

10370/03 (Presse 167)

GENERAL AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS *

2519th Council meeting

- GENERAL AFFAIRS -

Luxembourg, 16 June 2003

President : **Mr Giorgos PAPANDREOU**,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic
Republic

* *The 2518th session on External Relations is the subject of a separate press release
(doc. 10369/03 Presse 166)*

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- *Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.*
- *The documents whose references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site <http://ue.eu.int>.*
- *Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the above mentioned Council Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.*

PARTICIPANTS

The Governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium :

Mr Jan DE BOCK

Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Denmark :

Mr Poul Skytte CHRISTOFFERSEN

Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Germany :

Mr Wilhelm SCHÖNFELDER

Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Greece :

Mr Giorgos PAPANDREOU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Anastasios GIANNITSIS

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs

Spain :

Mr Ramón DE MIGUEL Y EGEA

State Secretary for European Affairs

France :

Ms Noëlle LENOIR

Minister attached to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with responsibility for European Affairs

Ireland :

Mr Brian COWEN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Italy :

Mr Roberto ANTONIONE

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg :

Ms Lydie POLFER

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

Netherlands :

Mr Atzo NICOLAÏ

State Secretary for European Affairs

Austria :

Mr Gregor WOSCHNAGG

Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Portugal :

Mr António MARTINS da CRUZ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Finland :

Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Sweden :

Mr Sven-Olof PETERSSON

Ambassador, Permanent Representative

United Kingdom :

Mr Nigel SHEINWALD

Ambassador, Permanent Representative

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Commission :

Mr Chris PATTEN

Member

The Governments of the Acceding States were represented as follows:

Czech Republic :

Mr Cyril SVOBODA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Estonia :

Ms Kriistina OJULAND

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Cyprus :

Mr George IACOVOU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Latvia :

Ms Sandra KALNIETE

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania :

Mr Antanas VALIONIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Hungary :

Mr Endre JUHASZ

Minister in charge of European Affairs

Malta:

Mr Joe BORG

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Poland :

Mr Włodzimierz CIMOSZEWICZ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovakia :

Mr Eduard KUKAN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovenia :

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL

Minister for Foreign Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

PROGRESS OF WORK IN OTHER COUNCIL CONFIGURATIONS

The Council took note of a report from the Presidency on work underway in the Council's other configurations, covering meetings held since the last report on 19 May.

The Presidency's report highlights in particular:

- Adoption of the "tax package", including a Directive on the taxation of savings and a Directive on interest and royalty payments, by the Economic and Financial Affairs Council on 3 June.
- Agreement reached by the Justice and Home Affairs Council, on 5 and 6 June, on a Directive on long-term residents and on the text of Agreements with the United States on extradition and mutual legal assistance, to be signed at the EU-US summit on 25 June in Washington.
- The outcome of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council on 2 and 3 June, where political agreement was reached on a draft Regulation aimed at amending medicine authorisation procedures and the rules regarding the European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products. A Decision was also adopted on the signing by the Community of the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, as well as a general approach on a draft Decision on guidelines for the Member States' employment policies.
- Approval by the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council on 5 June of a new framework for relations in the aviation sector with the United States and other third countries, following the Court of Justice ruling last November which found existing arrangements to be in breach of Community law.

PREPARATION OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON 19 AND 20 JUNE

The Council examined an annotated draft agenda prepared by the Presidency as the basis for deliberations of the European Council at its meeting on 19 and 20 June in Thessaloniki.

The annotated draft agenda covers all of the subjects that the European Council is expected to cover, namely:

- The European Convention and the Intergovernmental Conference on the draft EU Constitutional Treaty
- Immigration, frontiers and asylum
- EU enlargement
- Western Balkans
- The "*Wider Europe – New Neighbourhood*" initiative
- The follow-up to the Spring European Council in Brussels
- External relations

The Council also endorsed a report from the Presidency on asylum, migration and external borders, prepared in response to a request by the European Council at Seville in June 2002, as well as Council conclusions, annexed to the report, on:

- the development of a common policy on illegal immigration, external borders, the return of illegal migrants and cooperation with third countries;
- the development of a policy at European Union level on the integration of third country nationals legally residing in the territory of the European Union.

STATUTE AND FINANCING OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES

The Council reached political agreement, on the basis of a compromise suggested by the Presidency, on a draft Regulation aimed at establishing rules on the statute and financing of European political parties. It requested the Presidency to forward the text to the European Parliament with a view to reaching agreement on the dossier, if possible in first reading.

The Council reached agreement by qualified majority, the Danish, Italian and Austrian delegations indicating their intention to vote against.

The Presidency compromise covers a number of issues that had previously remained outstanding, namely the conditions in which a political party may qualify for European political party status, rules relating to contributions from member parties and donations, and the use of funds for election campaigns.

Most of the rules provided for by the Regulation are due to enter force as from the first plenary session after the European Parliament elections in June 2004.
