

**Contribution by Dr Dimitrij Rupel,
Slovenian Foreign Minister and Prime Minister's Representative to the European
Convention,**

Brussels, 16 May 2003

In my contribution, I wish to present briefly Slovenia's view on the future building and strengthening of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy.

At the beginning of May, foreign ministers of the new member states participated for the first time in an informal meeting of EU foreign ministers. One of the key topics of the meeting was the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. The discussions showed that, despite certain doubts, an EU of 25 countries will be able to continue integrating its foreign policy in a direction that allows for efficient operation in the new security-political situation of the 21st century. Slovenia believes that democratic debate within the Convention, and the reaching of a consensus among the 25 members, provides the foundation for effective formulation and implementation of the CFSP and the ESDP.

The Iraq crisis has clearly shown that weaknesses still exist that prevent the EU from consolidating its role, especially in view of its economic development and power, as an important global player in the international security and political arena and a trustworthy Transatlantic partner. In the future, the EU should not allow itself to remain a mere bystander while the international security environment changes in an unpredictable manner. With the strengthening of the CFSP, the EU will become a guarantor of stability and of the development in the European continent and the international community at large.

Slovenia supports the merging of the present functions of the Commissioner for External Relations and the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. This combination of functions in one post - the EU foreign minister would be one of the vice-presidents of the Commission at the same time - may contribute to concerted action, and the transparency and effectiveness of the Union in external relations. The foreign minister would conduct EU Foreign, Security and Defence Policy. Within the Commission, his responsibilities would include external relations and the coordination of other aspects of the EU's external actions.

Slovenia also welcomes the text of Article 15 since, in our opinion, effective coordination between diplomatic and consular representations of Member States and EU delegations in third countries and to international organizations is essential for productive EU action in international relations. In the future, the possibility should be considered for the EU delegations in certain third countries assuming the function of representing those members that may so desire.

Slovenia is aware that the Common Foreign and Security Policy could be even more effective if the European Union managed to upgrade its defence component. Slovenia does not consider the strengthening of the European Security and Defence Policy an alternative to NATO, but believes the EU and NATO to be complementary. We also believe that in building the ESDP the unnecessary duplication of EU and NATO defence structures or duplication within national structures should be avoided, since this would be completely irrational and unfeasible for small countries like Slovenia.

All 25 countries should take part in formulating the European Security and Defence Policy to avoid a policy of exclusion. Slovenia is in favour of proposals directed towards the strengthening of the ESDP within the entire EU.

A strong EU is in Slovenia's interest. The EU will be strongest if united.