently necessary as it would make the Council's decisions more comprehensible to the public. In addition to the problem of institutional reforms already touched upon, the European Union must also address issues not covered as yet by the Treaties, for instance defence. As far as the methodology for further action was concerned, he did not believe that an intergovernmental conference was the best approach. He therefore proposed that a group of independent experts be set up to prepare the corresponding reforms.

Antonio RUBERTI (Italy) noted that the need for an institutional reform of the European Union was now generally recognized; this had not been the case a year ago. There was still

disagreement on the scope of these reforms, however: many wanted them to be limited to a minimum. It had yet to be decided whether the reform should be restricted to the "Amsterdam triangle" or whether they would also encompass other areas of policy. Europe had recently had to face many new problems in second pillar areas in particular. With regard to further steps, he doubted whether an intergovernmental conference could be dispensed with. Moreover, the role of national parliaments should not be restricted to ratifying European Union treaties. He regarded COSAC as the right place for a discussion of the problems at hand; its work would also strengthen the role of the European Parliament and the national parliaments. The question of how the national parliaments should be involved in the second pillar must also be considered. Generally speaking, he felt that the right points were being addressed but was concerned that the approach being taken was too minimalist and did not encompass political problems in particular.

José MEDEIROS FERREIRA (Portugal) stated that the institutional reforms, as envisaged in the protocol to the Amsterdam Treaty, showed a tendency towards inequality. The opportunity must now be seized to take political steps towards the creation of a European confederation. Here, he had in mind the creation of a Senate which would assume the Council's legislative role in conjunction with the European Parliament. In this way, it could also be ensured that decisions were taken by majority vote. He thought it unlikely, however, that his proposal would succeed. The existing problems must at any event be tackled at an intergovernmental conference. As a first step, the role of the Commission President must be strengthened, above all in representing the EU in its external relations. The collegiate character of the Commission must be further developed: this was the only way to ensure that common interests were defended and that the Commission performed its key function as "guardian" of the Treaties. Furthermore, the Commission and its President should present a programme setting out ways to achieve the so-called "well-being" of the Community.

With regard to the weighting of votes in the Council, the balance between the member states must be maintained. He did not regard the setting up of a group of independent experts as the right way forward. Rather, the reform projects ought to be entrusted to future presidencies which should work out corresponding proposals. The Portuguese Presidency in 2000 would be in a position to prepare steps towards an institutional reform of the Community.

Michiel PATIJN (Netherlands) pointed out that on the eve of the next intergovernmental conference, many parts of the Amsterdam Treaty had not yet fully entered into effect. These included the movement of persons, the common foreign and security policy, strategies for introducing majority voting and broadening public access to meetings and documents. Given these unresolved issues, it was perhaps a mistake to make even more demands at the present time.

In his view, enlargement of the Union to take in countries of Central and Eastern Europe was out of the question before 2003. There was time, therefore, to implement institutional reforms. Decisions should not be taken too hastily. Resolving the so-called "left-overs" from Amsterdam was not the only task for the future. The democratic credentials of the European Union must also be improved, in particular by strengthening the role of the European Parliament with regard to legislation and budgetary control. The introduction of majority voting in all areas covered by the first pillar was also urgently needed. The Commission must do more to account for its actions. A legal restructuring of the Treaties, in particular a consolidation of the texts, was also important.

A great deal of work remained in the field of foreign and security policy. Security within the framework of NATO had yet to be consolidated. A further task was the binding codification of fundamental rights. Preparatory work on this project should be done by a small body; otherwise, there would be unnecessary delays.

Guillermo MARTINEZ CASAN (Spain) was of the view that the new Commission should distinguish itself by its independence, resolve and loyalty to the Treaties and should accumulate substantial executive power. In addition, the position of the European Parliament must be strengthened, above all by exploiting the new possibilities under the co-decision procedure. In view of the scale of the reforms yet to be implemented, two intergovernmental conferences were necessary, both prepared by smaller bodies. A great deal remained to be implemented in the second and third pillars in particular. The third pillar must come last, however, in order not to delay enlargement. Enlargement enjoyed absolute priority, and people in the applicant countries must not be disappointed. All in all, the Spanish Parliament favoured a policy of gradual reform: the decisions which had to be taken should be given careful thought and not be rushed.

Justinas KAROSAS (Lithuania) stated that the enlargement process must be transparent for the applicant countries. In particular, they needed information about progress on institutional reform and about the work of the intergovernmental conference. It was also to be hoped that following the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty the European Parliament would be more capable of effective action. In his opinion, the implementation of institutional reforms was not a precondition for the admission of new member states. Most importantly, these reforms must not be allowed to delay the process of enlargement. The extension of qualified majority voting must not be to the detriment of the smaller countries; rather, equal conditions must be created for all member states. The applicant countries in Central and Eastern Europe hoped that they would have an opportunity to express their views as the process of institutional reform progressed.

Outi OJALA (Finland) stressed that the European Union should make full use of the possibilities opened up by the Amsterdam Treaty. One of the future priorities must be the drafting of a charter of fundamental rights. She did not feel, however, that this could be done at the next intergovernmental conference. She agreed with previous speakers that the application of majority voting must be extended and that the principle of unanimity should only apply for constitutional questions. As had already been pointed out, the further development of the co-decision procedure was important. As far as the composition of the Commission was concerned, she believed that small member states should continue to be able to appoint a commissioner. It was not acceptable that the large member states should dominate the Commission, thereby in principle creating two distinct levels. Furthermore, she felt that it would be useful if specialized committees were set up within the Commission. She pointed out that Finland was sceptical about the creation of a second or third chamber.

Finally, she called for a decision to be taken on the question of languages; as members of democratically elected bodies, parliamentarians must have the possibility of expressing themselves in their own language.

Sören LEKBERG (Sweden) expressed the view that the next intergovernmental conference should limit itself to the "left-overs" from Amsterdam, i.e. to major issues, since otherwise the enlargement of the European Union would be at risk. Each country should continue to appoint at least one commissioner. With regard to the weighting of votes in the Council, he felt that the current balance must be maintained; this was particularly important for the small countries.

Finally, he agreed with previous speakers that majority voting must be extended and the principle of unanimity should be applied only in the case of constitutional questions or matters which concerned the core powers of the nation-state.

Loukas APOSTOLIDIS (Greece) drew attention to the fact that the subject of institutional reform had already frequently been on the agenda of COSAC. The discussions had, however, never produced a concrete result. COSAC had only put forward demands, for instance for an expansion of the powers of the parliamentary institutions and the European Parliament, or for measures to render the intergovernmental conferences more efficient. There was agreement that, following the recent crisis, the Commission should acquire a new status and that the institutional reforms should go hand-in-hand with the treatment of topical political issues in Europe. The question was, therefore, whether the Conference should adopt a resolution or recommendation on this matter. There were other issues which must also be examined in depth, such as the enlargement of the European Union and the common foreign and security policy. All in all, he was of the view that the institutional reforms should be implemented after the completion of enlargement. Moreover, a uniform opinion must be stated on the Kosovo crisis. In future, Europe should speak with one voice in the case of major political problems or crises. This was the only way to make it clear to citizens what Europe actually stood for.

Jacob BUKSTI (Denmark) stated that the next intergovernmental conference should be restricted to the "left-overs" from Amsterdam. Otherwise, in Denmark at least, there would be constitutional problems and possibly a need for a further referendum. He agreed with previous speakers that each member state should have its own commissioner and that majority voting should be extended. One question was the future role of national parliaments. They were important players and should not be pushed into the background in relation to the European Parliament. It would therefore make sense to establish a link between decision-making in the European Parliament and in the national parliaments. He agreed with his Finnish colleague that there was no need for a second or third chamber.

Prof. Jürgen MEYER (Germany) stated that a majority of the Members of the Bundestag fully agreed with the proposals put forward by Elmar Brok. This applied in particular to the call for political accountability on the part of commissioners, the introduction of a double majority in

the Council and the extension of qualified majority voting. Preserving the unanimity rule could not be justified as it was alien to the essence of a democratic constitution.

In his view, dealing with the "left-overs" from Amsterdam enjoyed absolute priority and must be completed before the end of 2000. The goal was as rapid a process of enlargement as possible. Enlargement would be delayed indefinitely if the calls for institutional reform went too far.

The drafting of a European charter of fundamental rights was also important as it would allow effective control of the Brussels bureaucracy. Such a charter would also allow the entire treaty base of the European Union to be interpreted in conformity with fundamental rights. It would make it clear that the European Union was no longer only a economic community but also a community of values. As Elmar Brok had already said, a convention of national and European parliamentarians should take the lead in drafting the charter. It was not appropriate to entrust this task to the intergovernmental conference as this would lead to a clash of interests. The purpose of basic rights was, namely, to ensure control of the executive. There would be no guarantee of this were the charter to be drafted by the intergovernmental conference because the governments would then be able to decide themselves on arrangements for control of the executive. Drafting a charter of fundamental rights was therefore the task of the parliaments. Given the possibility of a referendum, the norms set out in the charter must be clearly formulated and easy for citizens to understand. Generally speaking, the fundamental rights should be divided into two categories: human rights and civil rights. Finally, the citizenship of the Union envisaged by the Amsterdam Treaty must acquire greater substance, thereby making it easier for citizens to understand. Thought might be given, for instance, to defining more precisely the right to vote and to stand as a candidate at elections or the right to freedom of movement. In his view, a charter of fundamental rights was an important element in helping Europe grow together but did not necessarily require a debate on a constitution.

Dolores CRISTINA (Malta) pointed out that the primary task of the intergovernmental conference must be to remove obstacles to accession by the applicant countries. The institutional reforms must not lead to a postponement of enlargement. Any further delay would cause additional problems for present and future members alike. As far as the modalities for the reform process were concerned, it must be borne in mind that two distinct concepts must be reconciled with one another: the sovereignty of nation-states and that of

their populations. As a representative of an applicant country, she would be interested to know how much progress had been made in solving the problems identified and how realistic it was to expect the institutional reforms to be completed by 2000.

Tino BEDIN (Italy) elucidated the position of the Italian Senate. It was of the view that the institutional reforms should not only cover organizational aspects but should pursue the goal of bringing the Union closer to citizens. This could be done in three phases: first, a new chapter must be incorporated into the Treaty providing protection for basic rights, and the position of the European Parliament must be strengthened in relation to the executive. Secondly, compliance with the principles of subsidiarity, transparency and democratic control must be ensured, in particular by establishing a hierarchy among the sources of Community law. Thirdly, the envisaged reform must also encompass an amendment of the clauses providing for a review of Treaties in order to ensure that both the European Parliament and the national parliaments were more closely involved in the process of decision-making on legislation. Democratic legitimation must also be enhanced. The direct election of the Commission President by the European Parliament would be a step in this direction.

Elmar BROK (European Parliament) proceeded to make a number of additional comments on his introductory statement. He stressed that the larger member states had to show consideration for the smaller member states and their identity, but faced considerable problems of legitimacy at home for doing so. In future, a balance must be struck between these two positions.

There was agreement that the intergovernmental conference should be restricted to major issues such as the "left-overs" and preparations for enlargement. Enlargement must not be delayed by institutional debates. In making the Union capable of enlargement, issues must also be addressed which did not require amendment of the Treaties. The national parliaments must be reminded of their duty and strengthen their oversight of the Council in particular. This was a way to make decision-making in the Council more transparent.

Moreover, a division between junior and senior commissioners would allow members of the Commission to attend meetings of the EU affairs committees of the national parliaments. This would be a way to improve control of the Commission and national governments, and would also promote transparency. With regard to the drafting of a European charter of fundamental

rights, a convention bringing together national and European Members of Parliament was the best way forward. It must be decided whether to draft an entirely new charter or whether to take the Council of Europe's European Convention on Human Rights as a basis. The form the charter of fundamental rights took should be such that it did not have an influence on the decisions of national governments and, in particular, did not affect national constitutional arrangements or legislation. Rather, the aim of such a charter must be to ensure the protection of citizens' basic rights as affected by the legislation and administrative action of the European Union. This clear delimitation would help to avoid difficulties with regard to judicial review and, in particular, questions of jurisdiction.

The aim of all these efforts must be to achieve an optimal balance between the three elements of democracy, efficiency and transparency. This was an essential prerequisite for gaining public acceptance of the European Union.

Charles-Ferdinand NOTHOMB (Belgium) summarized the position of the Belgian parliament on the question of institutional reform. To avoid overloading, institutional reform should be restricted to the "left-overs" from Amsterdam. Any other questions that remained open should be addressed as part of a second reform.

As far as the future composition of the Commission was concerned, each member state should be able to appoint a commissioner. For a transitional period, larger member states should be allowed to appoint a deputy commissioner. Following enlargement, it would no longer be possible for each member state to appoint a commissioner. To make up for this, a hierarchy must be established among the commissioners who, moreover, should no longer be national in orientation.

With respect to the future weighting of votes in the Council, the concerns of larger states must also be taken into consideration. Overall, the larger member states should have more influence on decision-making. A conceivable solution would be to maintain the present weighting of votes whilst slightly raising the threshold for a qualified majority. A double majority could be introduced in a number of important fields. The unanimity rule should only apply to constitutional matters. The application of qualified majority voting could be extended; in a number of fields a raised qualified majority might even be introduced. In this

regard, it would be useful to draw up a list of those fields which should not be subject to qualified majority voting.

With regard to the role of the European Parliament, he felt that the codecision procedure should be applied in all fields requiring a qualified majority in the Council.

Furthermore, the General Affairs Council should be divided into two: one should be responsible exclusively for questions of security and defence policy, the other for all other fields. In addition to the European Parliament, the national parliaments should also be involved in decision-making in the European Union. Any constitutional text, charter or constitutional declaration would have to be drafted jointly by them. It must be ensured, however, that these texts were comprehensible to citizens. As an alternative, the existing treaties could be consolidated in a way that would make them easier to understand. Finally, the convention proposed by Mr. Brok and Prof. Meyer - in a certain sense an expanded COSAC - was the right way to solve the problems at hand.

Reinhart GAUGG (Austria) pointed out that the European Parliament might be overtaxed by all the tasks cited by previous speakers. The institutional reform should in his view not be limited to individual problems, such as the question whether each country should be able to appoint a commissioner. Rather, there must be a thorough reform of each institution. The commissioners should show greater fairness towards the applicant countries and should in particular ensure that the criteria for accession were clear and comprehensible.

Finally, he was critical of calls for dispensing with the unanimity principle; it had been an important precondition for Austria's accession to the European Union.

Jerzy JASKIERNIA (Poland) stressed that the institutional reforms were not a precondition for enlargement but would ensure that this process went smoothly. In Poland, every effort was being made to remove any obstacles to enlargement. For instance, all bills were being examined to ensure their compatibility with EU law. The Polish Parliament's EU affairs committee also had the right to intervene at any stage in the legislative process. Poland expected a realistic prospect for the accession of new member states. Perhaps corresponding deadlines could already be set at the Helsinki summit. Poland itself would have completed its preparation for accession by the end of 2001.

He was unclear as to the relationship between the planned charter of fundamental rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. The question as to the purpose of such a charter remained. It must be considered whether accession to the European Convention on Human Rights was not in fact sufficient.

Michel BARNIER (France) affirmed that the institutional reforms must be dealt with at an intergovernmental conference. However, the European Union was not able to do everything at one go. It would therefore make sense to set up working groups to do the groundwork in individual fields. This procedure had already proved its worth in the preparations for economic and monetary union. Although the Amsterdam Treaty contained many improvements, it also showed many deficiencies. The functional mechanisms of the European Union in particular must become more efficient. This applied above all to enlargement; acceding countries must find a European Union capable of functioning effectively. At the same time, enlargement must not be postponed. In his view, it could not be expected to take place before the end of 2000. The planned institutional reforms could be completed by then. They should not, however, be limited to the "left-overs" from Amsterdam but should also encompass internal arrangements such as the relationship between the European Parliament and national parliaments, improved cooperation and the possibility of holding Europe-wide referendums. Furthermore, a clear text on subsidiarity must be drafted, and explicit definition given of the competencies of the European Union. He suggested that at the next COSAC each member state should present its ideas on how to bring the European debate closer to the citizens. A synthesis could then be produced from these proposals which would allow the problems at hand to be tackled in the best possible way.

Richard CORBETT (European Parliament) considered an extension of qualified majority voting to virtually all fields to be urgently necessary. This was particularly important given that the European Union would at some stage have as many as 27 member states. Unanimity should be restricted to a very limited number of cases. Majority voting should become the rule not only for political issues but also for appointments, such as the election of the Commission President or the President of the European Central Bank. He was critical, however, of proposals for introducing a double majority or raising the number of votes needed for a qualified majority as this would make decision-making at European level considerably more difficult. He pointed out that in the immediate future the legislative activity of the European

Union would concentrate on amending existing legislation rather than on adopting new Community acts. He therefore saw no reason to give minorities the right to block such changes by using their veto. He suggested that the institutional reforms and the accession of new members should be ratified by the member states in a single package. Finally, in his view the intergovernmental conference should be prepared by a committee of independent experts. These experts should enjoy the trust of the member states, and the Commission should have a say in their selection.

Vincenzo MUNGARI (Italy) recalled that the member states had agreed in a declaration appended to the Amsterdam Treaty to produce a consolidated version of the Treaty texts. Changes to date had amounted to no more than a simplification of the original treaties. He also referred to the weak position of the European Parliament, whose role in the legislative process was essentially limited to stating opinions which had no binding force. It was the Council, the Commission and the national governments which had the last say. Given this fact, the European Union clearly had a democratic deficit. In reforming the Commission, priority should be given to the principles of homogeneity and efficiency. All member states should have a representative in the Commission. In the field of external relations, there was a need for closer cooperation. It was doubtful, however, whether agreement could be reached on a common line since there were many contentious issues. But an attempt could at least be made at intergovernmental conferences to find common approaches to decision-making in the foreign policy field. There were, however, reform projects to which all member states could give their unqualified support: in particular, the adoption of a charter of basic rights and the anchoring of human rights.

Tassos PAPADOPOULOS (Cyprus) recalled that institutional reform had often been a topic of discussion at COSAC meetings, without any concrete result, however. Since at this meeting a greater convergence of views could be observed, a text should be drafted which could then be discussed and adopted at the next COSAC. His country was expecting a great deal from the European Council and hoped that it would produce concrete results.

Generally speaking, a better balance must in future be found between the Community's institutions. The aim must be to unite not only Europe's governments but also its peoples. This required closer cooperation between national parliaments and the European Parliament. However, the institutional reforms should not be an obstacle to enlargement. The reforms

must be tackled as swiftly as possible. When discussing enlargement, reference was made primarily to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. But the countries of southern Europe - Cyprus and Malta - should not be forgotten. Following their accession, all new member states should enjoy the same participatory rights. For instance, all or none of them should have the right to appoint a member of the Commission.

Tunne KELAM (Estonia) observed that the link between institutional reform and enlargement was now generally recognized. Should the reform be prepared, as already proposed by a number of speakers, by a committee of independent experts, the latter should, he suggested, hold more informal meetings which representatives of the Central and Eastern European countries could also attend. The informal atmosphere would be conducive to a discussion of Europe's future. He agreed with previous speakers that qualified majority voting must be extended. The applicant countries should be involved in further discussions on this issue, for instance on possible thresholds for majority decisions, and also informed accordingly. Following their accession, new member states must enjoy the same rights as the old member states. In particular, this meant that they must also have a representative in the Commission. Furthermore, the role of the European Parliament, and particular its cooperation with national parliaments, must be improved. This entailed more transparency and greater accountability. As Co-Chairman Pflüger had emphasized in his welcoming address, it was important that the European Union should export stability and the rule of law to other parts of Europe. Institutional reform should not be used as a pretext to postpone enlargement. However, the applicant countries must be expected to create the preconditions for accession.

Sandra FEI (Italy) stated that the basis for a political union in Europe had yet to be created. In Italy there had been disappointment that the Amsterdam Treaty had failed to achieve this. Europe must continue to work towards assuming a complementary position alongside the USA. In addition to a democratic deficit in the institutions of the EU, there was also a deficit with regard to information, which must be eliminated if Europe was to be brought closer to the citizens.

Co-Chairman Willi STÄCHELE thanked participants for the fruitful discussion and indicated that a number of amendments to the Appeal to Voters in the European Elections had been tabled. As time was getting on, he therefore suggested that the discussion be held during the afternoon session.

Relations between the EU and Third Countries: The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy

In his introductory paper, Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER examined NATO's role and the EU's relations with the United States. Dr. PFLÜGER said that from a German perspective, NATO was indispensable in safeguarding peace and security in Europe. Together, the USA, Canada and the European Union formed an area of indivisible security. The real task of the Alliance was to undertake the collective defence of Europe, but not to assume a global intervention role. It was important to extend the Alliance to South-Eastern Europe. Europe's partnership with the USA formed the cohesive element of European security policy. The US presence promoted Europe's security interests and contributed to stability and balance in Europe. In this sense, the criticism of US dominance in the Kosovo conflict and of the EU's dependence on the USA in crisis management was unjustified. It was wrong to level these accusations at the USA: criticism should focus not on US dominance but on Europe's weakness. Europe must seek to strengthen its position. This entailed, not least, the assumption of a greater share of the defence burden and better coordination of measures in the field of armaments.

In sum, it was time to match the EU's economic weight with political substance. The EU must become an actor on the international stage as well. In a region such as the Middle East, for example, the EU must not only be a major source of funding but must also play a political role. With the Treaty of Amsterdam, virtually all the conditions for this were now in place: a merger between the WEU and the EU would streamline the decision-making structures in security and defence policy. Even though the status of the neutral states had to be considered, the merger was indispensable to enhance the capacity to act. He was also optimistic about the appointment of a High Representative for the CFSP. In his view, combining the posts of WEU Secretary-General and High Representative would make matters easier in many respects. When establishing the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit, the expertise available in the Commission must be utilized. In this context, it was sensible to seek to draw together the responsibilities for the EU's external relations - currently divided between four different Commissioners - within one *cabinet* in the Commission. He also called for the

establishment of a security policy council with appropriate staff support. However, this council should not work parallel to NATO.

To summarize, Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER stressed that in creating a new and effective CFSP, much depended on the will of the EU member states and the establishment of new and viable structures. The war in Kosovo showed that where there was no EU presence, instability, chaos and anarchy reigned. The lesson to be learned from the Kosovo conflict was that the EU must also gain in political stature - perhaps more rapidly than had hitherto been assumed.

Referring to the twenty-six requests to speak, Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER asked speakers to keep to the agreed time limits during the subsequent debate.

Enrique BARON CRESPO (European Parliament) outlined the position adopted by the European Parliament in its most recent Resolution. He stated that the European Parliament, too, demanded that the EU should not restrict itself to the role of economic actor but should become a political player as well. During the debate in the European Parliament, the new instrument of Common Strategies had played a key role. These Common Strategies - especially on Russia, the Ukraine and the Mediterranean region - must be prepared as soon as possible. In the European Parliament, European identity and foreign and security policy were seen as Europe's fundamental problems at the present time. The logical conclusion to be drawn was that the EU must develop a common security and defence policy, equipped with its own armed forces.

Alain BARRAU (France) felt that a restriction of US responsibility in European conflicts such as Kosovo was necessary, as the onus was on the Europeans themselves to deal with defence and security policy issues. Following its entry into force, the Amsterdam Treaty offered the appropriate instruments for this purpose, and the Europeans were also ready for a collective security and defence policy. Moreover, Europe's desire not to restrict itself to the role of economic giant and political dwarf - especially in security and defence policy - did not call the defence alliance into question. Based on the recognition that the organizational and decision-making structure of security and defence policy was clearly dominated by the USA, a debate was required - an open, public debate as it concerned Europe's fundamental values - to examine how changes to the current unsatisfactory arrangements could be achieved.

Europe's independence urgently demanded a collective, self-reliant European security and defence policy.

Pierre BEAUFAYS (Belgium) asked how the much-cited demand for a strengthened security and defence policy was to be achieved in practice. The lack of political will on this issue - the result of Member States' divergent views on fundamental issues - was evident in the so-called "Bremen Declaration". He was interested to hear about the German position on the establishment of a collective European defence policy. The CFSP's Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit, to be set up in the General Secretariat of the Council, needed to be strong and effective. It was not sensible, however, to "isolate" the Unit; on the contrary, strengthened cooperation with the Commission was called for. Protecting human dignity as a key task of the CFSP entailed the creation of a "combined force" as a necessary prerequisite.

Ignasi GUARDANS I CAMBO (Spain) pointed out that in shaping the CFSP, special consideration must be given to national sensitivities and identities. He advocated the creation of new instruments within the CFSP. Common Strategies, in particular, required adequate information to be made available. In his view, embedding the WEU in the EU was absolutely crucial. In this case, a new framework must be created for the Associate Members of WEU in particular. The question was how parliamentary support for security and defence policy should be managed in future, especially in the wake of the WEU's integration into the EU.

Francisco TORRES (Portugal) referred to the connection between EU enlargement and the development of the CFSP. He highlighted the EU's priorities and the inseparable link between institutional reforms, enlargement, and the reshaping of the CFSP.

Peter SCHIEDER (Austria) observed that as a neutral country, Austria did not wish to shirk its obligations with respect to solidarity and responsibility within the EU, but pointed out that concerns about military pacts remained. He emphasized, however, that Austria had always made a particularly active contribution to UN missions. He raised the issue of the CFSP's future parliamentary assembly as well. Should this be the WEU Assembly or the European Parliament? A further issue which interested him was whether it ought to be possible to appoint a Secretary-General from a non-WEU member state. He also appealed for the EU to overcome any concerns it might have about working together with other international

organizations, e.g. with the Council of Europe on the protection of minorities, or with the OSCE on disarmament issues.

Lojze PETERLE (Slovenia) noted that the sources of conflict in the Balkans had largely been underestimated, and underlined European responsibility for peace and stability in the Balkan region. In his view, the EU's key task was to "Europeanize" the conflict scenario in the Balkans.

Maria DAMANAKI (Greece) felt that an investigation into the reasons for the weaknesses and shortcomings of the European contribution to the solution of conflicts such as Kosovo was required. She too considered the Europeanization of the Kosovo issue to be Europe's key priority. This raised the issue of how the USA should be integrated into this process. It was crucial for Europe to show the same zeal for the CFSP as it did for other - notably economic - policy areas. Major decisions were expected within the CFSP in the next five years. Satisfactory ways of involving citizens in this process must be sought at an early stage.

Sandra FEI (Italy) pointed to the EU's failures in the management of the Balkan crisis and said that this made the creation of the post of "Mr CFSP" all the more important. In the Italian view, the aims of a new CFSP needed to be defined within the framework of a "fourth pillar". Responsibility for foreign and defence policy must revert to Europe. The Franco-British St Malo Declaration could serve as a model in this context. In her view, the tendency for NATO to act as self-appointed judge over the entire world was dangerous. Instead, foreign policy must be governed by the principle of cooperation. The EU must continue to present itself to the countries of the Third World as a viable alternative - alongside the USA. The EU possessed the economic power which was a prerequisite for a capacity to act, but this now needed to be matched by political will.

Assen AGOV (Bulgaria) saw the Kosovo conflict as a warning to all Europeans. He underlined the need for integration of all the regions of the former Yugoslavia, but warned against a schematic, "packaged" approach. Croatia, for example, did not wish to be treated in the same way as Albania. A common policy of integration, taking into account the individual situations in each country, was therefore required. The policy areas relating to the internal market, European economic and monetary union, the "third pillar" and the CFSP were all interdependent, and so an overall perspective was essential in resolving the various problems.

The Kosovo conflict was the "last battle of the Cold War". In this respect, greater efforts must be demanded from the Europeans.

Michael STÜBGEN (Germany) pointed out that the Amsterdam Treaty also provided for the possibility of combat missions. However, he saw no real scope for such missions at present due to insufficient budget funds. In this respect, the parliaments must recognize that their task was to increase resources, if necessary by exerting appropriate pressure on their national governments. The WEU's integration into the EU must be pursued vigorously under the Finnish presidency. The step-by-step plan put forward by Germany's former Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel could serve as a model in this context. Cooperation in the field of armaments must be incorporated into the Treaty on European Union as a medium- and long-term task of the CFSP. Finally, the High Representative for the CFSP must be granted sufficient funds and scope for action. The Commission's competencies and resources should be utilized in this context. In his view, the Commission should be given responsibility for managing the CFSP portfolio in the long term.

Tuija BRAX (Finland) expressed the view that the EU must assume more political responsibility at international level. She appealed for special consideration to be given to the situation of non-aligned countries in shaping the new CFSP. Following the conclusion of the Amsterdam Treaty, the EU needed to sharpen its profile vis-à-vis the WTO to match its increased responsibilities. "Mr CFSP" must also assume special responsibility for external relations in the field of consumer, health and environmental policy and in combating child labour, for example.

Dolores CRISTINA (Malta) highlighted the need for the EU to develop a coherent security policy. The Amsterdam Treaty established the framework conditions for this process. She welcomed the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe and called for a strengthened policy on the Mediterranean region.

Doros THEODOROU (Cyprus) cited the values which Cyprus shared with Member States, but also its desire for enhanced security against the background of the Turkish threat, as her country's reasons for wishing to join the EU. However, experience of the Kosovo conflict raised concerns that Europe was by no means in a position to guarantee the desired security.

She voiced criticism of the USA's role in Kosovo, which she described as a form of American dominance over Europe. She called upon the EU to do more for peace.

Maurice LIGOT (France) stressed that the EU was prosecuting the war in Kosovo in response to human rights violations. He identified the following problem areas in shaping a viable new CFSP: the decision-making bodies must be democratic and effective and enjoy a high level of acceptance among citizens. The High Representative, who must belong to the executive, should be given broad powers. In view of the fragmentation and lack of synergy in current European security and defence policy, better coordination and implementation of existing European capacities were required. There must be no further cuts in Member States' budgets at the expense of defence, and the EU must be equipped with sufficient resources to establish its own European identity vis-à-vis the USA. Further specific common European strategies, also on Russia, were necessary.

Loukas APOSTOLIDIS (Greece) cited the creation of an autonomous political power as the stated aim of the EU. He recognized the EU's fundamental desire to achieve this goal, but pointed out that there were serious shortcomings in this area. In its relations with NATO during the Kosovo conflict, the EU's role was lamentable: it was incapable of taking on joint responsibility and merely played a peripheral role. Accepting a US monopoly on conflict resolution was unacceptable, however. He called for a Balkan conference to be convened before winter to resolve the refugee and environmental problems associated with the Kosovo conflict.

José SARAIVA (Portugal) asked about the cost of developing a European security identity. He pointed out that implementation and funding in this area had largely been left to the USA in recent years.

Relations between the EU and Third Countries:

EU Trade Relations with the USA, Latin America and the ASEAN States

Philippe HERZOG (European Parliament) explained that although the European Union was a trade power, it was unable - despite its economic strength - to pursue a genuine foreign trade policy. Recent experience had shown that the USA had proved increasingly successful in

asserting its trade interests. In this context, there had been frequent conflicts which could have been avoided if mutually satisfactory arrangements had been agreed in time. Food safety was a key priority for the European Parliament. Trade with the Latin American states was currently declining and relations were fraught with difficulties, e.g. on the issue of concessions with respect to Mercosur. The political dialogue with the South-East Asian states was proving equally problematic. Unless continuity in the negotiations and a unified stance by the Council could be guaranteed, Europe - it was to be feared - would fall further behind in its efforts to assert its interests. The European Parliament, which had held three hearings on these issues, was calling for more information and involvement in the negotiation process. It was seeking to cooperate in these areas not only with the Council and the European Commission but also with the national parliaments.

Henk DE HAAN (Netherlands) underlined the special importance of the WTO and the hopes raised by the negotiation process - due to start in December - in terms of global economic development. In particular, promoting economic development in Central and Eastern Europe also contributed to political stabilization in these states. In his view, material poverty must be consigned to history, as must conflicts arising from economic disparities between the countries concerned. He felt that it was important, at the forthcoming WTO Round, to achieve a comprehensive liberalization of trade in the service sector and to include and discuss the protection of intellectual property and copyright issues in the negotiations. It was also important to ensure that the developing countries could participate in the negotiations on an equal basis. "Weak" countries in particular must be given special consideration so that they could put forward their interests as well.

Nicole CATALA (France) referred to the EU's disputes with the United States. In her view, the USA did not apply the WTO rules in an even-handed manner in practice. As globalization continued, however, Europe must insist on the fair application of these rules. The European Council must give the European Commission a precisely defined mandate so that the Commission could assert common European interests. Progress must be achieved on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights so that these rights could also be incorporated effectively into foreign trade positions.

LORD TORDOFF (United Kingdom) explained that environmental implications had to be considered in the field of trade relations too. Strengthening consumer protection for the

citizens of the Union was a key issue. With respect to genetically modified foods, in particular, precautionary measures were extremely important. It was unacceptable for the USA to tell consumers in the EU what they should and should not eat. Legislators were repeatedly being requested to respond to consumers' fears about genetically modified foods. It ill befitted parliamentarians to ignore these concerns. It must be made clear to the United States that consumer psychology was also a factor in this context.

Paul HATRY (Belgium) praised the Chairman's introductory paper on trade relations and observed that trade relations between the USA and the European Union had never been entirely unproblematic. The dialogue between the EU and the USA on trade problems had suffered severe setbacks, especially as a result of the WTO's dispute settlement system. This was evident from the recent disputes. Furthermore, the USA often failed to abide by WTO rules, and this approach was to be criticized. In his view, negotiations at the forthcoming WTO Round should focus especially on liberalizing the service sector. It was also important to keep the number of free trade areas to a minimum and, at the same time, to achieve simplification by means of comprehensive agreements. He was also concerned about the apparent decline in EU exports in precisely those sectors where advances in science and technology were a prerequisite and thus played a key role. The EU no longer led the field in these areas.

Pedro SOLBES MIRA (Spain) expressed the view that there was inequality in the negotiating positions of the European Union and the USA. It had become apparent that the USA now predominated in the assertion of its positions. On the issue of genetically modified foods, in particular, he took the view - not only because public opinion demanded it - that these must be labelled. Consumers must be able to choose freely which foods they wanted to eat. With regard to the forthcoming WTO negotiating Round, he shared the previous speakers' opinion that liberalizing the service sector, and intellectual property issues, must be priorities. The discussions should also focus to a greater extent on issues of concern to the Latin American countries. The EU had concluded association agreements with Latin American states. Overall, however, it was important to strengthen trade policy cooperation with Latin America and, through the conclusion of further agreements, also to consolidate political and economic structures.

Tino BEDIN (Italy) emphasized that agriculture would be a key issue at the WTO negotiating round. In particular, agricultural subsidies offered plenty of scope for discussion and conflicts. In his view, this was also a problematic issue in terms of the conclusion of agreements between the EU and the Latin American countries or Mercosur, since agricultural products formed the bulk of these countries' exports. This was therefore a very sensitive area, and care must be taken to ensure that progress in negotiations was not achieved at the expense of the EU's agricultural sector. From his point of view, this would not be acceptable. In this context, it must be borne in mind that negotiations were also scheduled to take place on new agreements for the Mediterranean region.

In her contribution, Maria Manuela AUGUSTO (Portugal) called for the promotion and expansion of relations with the Latin American states in the trade policy field. The course initiated in the 1980s must be pursued consistently in order to achieve a further deepening of relations. In her view, however, priority should not only be given to political and trade policy issues. It was just as important to ensure that social issues were also included in the agreements, thereby helping to improve living conditions.

Review of COSAC Rules of Procedure/Setting-up of a Working Group/ COSAC on the Internet

Co-Chairman Willi STÄCHELE asked the guests on the visitors' galleries to leave the room as the meeting on this item of business was to take place in closed session.

In his introductory statement, he emphasized that the Amsterdam Treaty had significantly changed the role of COSAC. COSAC was now expressly mentioned for the first time - in the protocol on the role of national parliaments - and had been given the right to submit any contribution it considered appropriate to the institutions of the EU. At the XIXth meeting of COSAC in Vienna, a large number of proposals had been put forward concerning changes to COSAC's rules of procedure, and in particular on practical ways to improve its work, on the frequency of meetings, on the possibility of special meetings and on voting arrangements. The drafting of an official English version of the rules of procedure had also been proposed. There was also the question of COSAC's working languages. Germany intended to press for German

to be admitted as a third working language. Furthermore, binding provisions on the question of admitting the public to future meetings of COSAC could also be incorporated into the rules of procedure.

The future of the COSAC website on the Internet was also a very important issue. In this connection, he thanked his colleague from Luxembourg who had developed and looked after COSAC's Intranet website. In order to make the website accessible to the public, this task was now to be entrusted to the European Parliament; Europe's citizens, especially in the applicant countries, would then be able to familiarize themselves with COSAC and its work.

At the last meeting of COSAC in Vienna, Renzo Imbeni, Vice President of the European Parliament, had proposed that a working group be set up to prepare the amendments to COSAC's rules of procedure. Such an approach promised to be more effective than discussions in plenary, which might prove laborious and time-consuming. He therefore suggested that the Conference take a decision on this question today. In addition to representatives of the Troika and the European Parliament, the working group should be open to representatives of any member country interested in being involved. Each member state should have one representative in the working group, which should prepare an interim report for the next conference in Helsinki in October. The rules of procedure could then be adopted at the conference in spring 2000.

Esko AHO (Finland) was of the view that a decision on the rules of procedure should already be taken at the next COSAC meeting in Helsinki in October. To achieve this goal, he proposed the following course of action: at the present meeting, a decision should be taken to set up a working group on the rules of procedure composed of representatives of the national parliaments, that is members of the EU affairs committees. This group should convene for its constituent meeting in August. There would then be time until the end of August to submit suggestions and proposals for amendments. On this basis, a working document would be drafted. The working group should then meet in September in Helsinki and reach agreement on the text to be adopted at the COSAC meeting in October. Should this, contrary to all expectations, not be possible, the discussions could be continued at the COSAC meeting itself.

Renzo IMBENI (European Parliament) welcomed the Finnish proposal wholeheartedly, and felt that nothing needed to be added. If the timetable outlined were adhered to, agreement on the rules of procedure could be reached in Helsinki or, at the latest, next year in Portugal.

Antonio RUBERTI (Italy) called for rules of procedure to be established which allowed COSAC to take positive action and which did justice to its remit. In future, COSAC must focus its attention in particular on compliance with the subsidiarity principle. He suggested that COSAC hold two special meetings to deal with the Commission's annually published legislative programme and the subsidiarity report.

Michel BARNIER (France) felt that the development of a COSAC website on the Internet should be based on the existing Intranet site. The main objective must be to simplify COSAC's internal work. The extent to which the public should be given access was a subject which should then be examined separately. The French Senate, at any rate, was willing to collaborate on the establishment of an Internet site.

Suzette VERHOEVEN (Belgium) considered the Finnish proposal to be acceptable and pointed out that changes to the text submitted by the working group could still be made at the next COSAC meeting in Helsinki. However, it must be clarified whether the working group would be established at senior official or political level.

Co-Chairman Willi STÄCHELE suggested the working group do the groundwork at senior official level and that it continue its deliberations in September in Helsinki at political level.

A MEMBER OF THE FINNISH DELEGATION proposed that the working group conduct its deliberations at political level from the outset. It should also be open to members of national EU affairs committees.

Tino BEDIN (Italy) supported the Finnish proposals and was also of the view that the working group should be set up at political level from the beginning. Any new rules of procedure must include adequate dispute settlement mechanisms. With regard to the COSAC website, not only the technical but also the political content must be specified. This task should be entrusted to COSAC itself.

Jacob BUKSTI (Denmark) stated that the Finnish proposal concerning the drafting of COSAC's rules of procedure was excellent and merited unqualified support. However, following the preparation of an initial draft, preliminary deliberations should be held among the heads of the delegations of the national EU affairs committees. This would enhance the prospects for agreement at the conference in Helsinki. He also agreed wholeheartedly with the comments by the Chair regarding the COSAC website. It would also make sense to set up a working group to deal with this subject.

José MEDEIROS FERREIRA (Portugal) was confident that should the Finnish proposal be accepted it would be possible to adopt new rules of procedure for COSAC by the end of 1999. It must still be decided, however, what role the Troika would play with regard to the working group and what mechanisms there would be for coordination on individual questions.

Jos SCHEUER (Luxembourg) proposed that a twin-track approach be taken in developing the Internet website. On the one hand, the website should contain information on COSAC itself; on the other, it should facilitate an exchange of information among the Parliaments and their EU affairs committees. A system of rotation could be introduced in managing the website. Luxembourg was willing to entrust the task of organizing the website to the French Senate, which had expressed a corresponding interest. A working group could decide on the content of the website. The website would then have not only a purely technical but also a political dimension.

Renzo IMBENI (European Parliament) made it clear that the European Parliament did not wish to block any proposals regarding the management of the website, but had merely offered to assume the task of managing it on a permanent basis and to support the project as a whole.

Co-Chairman Willi STÄCHELE thanked the participants for the lively discussion and affirmed that, in line with the Finnish proposal, a working group would be set up at political level and would prepare a draft of the rules of procedure for the next COSAC meeting in Helsinki. A working group would also be set up at senior official level to formulate proposals in collaboration with the European Parliament for the development of a COSAC website.

Adoption of an Appeal to Voters in the European Elections

Co-Chairman Willi STÄCHELE noted that a number of proposals for amendments to the draft of an appeal to voters in the European elections had been submitted and that there was therefore a considerable need for further discussion.

Jacob BUKSTI (Denmark) emphasized that a decision must first of all be taken as to whether COSAC should adopt such an Appeal to Voters at all.

THE BRITISH DELEGATION supported the Danish proposal.

A REPRESENTATIVE OF SPAIN expressed the view that COSAC should adopt the Appeal to Voters and should unanimously approve a corresponding text.

A REPRESENTATIVE OF PORTUGAL felt that it was common sense that the citizens of Europe should be called upon to vote in the European election. In this way, COSAC could make itself better known among the public. It was the least that could be done.

Renzo IMBENI (European Parliament) appealed to the conference participants to show solidarity and a sense of responsibility and to adopt the Appeal to Voters. Such a declaration could have a direct public impact.

Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER stressed that the elections to the European Parliament could not be ignored. It would therefore make sense for COSAC to adopt the Appeal to Voters. It would make a bad impression if the Conference failed to agree on a corresponding text.

Prof. Jürgen MEYER (Germany) stated that given the forthcoming European Council meeting in Cologne and closeness of the election date, it was essential to adopt the Appeal to Voters.

A REPRESENTATIVE OF ITALY supported the proposal of the German Presidency. The Appeal to Voters highlighted the cooperation between the European Parliament and the national parliaments.

THE DELEGATION FROM THE NETHERLANDS also supported adoption of the Appeal to Voters but was of the view that the text should be as concise as possible.

Co-Chairman Willi STÄCHELE summed up the outcome of the discussion and concluded that COSAC would adopt an Appeal to Voters. A working group chaired by Wolfgang FISCHER, Chairman of the Committee on European Union Questions of the Bundesrat, would be set up to reach a consensus based on the various motions for amendments. The final draft could then be adopted by the Conference the following day.

1 June 1999

The COSAC participants were welcomed by Co-Chairman Willi STÄCHELE and the session was resumed.

Adoption of an Appeal to Voters in the European Elections

Co-Chairman Willi STÄCHELE informed the conference participants about the "Appeal to Voters in the European Elections" which had been revised overnight by the working group set up the previous day under Wolfgang Fischer (Germany). He noted that there were no further objections to the text in its current form and that it was thus adopted unanimously by the Conference.

Report on the Work of the German Presidency – Progress on Agenda 2000 and the Enlargement Process

Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER welcomed Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer, thanked him for his attendance, and requested an introductory statement on the work of the German Presidency.

Federal Foreign Minister Joseph FISCHER expressed his thanks for the invitation to the Conference. The timing of the XXth COSAC - two days before the Cologne European Council - offered a good opportunity for a debate about the current state of the EU integration process. The German Presidency had faced special circumstances from the outset. The key issues on the agenda had been clear from the start. After the launch of the Euro, the EU's next major task had been the conclusion of Agenda 2000 in order to safeguard the EU's capacity for enlargement and ensure that it could continue to work effectively after enlargement. These tasks would continue to pose major challenges to the EU in future. Other key issues had been the conclusion of the European Employment Pact and the strengthening of foreign policy within the framework of the CFSP.

The Berlin European Council in March 1999 had been dominated by the adoption of Agenda 2000, but also by the simultaneous outbreak of direct confrontation in Yugoslavia. Internal and external crises were thus interlinked. The crisis within the European Commission had been compounded by a constitutional dispute in which the European Parliament had fought to extend its rights vis-à-vis one element of the European executive. All these problems had culminated under the German Presidency; rarely had any Presidency faced comparable challenges. However, he had no wish to complain, but rather to highlight the opportunities which had arisen for the German Presidency. Throughout these conflicts, the EU had not only demonstrated its unity, capacity to act and creativity but had also used the crises as a motive to push ahead resolutely with the integration process. The German Presidency had been successful and had made major steps forward. The incoming Finnish Presidency must follow on from the work of the last six months. Pressing ahead with enlargement in future would not only mean promoting the integration of the Central and East European states but also, and in addition, drawing the states of South-Eastern Europe closer to the prospect of full integration into the EU's structures.

On the Kosovo conflict: from the start of the Yugoslav tragedy, i.e. in 1991/92, the EU member states had devised common positions and made close cooperation a priority. This had proved very important for the development of an effective CFSP. Irrespective of assessments of the Kosovo conflict per se, the experience had clearly shown that the European role must be strengthened. Europe must shape, and not only have a say in shaping, its own destiny. The political negotiations on the Kosovo conflict were now in a crucial phase. The coming days would show whether the breakthrough to a peace settlement could be achieved. The alternative was an escalation of the conflict. The fundamental goal of the peace settlement was to guarantee the return of refugees to a safe environment. If this failed, the politics of “ethnic cleansing” and aggressive nationalism would have triumphed. This would be a declaration of war against a Europe based on integration.

It was crucial to provide a long-term response to the problems of the entire region of South-Eastern Europe. The planned Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe was extremely important in this respect. He wished to stress to the applicant countries, especially Bulgaria and Romania, that the Stability Pact was not an alternative to their accession aspirations. The Stability Pact served a different purpose, i.e. to guarantee stability and security for all states in

the region, to safeguard the inviolability of borders, to achieve confidence-building measures on disarmament agreements, and to develop mutual security guarantees.

Alongside these security policy objectives, the Stability Pact also aimed to promote economic development, as well as the market economy and the free exchange of goods and services, throughout the region. It thus sought to enhance the overall opportunities for healthy, dynamic economic development. Finally, as the third element of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, efforts must focus on democratizing the internal structures of the countries of the region. The experiences of the EU member states since the foundation of the EC would be drawn on for this purpose. Economic stability had always gone hand in hand with democracy, the guarantee of minority rights, the rule of law in politics and society, and the inviolability of borders.

Like the CSCE process initiated at the Helsinki Conference, the Stability Pact must be designed as a long-term project. At the end of the process - and this must be clear to all parties - there was the historic prospect of full membership of the EU. There could be no divided security, but only common security, in Europe. The prospect of accession - no matter how unrealistic this might appear today - could not be bypassed.

To achieve this goal, it was therefore even more important to safeguard the EU's capacity to act. How could a European Union with nineteen, twenty-one or even thirty member states continue to work effectively and evolve into a political subject? This question demanded a satisfactory answer. Institutional reform, especially with respect to the "left-overs" from Amsterdam, was therefore a pressing issue. The debate now focussed on a new Intergovernmental Conference which should, if possible, be concluded during the French Presidency. This task was far from straightforward, but institutional reforms were inevitable in order to resolve the major challenges of the future. Europe must retain its capacity to act, yet must not result in a "core Europe". In the debate about the necessary institutional reforms, the future role of the European Parliament must be addressed as a key issue.

With Agenda 2000, the issue of financial and structural reform of the EU had been tackled for the first time. The agreement reached in Berlin was clearly a compromise. To achieve the consensus necessary in that particular historical context, all the countries had had to lower their expectations. The Agenda 2000 compromise had created the framework conditions for

the EU's capacity for enlargement. However, further reforms, especially in agricultural policy, were required. Efforts to contain the crisis in the Commission had also been successful. With the agreement to appoint Romano Prodi as the new President of the Commission - an excellent choice, in Fischer's view - there was the hope that the Commission could once more become an effective player in future. High unemployment - Europe's key problem - would be tackled through the European Employment Pact, focussing especially on youth and long-term unemployment and on measures to dismantle discrimination against women in the labour market. National reforms must be pursued at the same time.

The Euro had recently revealed the weaknesses in the financial markets. There was clearly a need for action in this area.

The CFSP must be developed further. A report on this issue would be tabled at the Cologne European Council. The appointment of "Mr/Ms CFSP" would further enhance the development of an individual European identity and capability in foreign and security policy. Europe would therefore no longer be subject to external decisions in this field of policy, but could develop as a political subject in its own right. The next step was the integration - or concentration - of existing structures. The WEU's integration into the EU was currently under discussion in this context. The German Presidency fully supported this approach. Finally, in the process of European integration, greater priority must be given to fundamental rights. The EU's legitimacy and credibility were important prerequisites for the future of the European Union. To this end, citizens' fundamental rights must be granted the same importance at EU as at national level. It was clear that as national powers to intervene in the life of society were transferred to the EU, equivalent citizens' rights had to be created. A European definition of basic rights - in the form of an EU Charter of Fundamental Rights - was therefore required. This should derive from a broad-based dialogue involving representatives of the European Parliament, the national parliaments, the governments and the Commission. The participants should form a convention and submit a report to the European Council during the French Presidency. At the Cologne European Council, a decision on the drawing up of a Charter of Fundamental Rights and - in the medium term - its incorporation into the EU Treaties was to be adopted. This was intended to initiate a substantive discussion on the elaboration of fundamental rights at EU level.

Completing the process of European integration was the task of the present generation. It was premature, at this stage, to predict the outcome and substance of the integration process. In the future, it was unlikely that the European nation-states would be consigned to history, but it was clear that in the era of globalization, the sovereign nation-state of the nineteenth century no longer had the capacity to act. If Europe wished to take its destiny into its own hands - naturally taking its partners into consideration - then the process of European integration must be completed by the present generation.

Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER thanked Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer for his comments. He requested speakers to adhere to a maximum time limit of four minutes per intervention during the ensuing discussion with the Minister.

Alain BARRAU (France) thanked the German Presidency for its commitment to achieving positive solutions at the crucial Berlin European Council. However, he stressed the compromise nature of the outcomes. At the forthcoming Cologne European Council, he felt there was a need to focus especially on combating unemployment. It was important - and he made no secret of his concern - to make the same kind of effort on this issue as on the launch of the Euro. The aim was to utilize all means available to turn employment policy into a policy for growth. Employment policy was the second most important issue for the Cologne European Council after the Kosovo conflict. He also underlined the need for a European Common Foreign and Security Policy. How should a future European defence policy be established, and how should relations with the USA - which did not always share Europe's interests and viewpoints - be shaped? These were issues which had to be resolved.

He informed the COSAC participants about a non-binding preparatory working paper on the enlargement process which had been drawn up by the French Assemblée Nationale. In his view, this paper, which had also been submitted to the French Planning Minister Nallet, was an extremely important political document. The forthcoming negotiations with the applicant countries must be guided by the principle that everyone - the candidate countries and the EU Member States - should gain from the accession process.

Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER pointed out that all the colleagues present - including those from the applicant countries - had a full right to speak at COSAC. He now gave the

floor to the Tadeusz Mazowiecki who ten years ago had been the first Prime Minister of a Central and East European country to be democratically elected.

Tadeusz MAZOWIECKI (Poland) confessed that he had been greatly moved by the speeches by Wolfgang Thierse, President of the German Bundestag, and Co-Chairman Dr Friedbert Pflüger on Germany's new European and peace policies. The Polish people had fought against the division of Europe since 1980; the process which culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall had begun in Poland in the 1980s. Today, Poland was included in the first round of applicant countries and expected the Helsinki European Council to name dates for the accession of Poland and other applicant countries as well. He shared the view of Co-Chairman Dr Pflüger that security in Europe was not divisible. Since 1992, many errors had been made in connection with the Balkan issue. The planned Stability Pact was extremely important in overcoming the logic of war and ethnic cleansing; this must now give way to a logic of development. It was also important to encourage the emergence of a new generation of democratic parliamentarians in the Balkans. He wished to cite two criteria as a measure of the success of the Stability Pact: the return of all refugees, and the granting of extensive economic aid for Kosovo, but also for Serbia and other states in the region. It was important to continue the institutional reforms of the EU. However, two issues had not yet been satisfactorily resolved. What was the future of agricultural policy in Poland, and what measures could be taken to ensure that with the Schengen Agreement, no new Iron Curtain was created in Europe? He wished to pay tribute to the outstanding achievements of the German Presidency, and he hoped that the incoming Finnish Presidency would be equally successful.

Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER thanked Tadeusz Mazowiecki specifically for his historic political achievements. Without Mr. Mazowiecki's efforts, delegates would not be sitting here together today. He also extended his thanks to the other Central and Eastern Europe countries which had made the European revolution possible.

Nicole FONTAINE (European Parliament) thanked Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer for his very interesting report. She reminded the Conference of the European Parliament's difficulties with the timing of the XXth COSAC in view of the forthcoming European elections. Nonetheless, she was delighted to be here in Berlin. In particular, the staging of the

Conference in the Reichstag Building - a place which awakened deep emotions - was also a valuable contribution to the European Parliament's electoral endeavours.

She stressed her great appreciation of the German Presidency's efficiency and especially the German contribution to resolving the institutional crisis in the EU, which had ultimately had a positive effect on the Union's democratic culture. On a personal note, she paid tribute to the enhanced efficiency of the co-decision procedure, which had been very important in resolving issues of structural policy at the Berlin European Council. On the issue of the EU's institutional reform, she wished to ask Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer how he envisaged the European Parliament's involvement in the forthcoming negotiations. She reminded the Conference of the European Parliament's positions, which stated that through the use of the Community method, the national parliaments and the European Parliament should take concerted action.

Outi OJALA (Finland) thanked the German Presidency for its efforts and achievements. It had established a good basis for the incoming Finnish Presidency. The report by Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer had greatly impressed him. In view of the constraints on the ability of politics to influence events in the global era, politics must concentrate on addressing the priorities of the given historical situation. At present, this was clearly security policy. In this respect, attention should not merely focus on the military aspects of security; it was far more important to integrate economic issues, environmental problems and human rights policy into an overall perspective as well. He wished to underline the historic importance of EU enlargement to the East. In his view, the integration of Russia and Ukraine was a key issue for Europe's common future. He would be interested in hearing the German Presidency's views on this issue.

Pedro SOLBES MIRA (Spain) reminded the Conference of the progress achieved by the EU since the Madrid European Council ten years earlier. He thanked the German Presidency for its work. The outcome of the Berlin European Council should be seen as a compromise. Although it had achieved greater clarity on some issues for the coming years, it had left many problems - notably in agricultural policy - unresolved. In particular, issues relating to institutional reform remained on the agenda. The institutional issues left open in the Amsterdam Treaty must be settled at an Intergovernmental Conference prior to enlargement. He wished to emphasize that the arrangements agreed in the Amsterdam Treaty were not a

viable solution for the future. This institutional model was based on instruments created for a community with just six Members. The Stability Pact should be viewed as a contribution to political democratization. The EU must also offer appropriate instruments for an opening towards South-Eastern Europe. He voiced criticism of the continuing shortcomings in the EU's relations with third countries, which failed to take sufficient account of these countries' individual situations. He asked the Federal Foreign Minister for more information on the planned Stability Pact.

Federal Foreign Minister Joseph FISCHER responded to the above points. On the issue of employment policy as an agenda item at the forthcoming Cologne European Council, he stressed that combating unemployment was the key domestic policy challenge in virtually all the EU Member States. To avoid misunderstandings, he wished to point out that the focus on unemployment at the Cologne European Council was merely the continuation of comparable efforts at the Berlin Summit. With the adoption of Agenda 2000 - especially the structural policy measures - in Berlin, important steps to stimulate growth had already been adopted. This meant that significant progress on initiating programmes with a positive impact on employment had already been achieved. In the public debate on this issue, he personally had always underlined the usefulness of a coordinated structural policy as it was able - through a process of "give and take" - to lend substantial impetus to employment and regional development.

He particularly wished to thank Tadeusz Mazowiecki for his words. He admitted that at the beginning of the present Federal Government's term of office, there had been considerable scepticism about the Red-Green coalition's intentions in the field of European policy. By contrast, he had always been optimistic in this respect. During his first visit to Poland, he had therefore described the adoption of Agenda 2000 as a measure of the seriousness of Germany's response to the challenges of integration. In Warsaw, he had given assurances that under the new Federal Government, Germany would fulfil its responsibilities to Europe and adopt Agenda 2000 in Berlin.

In response to the calls for specific dates for accession, he wished to point out that speculative dates were no help. Dates for accession could only be named once there were realistic prospects of accession and all the problems had been worked through chapter-by-chapter. The Commission's progress reports, due in autumn 1999, formed an important basis for the

decisions to be taken at the Helsinki European Council on the further prospects of accession. He appealed to all parties not to raise the issue of dates. Instead, it was crucial for both sides to do their homework. The EU member states must make the EU ready for enlargement, and the applicant countries must make themselves ready for accession. The best guarantee of rapid accession was to establish an optimum framework for structural and economic adjustment in the member states and to proceed speedily with the approximation of legislation.

He assured the Conference that the Stability Pact was designed to be a long-term process. An alternative to South-Eastern Europe's integration - i.e. historical atavism in parts of Europe - was inconceivable. Milosevic's politics of a Greater Serbia combined with aggressive nationalism must be set against their antithesis, namely the principle of European integration. European integration did not entail the surrender of national identity but of nationalism - i.e. setting one's own nation above those of neighbouring states. With European integration, nationalism would give way to the rule of law and the integration of interests. This "secret of European integration" must be passed on to the states of South-Eastern Europe through the Stability Pact. The Stability Pact was the key challenge for the EU. It was less costly than war and expulsion and was a meaningful way of investing in peace. In essence, therefore, the Stability Pact was a non-military security pact. He reminded the Conference that the EU had created non-military security through integration. The Councils' negotiations thus represented the "maximum mobilization of national interests". With European integration as their watchword, Europeans no longer took to the battlefields but were obliged to seek success at the negotiating table. The issues now dealt with in the Council had, in the past, led all too often to conflict and war. This, in his view, was where the real fascination of European integration and "Eurocracy" lay.

On the issue of agricultural programmes, which had also been raised, he felt that plain speaking was called for. Despite the importance of agricultural policy in individual states, the need to adjust to the WTO rules exerted great pressure on further agricultural policy reforms. After all, the EU derived the major share of its gross national product from high-quality industrial products and services. It therefore had a strong vested interest in global free trade - not least in order to safeguard jobs in member states - and must avoid being embroiled in trade wars at all costs. He also highlighted the clear imbalance which now existed between the low level of value added of the agricultural sector, on the one hand, and the agricultural

budget's substantial share - almost 50 per cent - of the total EU budget, on the other. There was a clear need for action in this area.

On the Schengen issue, he hoped that Schengen could be extended to include Poland; this was not only in Europe's, but also in Germany's particular bilateral interest as Poland's neighbour.

He thanked the Vice-President of the European Parliament, Nicole Fontaine, for her critical but ever constructive cooperation in pushing through the Agenda 2000 process. The Federal Government actively promoted the strengthening of the European Parliament, e.g. in connection with the drafting of an EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. He reminded the Conference that other countries held divergent views on the further strengthening of the European Parliament as a result of their different traditions.

On the question how an enlarged EU with further Member States would function in light of the shortcomings of the Amsterdam Treaty, he believed that an enlarged European Union with twenty-one to thirty Member States could only work effectively if Parliament played a full role. This gave rise to difficult institutional questions. During the crisis in the European Commission, initial elements of the emerging internal debate, which was marked by a strong divergence of national interests with regard to the relationship between nation-states and their representation in the EP, had become apparent. The European Parliament's newly achieved self-confidence - the result of the crisis in the Commission - was very promising in terms of the forthcoming debate on the proposed institutional reforms.

On the Presidency's policy on Russia and Ukraine, the European Union had adopted a decision to implement the new instrument of the Common Strategy - which had been created in the Treaty of Amsterdam - with respect to Russia, Ukraine and the Mediterranean region. A new dynamism had entered the EU's common Mediterranean policy, not least as a result of the recent elections in Israel. The Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference in Stuttgart had been a success. The crucial breakthrough for the conclusion of an association agreement with Egypt was imminent now that remaining concerns about Egypt's human rights policy had been removed.

The development of - equally important - Common Strategies on Russia and Ukraine was at the forefront of the EU's efforts. The Common Strategy on Russia should now be adopted at

the Cologne European Council, and the Common Strategy on the Ukraine would be addressed in the near future. He stressed that European security must always rest on relations with Russia, especially on a strengthening of democracy in Russia. As the Kosovo conflict demonstrated, Russia played a key role in Europe's common security. This also applied to Ukraine, where the reform process and efforts to bring Ukraine into closer contact with Europe must be further strengthened.

In conclusion, he thanked the COSAC participants for their attention and wished them every success with the remainder of the Conference, which he hoped would be productive.

Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER thanked the Federal Foreign Minister and said that his comments on EU enlargement and European reunification had confirmed COSAC's views. The discussions on these issues in Berlin, especially in the Reichstag Building, were highly symbolic. He wished the Minister every success in his efforts to achieve genuine peace in Kosovo, uphold human rights and ensure the safe return of refugees to their homes.

Mariana STOICA (Romania) thanked Germany for its hospitality and good organization of the Conference. She commented on the outcome of the Berlin European Council in March. The signing of Agenda 2000 had been a major success. The compromises reached on the financial perspective until the year 2006, especially on agriculture and the structural funds as well as member states' contributions to the EU budget, were important preconditions for the conclusion of negotiations with the applicant states. This, not least, was one of the successes of the German Presidency.

She reported on the current situation with regard to Romania's preparations for accession. The Romanian people and all political forces were unequivocal in their support for Romania's integration into the EU. Romania had therefore done all the "homework" necessary to prepare for its integration into the EU. These efforts would continue in future too, in order to fulfil the conditions for full membership at a later date. The EU faced fierce "competition" between applicant states. Romania was in danger of becoming a casualty of this competition. She highlighted the difficulties affecting the Romanian economy, particularly its foreign debt commitments in 1999. All the reforms necessary to restructure the Romanian economy had been introduced. In particular, the government had initiated numerous measures to pave the way for privatization and the approximation of legislation. The results of the screening

process were particularly important for Romania, as they were important indicators of measures which needed to be intensified. The Romanian Parliament had recently adopted laws, inter alia, on regional development, the status of civil servants, and the responsibility of individual ministries. To summarize, she wished to say that Romania also fulfilled all the political criteria established in the decisions taken at Copenhagen, i.e. democracy, the rule of law, stable institutions, and respect for human rights and the rights of minorities. She hoped that the European Council would decide as soon as possible on Romania's accession and the beginning of negotiations.

Pierre BEAUFAYS (Belgium) stressed that he agreed with individual elements of Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer's report. He supported the Minister's call for greater concertation in the foreign policy field; in his view, great progress had already been achieved in this area in recent years. He also concurred with the Minister's comments on the development of the EU's internal democracy and the outcomes of the Berlin Agenda 2000 Summit, which laid the foundations for the forthcoming EU enlargement. He shared the Minister's view that there were still many tasks to be overcome. This applied especially to EU financing. He called for the ceiling on total EU expenditure - currently set at 1.27 per cent of GNP - to be revised upwards. No federal system had such a limited budget. In his view, a sensible move would be to introduce a specific EU tax on energy consumption, offset if necessary by cuts in VAT. In agricultural policy, not all the measures necessary to prepare the EU for enlargement had been adopted in Berlin. This applied especially in the context of the WTO rules.

Tom SPENCER (European Parliament) thanked the German Presidency for the strength and resolution which it had shown during the negotiations on Agenda 2000, but also in the Kosovo conflict. He asked how much longer the six-month rotation of the Presidency should continue. Like the German Foreign Minister, he too was keen to strengthen the European Parliament. Nonetheless, he noted a trend towards a bicameral parliament within the European framework, and called for greater influence of the national parliaments. Overcoming internal and external conflicts was, after all, not simply a matter for governments. The important intellectual and institutional conclusions had still to be drawn in this respect. The Commission's decision to extend association arrangements to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania was inadequate as it held out no promise of EU membership. The Prodi Plan for the reconstruction of these countries was more encouraging.

In this context, however, confidence was a prerequisite. This, in its turn, was not simply a matter of faith; it depended on firm realities and clear timetables.

Tibor SZANYI (Hungary) expressed regret that during the session with Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer, only one country from the accession candidates had had an opportunity to speak. The EU's greatest challenge was to resolve the issue of whether a single Europe could be created, or whether a dual Europe would continue to exist. As the Kosovo crisis had clearly shown, EU security policy was a key concern. These problems had to be resolved as a matter of urgency. The German Presidency had achieved a great deal with the adoption of Agenda 2000. A particularly positive outcome was that future EU budgets would make provision for new Member States from the year 2002. He stressed that the first accessions must take place prior to the year 2004. Dates were required. Without specific dates, nothing could be achieved, as the EU's history proved. Appropriate announcements should therefore be made during the Finnish Presidency. Hungary would be ready for accession by the end of the year 2002. By then, a number of discrepancies needed to have been resolved within the EU. In public, for example, there was a great deal of rhetoric about European identity, yet behind closed doors, national interests played a key role. There was also a contradiction between the calls for more democracy and more efficiency. All these problems must be tackled and resolved jointly. EU integration was not a privilege for the fifteen current Member States; it was a matter of overall responsibility for all the European countries.

In response to Tibor Szanyi's criticism about the lack of consideration given to the Central and East European countries with respect to the right to speak, Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER pointed out that Tadeusz Mazowiecki had been the second delegate to speak after the Federal Foreign Minister. In his view, this itself showed that the Central and East European parliaments were firmly integrated into COSAC's debates. He also felt that this criticism was not entirely fair because the German Chair, in particular, had worked especially hard to ensure the granting of full rights to speak for representatives of the accession candidates at COSAC.

Edvins INKENS (Latvia) expressed his thanks for the opportunity to speak at the Conference, and said that he intended to be frank. Debates such as yesterday's on the weighting of votes in the Council were simply "pie in the sky" and failed to address the problems of the real world.

It was no wonder that the EU's acceptance amongst the general public in the applicant countries was declining substantially. He went on to inform the Conference about the particular problems affecting Latvian agriculture. In Latvia, as in the other Baltic states, the agricultural restructuring process had been carried out in a particularly cruel manner. There were very few agricultural subsidies available, and as a result of restrictions on access to EU markets and the introduction of quotas - a straitjacket for Latvian agriculture - Latvia was exposed to extremely fierce competition. In particular, the loss of Russia as the key market for agricultural products had intensified competition between the EU and the Baltic states. Pig meat, for example, was now so cheap as a result of low-priced imports from the EU that it was no longer worth producing. The result was widespread bankruptcy and the closure of numerous agricultural holdings in Latvia and Lithuania. The Latvian agricultural market was now in ruins, yet Latvian farmers were supposed to adjust to the EU, even though the EU itself had so far failed to introduce any real reforms. Under these circumstances, the EU's insistence on adjustment was difficult to comprehend. His question was this: was it sensible to destroy a key sector of the Latvian economy, i.e. agriculture, simply so that the EU could prove its capacity for enlargement - amongst others, to Latvia itself?

Maria Grazia DANIELE GALDI (Italy) stressed that she had been very pleased to hear Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer's report. His views and assessments were very important, in her view. She was sad to note, however, that despite repeated debates and corresponding demands for institutional reforms - here within the framework of COSAC - the tangible outcomes were negligible. She had the impression that the EU was constantly being overtaken by events. This was particularly evident from attempts to combat unemployment in the European Union. She called for special efforts, measures and resources to tackle unemployment effectively. In this context, the role of the European Parliament must be strengthened, and a pact - equipped with new instruments - concluded between the Parliament, governments and associations. Her particular concern was to introduce effective curbs on unfair competition, especially wage dumping. These practices not only increased the costs for those enterprises which adhered to the rules but often jeopardized safety in the workplace as well. She reported on an initiative by the Italian Parliament to combat child labour. Its purpose was to create "negative incentives" through targeted measures to discourage the employment of children. She was in favour of a comprehensive consensus on labour market policy reform. This meant that intervention measures had to be targeted more specifically, with more precisely defined goals and procedures. She also stressed the need for

a general reform of the EU's own resources which would enable the Community to access new sources of income (e.g. through the taxation of energy consumption) on an autonomous basis.

José MEDEIROS FERREIRA (Portugal) referred to his most recent discussion with Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer within the framework of the North Atlantic Assembly. The Federal Foreign Minister's report had been very impressive. He also wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate the German Presidency on its achievements. He asked for the following comments, which were of great concern to him, to be forwarded to the Federal Foreign Minister. The idea of introducing a Charter of Fundamental Rights was extremely significant. This was clearly lacking from the European Union's range of instruments and was very important, especially in the context of the Schengen system. Referring to the Federal Foreign Minister's comments about the abolition of European dictatorships, he reminded the Conference that Portugal had been the first country to topple its dictatorship in 1974. The removal of the Portuguese dictatorship had become a model for later similar actions. The planned Stability Pact had his full support. However, he would like to know how the Pact was to be financed. Furthermore, the European Parliament and the national parliaments must not be excluded from the debate about the Stability Pact.

Tunne KELAM (Estonia) congratulated the German Presidency on the outcome of the Berlin Agenda 2000 Summit. This had led to significant progress and given a great deal of hope to the future Members of the EU. He paid tribute to Germany's willingness to sacrifice some of its own concerns at the Berlin Summit in the interests of the EU. It had become apparent during the discussion that there were fears and worries on both sides: the applicant countries, for example, were concerned about a possible sell-out of their countries, while the EU member states feared that their countries might be overwhelmed by cheap labour from Central and Eastern Europe. He wished to refer back to the words of his British colleague from the European Parliament, Tom Spencer, who had pointed out that above all, mutual confidence was important. The COSAC Conferences themselves were confidence-building measures. He wished to propose that as with COSAC, representatives of the governments of the applicant countries should be able to attend the European Councils as observers. If necessary, other approaches must be sought in order to safeguard a full flow of information for the applicant states. He emphasized that the drafting of a schedule for possible accession from

the year 2004 should, if possible, be agreed during the Finnish Presidency. He wished his Finnish colleagues every success with their forthcoming tasks.

Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER underlined Tunne Kelam's demand. Unless a timetable were established, it would not be possible to mobilize the necessary forces in the applicant countries.

Sandra FEI (Italy) voiced clear criticism of the German Presidency. COSAC was not simply a forum for non-committal courtesies, expressions of thanks and congratulations. She had hoped that this Conference would stimulate real initiatives for the Ministers' future work. Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer had merely stated the obvious, and the information he had imparted was certainly not new. His report had been quite superficial and was more suited to the general public's level than to Members of Parliament. He had described the difficulties encountered by, and the progress achieved under, the German Presidency, but had failed to address a number of key issues. She had the impression that the German Presidency had not introduced any major initiatives and, indeed, had not planned to do so. It had simply handed on the baton to the next Presidency. Italy, by contrast, was the only truly European country. The Italian people were fully behind Europe. The Federal Foreign Minister's report had been disappointing, in her view. Was it a reflection of Germany's Euro-scepticism? Referring to the Minister's comments about further progress on an enhanced role for the European Parliament, she pointed out that at the negotiations on the Amsterdam Treaty, Germany itself had vetoed the granting of wider powers for the European Parliament against objections from the Southern European countries. The Minister's comment that the EU's institutional reform was a necessary precondition for enlargement was therefore unconvincing. These reforms were necessary anyway, for the era of Jean Monnet was long gone. She hoped that future debates would be more productive and stimulating so that the COSAC delegates had something substantial to take back to their parliaments.

In response to Sandra Fei's criticism, Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER pointed out that with participants from twenty-seven different countries representing a wide range of viewpoints, interests and traditions, COSAC, in his view, had to reflect a broad spectrum of opinion.

Nicole CATALA (France) raised the issue of Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer's initiative on the drafting of a EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. She asked, with some scepticism, what the purpose of the Charter would be. Were European citizens not already adequately protected through the European Convention on Human Rights, the national constitutions, and the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights in former Article F of the Maastricht Treaty, now Article 6 of the Amsterdam Treaty? Did these instruments not provide an adequate framework for all citizens of the member states and the applicant countries? In terms of "value added", she wished to highlight the difficulties which might arise with respect to the form and content of an EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. If the definition of human rights were strengthened in the planned Charter, over and above the definition of these rights in national legislation, inconsistencies would undoubtedly arise. As an example, she cited the French provisions on religious freedom, which were shaped by secular philosophy. Moreover, what would happen to the European Convention on Human Rights after the introduction of a EU Charter of Fundamental Rights? How should the Charter be implemented and monitored, and what provisions should be made with respect to responsibility for the administration of justice? Should a new European constitutional court be established? In view of the great difficulties involved, the stable structure of the present human rights system, which she had described, should not be jeopardized unnecessarily.

Ben BRADSHAW (United Kingdom) asked for his particular thanks to be extended to the Federal Foreign Minister for his courage and the leadership which he had shown, also within his own party. He reiterated the Federal Foreign Minister's view that Europe must develop a credible, effective and independent foreign policy. Against the background of the criticism and frustration voiced by his Italian colleague Sandra Fei, he wished to put forward a specific proposal, namely that the national parliaments should allocate more money to defence.

Francisco TORRES (Portugal) thanked the Chairman and all his staff for the excellent organization of the meeting. He also congratulated the German Presidency in particular for having achieved remarkable results despite inauspicious circumstances at the beginning of the Presidency. With respect to the rationale for the Charter of Fundamental Rights initiative, Portugal's response to this question, which had been raised by several states, was as follows: the Charter should be seen as a necessary flanking measure for the communitization of the EU's home affairs policy. On the issue of institutional reform, a number of questions were still unresolved, notably dates and deadlines, and the details of how the procedure should be

shaped on an individual basis. Was the possibility of convening a committee of independent experts being considered once more in this context? Should the European Parliament be involved, and if so, in what way?

With reference to Ms Catala's question on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Professor Jürgen MEYER (Germany) briefly outlined why the European Convention on Human Rights was not adequate and must be replaced by a Charter of Fundamental Rights. He cited five reasons: firstly, in the opinion of the European Court of Justice, the EU could not accede to the European Convention on Human Rights for legal reasons. However, more effective control of the Brussels bureaucracy than hitherto was required. Secondly, the European Convention on Human Rights contained loopholes, for it did not even provide for the principle of human dignity or the right to universal freedom of action. Nor did it cover the "third generation" of human rights, such as the right to data protection. Thirdly, the European Convention on Human Rights had been elaborated in commendable ways by the European Courts, but had remained a matter for experts. There was now a need to create a document which could be understood by every citizen. Fourthly, the European Convention on Human Rights was derived from the work of the Council of Europe, which encompassed forty Member countries. However, the EU needed its own document which established and reflected its own identity. The document must also result in a more specific definition of citizenship of the Union. Finally, the Charter of Fundamental Rights must make it clear, in a convincing way, that Europe was not only an economic community but also a community of values.

Esko AHO (Finland) thanked the German hosts for their excellent organization of the Conference and the impressive programme in the Reichstag Building. He wished to take the opportunity to invite delegates to attend the next COSAC on 11-12 October 1999 in Helsinki. He requested participants to arrive on Sunday so that the sessions could begin promptly on Monday morning. He gave his assurances that delegates could expect a substantive and significant conference in Helsinki too. To prepare the discussions, basic working documents would be drafted and circulated in good time. He hoped that in the framework programme, too, Helsinki could follow the German example. Certainly, the Helsinki hosts would try to think of new ideas. He concluded by expressing his thanks, and said that he looked forward to welcoming the Conference to Helsinki in autumn.

Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER thanked all the participants for their contributions and commitment. He himself had learnt a great deal from the discussions; in particular, he had acquired a better understanding of the various viewpoints and interpretations of current European processes. The different emphases in the discussions created an overall picture of the direction in which Europe should move. Thus the political weight of the EU should be strengthened, an effective CFSP developed, and the rapid enlargement of the Community - not least against the background of the Kosovo conflict - should be moved forward. In foreign trade policy, the forthcoming WTO Round was very important for the Community. He hoped that the joint discussions had stimulated new ideas, perhaps not for all but at least for some of the participants. As the organizing bodies, the German Bundestag and the Bundesrat had made every effort to ensure the success of the XXth COSAC. He therefore wished to express his warmest thanks to the many staff involved from both institutions. He particularly thanked the interpreters, who had a difficult and responsible task. He felt that the technicians deserved a compliment; the equipment had worked better today than at the last plenary sitting of the Bundestag in the Reichstag Building, when there had still been some problems.

After dealing with a number of other organizational matters, Co-Chairman Dr. Friedbert PFLÜGER thanked all the participants once again and said that he looked forward to seeing them again at the XXIth COSAC in Helsinki in autumn 1999.