

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Subject : 1st informal meeting of the Praesidium

22 February 2002

I. POINTS SETTLED

1. Name and role of the Praesidium

- a) It was agreed to stick to the Laeken language: "Praesidium".
- b) The Praesidium should have a two-fold role: it should serve the convention without imposing on it, but should also provide guidance and assist in structuring the debate.

2. Working method of the Convention

Members of the Praesidium recognised that, given the non-homogenous character of the composition of the Convention, it was not appropriate to resort to a vote. The Convention should aim at achieving consensus or, at least, a substantial majority.

II. OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS

1. Calendar of meetings of Convention and Praesidium

In order to take account of the request by the representatives of the national parliaments to hold the Convention meetings on Monday and Tuesday, it was agreed that the Secretariat should explore, together with the Secretariat of the European Parliament, the possibility of having at least some of the sessions at the beginning rather than at the end of the week. The Praesidium would reconsider the issue at its next meeting on the basis of this information, taking into account also the availability of the representatives of Heads of State and Government. The need for additional sessions was stressed by some members; others suggested that sessions might continue late into the evening.

As to the content of the first sessions, it was agreed that the debate should be organised on the basis of some general questions, the first of which would be "what do you expect from the EU?"

2. The Forum and contacts with civil society

The presentation by vice-President Dehaene of the broad lines of the activities of the Forum (see note dated 21 February 2000) was endorsed and it was agreed that the note should be further developed. Hearings should be organised on the basis of a structured approach (selection of participants and focus on specific issues) and two members of the Praesidium should ideally participate, together with M. Dehaene, in each hearing.

2. Arrangements for the opening session of the Convention

In view of the fact that the Convention has been convened by the European Council, the following arrangements were considered appropriate:

- President Cox could welcome the members of the Convention at the lunch
- the ceremonial session would be chaired by President Aznar, whose speech would be followed by President Cox's and President Prodi's (10 minutes each). President Giscard d'Estaing, seated from the beginning with the members of the Convention, would then join the podium and deliver his speech
- the session would then be suspended for 30 minutes (press conference)
- the 1st working session would then start with the following items:
 - presentation of the Praesidium
 - presentation of the programme of work
 - intervention by vice-President Dehaene on debate with civil society (and intervention by vice-President Amato on reorganisation of the Treaties?)
 - rules of procedure
- the session could be extended to the 1st March when a debate could be opened on the issues touched upon on 28th February.

This program is conditional on agreement at Praesidium level on the draft rules of procedure as well as on the results of contacts with President Cox.

4. Draft rules of procedure

The Praesidium agreed to revert to this issue on the basis of a revised version established by the Secretary of the Convention in the light of amendments suggested by members of the Praesidium by Monday 25 February lunch time.

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The next meeting of the Praesidium will take place on 27 February at 17H00.