

Statement by Mr Henrik Hololei
Alternate Member of the Convention
Government of Estonia
on articles on external relations of the draft Constitutional Treaty
15-16 May 2003, Brussels

Mr Chairman,

I would like to voice my recognition to the content of the text presented by the Presidium. The language of the draft articles is somewhat long and complicated, the structure a bit difficult to follow, but I consider most of the content appropriate. I am particularly pleased that the idea of the creation of the European Union's Foreign Minister has received a wide support and there seems to be a consensus in favour of that among the members of the Convention. He or she should also be the Vice-President of the Commission and bring together the resources of both the Council and the Commission.

About the defence and security co-operation I would like to mention the draft article 30 that allows for closer co-operation in defence area. In my mind it would be a rather unfortunate development for the unity of EU. The security and defence policies of the Member States are very different and it would be far premature to try to steer it into one mould. Certainly, the Member States are free to make their security policy choices. But closer co-operation in military field should not take place within the Union but rather outside it. Otherwise our half-hearted attempts would make the divisions within Europe plain to see for everyone. This would on the contrary diminish the influence of the Union in the world in order to improve it. Instead of setting ourselves in unnecessary and unattainable aims, we should focus on what is realistic to achieve – a more coherent foreign policy under the leadership of a European Union's foreign minister - a common, realistic and sensible voice in world affairs; development of good relations with neighbouring states. This said, I am not against deeper co-operation where it is really needed. For example the proposals to significantly upgrade co-operation in fighting terrorism deserves appreciation. Also a close co-operation in the defence industry will work for the benefit of European unity.

Foreign policy is an area that inherently belongs to the core of the national sovereignty. No doubt, sometimes you will have to make compromises also in this field. But these compromises should be reached by weighing all pros and cons of a policy line and not be imposed by the will of the majority. Thus I would prefer that all decisions regarding principles would remain to be adopted on the basis of unanimity, including those based on a proposal of the Union's foreign minister and the Commission. A policy that is backed by all of Europe is certainly more viable in long term than seemingly smoothly adopted decisions that do not have a real backing.

Thank you, Mr Chairman!