

INFORMAL EUROPEAN COUNCIL DISCUSSES THE CONVENTION

Athens, 16 April 2003

The Informal European Council met this morning with the President of the European Convention, Mr Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, with a view to taking note of the current stage of progress of its deliberations. Prior to this meeting, a brief exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament, Mr Pat Cox, took place.

The President of the Convention addressed Heads of State and Government on the latest developments as regards the Convention's deliberations. His presentation was followed by an exchange of views on the following main institutional issues:

1. How to ensure greater continuity in the Presidency of the European Council as well as in the different configurations of the Council of Ministers of the European Union;
2. The size and the composition of the European Commission after the enlargement to 27 members;
3. The nomination and the powers of the President of the Commission;
4. The nomination and the powers of an eventual "EU Foreign Affairs Minister";
5. The role of a possible new structure (e.g. Conference or Congress) composed by representatives of national parliaments and of the European Parliament.

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Participating countries agreed on the importance of finalising the work of the Convention in due time and of taking further account of the abovementioned matters. The final draft of the Convention's deliberations is expected to be presented at the Thessaloniki European Council on 20 June 2003.

It is recalled that the Laeken European Council (14-15 December 2001) decided to convene a Convention composed of the main parties involved in the debate on the future of the Union, in order to pave the way for the next Intergovernmental Conference (IGC). Its proposals will be submitted to the European Council and the final document will provide a starting point for discussions in the IGC, which will take the ultimate decisions.

The Inaugural Meeting of the Convention took place in Brussels on 28 February 2002. The text of the preliminary draft Constitutional Treaty was proposed on 28 October 2002, since then it has been the object of several contributions and proposals for amendment.

The work of the Convention is expected to be completed in 2003. It meets in plenary session once a month, at the premises of the European Parliament in Brussels.