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## **THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**1 JULY- 31 DECEMBER 2001**

### **WORK PROGRAMME**

Belgium will hold the European Union Presidency from 1 July to 31 December 2001. The Presidency kicks off at a crucial juncture in the process of European integration. A few months ago, the European Union approved a new treaty that definitively paves the way to EU enlargement. The European Union is currently devising a European social model. By 2010 it aims to become the world's most dynamic knowledge economy, with high levels of economic growth and social protection combined with low inflation and unemployment. The European Union has adopted a sustainable development strategy. In support of its monetary policy, it aims to create a policy that reconciles economic growth with social and environmental protection. The European Union has set itself the goal of creating an area of freedom, security and justice; an area where quality of life, food safety and environmental protection are priorities. Finally, the European Union is currently developing the tools that will enable Europe to play its part on the international stage from a position of strength and unanimity.

Clearly, the Presidency of the European Union is wholly in keeping with the actions undertaken by previous presidencies, proposals advanced by the European Commission and concerns expressed by the European Parliament. Indeed, a Presidency is not a job that can be done in isolation, but rather a mission carried out in the interest of the European Union.

During the second half of 2001, the Presidency will be confronted with two major challenges. First of all, it must address citizens' expectations and advance solutions to the concrete problems facing the EU. Secondly, the Presidency intends to sketch out the major lines of the debate on the future of an enlarged European Union.

The Presidency therefore aims to make progress in all areas of policy that fall within the remit of the European Union. At the same time, it intends to set the agenda, method and timetable for the debate on the future of Europe. This debate will begin in 2004 on the organisation of a new Intergovernmental Conference.

To this end, the Presidency has pinpointed a number of areas where action is required and initiatives will be taken:

1. the European social model;
2. a new currency and a new economic agenda;
3. the European area of freedom, security and justice;
4. sustainable development and a better quality of life;
5. enlargement;
6. the role of the European Union on the international stage;
7. the future of Europe.

The Presidency is intent on helping to find answers to the challenges facing the Union, and doing so in less than six months, and has therefore set itself the goal of making balanced progress in the areas of EU activity listed above. Thus, the Presidency will mark another step forward in the balanced process of unification. That is where the Presidency's ambition lies, and it will seek to flesh out this ambition by engaging in close, sustained cooperation with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the social partners and civil society.

## I. THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL

The Presidency of the European Union will be characterized by a strong social dimension. In this connection, the social agenda approved at the European Council in Nice will be the common theme running through all the actions taken. Indeed, the social agenda offers a dynamic perspective for defining and consolidating the European social model.

In recent years we have seen major progress made in this area. Employment and social policy have become topics featuring permanently on Europe's agenda. The Presidency will ensure that the emphasis is placed on high-quality work, equal opportunities, greater involvement by workers in economic change, the modernisation of social protection, the fight against social exclusion and poverty, sustainability, re-financing pensions and engaging in dialogue with the social partners.

The goal of **full employment** and efforts to improve job quality must go hand in hand. The Presidency has set itself the task of refining quantitative and qualitative employment figures, including statistics on the activity rate. Qualitatively speaking, national employment action programmes will be assessed during the Presidency, as they invariably are during the second half of the year. Job quality will be a key criterion in the assessment. On the basis of both national action plans and the work performed by the European Commission, a series of qualitative indicators will be developed as a first step in devising a European employment strategy. Other criteria include: working conditions, worker health and safety, new work-related health risks and collaboration between national labour inspectorates.

The European Union will endeavour to create a **European job market**. The Presidency will encourage the partners involved in the **social dialogue** to step up their efforts. The Presidency will pay special attention to actions in life-long learning, including the issue of qualification certificates and funding for life-long training. The necessary attention will also be paid to mobility and social security for migrant workers. After all, the European job market can only function properly if the rights of migrant workers are protected, in other words if their right to social security is guaranteed. The Presidency pledges to modernise current rules and regulations in this area. Its goal is to develop parameters containing the priorities and principles underpinning the necessary reform.

The Presidency also plans, in collaboration with the European Parliament, to finalise the talks on the directive on informing and consulting workers as well as those concerning workers in European companies and cooperatives. A European Observatory for Industrial Change will be inaugurated during the Presidency and debates will be launched on industry's social responsibility and the **European system for social mediation**.

The Presidency will continue the EU's efforts to **fight discrimination on the job market**. Here, special attention will be paid to reviewing the directive on equal opportunities for men and women on the labour market, equal pay for equal work, and the fight against moral harassment at the workplace. The Presidency will present indicators of wage inequality and will pursue the practice of including equality-related issues on the agenda of other Councils.

The European Union has a crucial responsibility where **social protection** is concerned. All the Member States are facing the same challenges: an ageing population, rising health care costs, adapting social protection to new situations, such as new configurations of household and new forms of work.

The Presidency's basic ambition is to flesh out the so-called "European social model" and establish a permanent foothold for it in the context of European collaboration. From this point of view, the Presidency's 'social policy' component was based on three priorities: launching European collaboration on pensions; promoting practical cooperation with a view to fighting poverty and social exclusion; and paving the way for the reform of current rules governing the coordination of social security systems.

A common European strategy for social protection, based on open coordination, must be a process that sets out specific, mutually agreed objectives, for which the Member States examine best practice in Europe and draw the appropriate conclusions. The term 'best practice' must be taken quite literally. Europe must demonstrate its determination where social policy is concerned. This means defining 'criteria of excellence', not criteria of mediocrity.

The Presidency is determined to initiate the debate on the sustainability of **pension systems**. Working on the basis of a joint report drawn up by the Committee on Social Protection and the Committee on Economic Policy, we intend to reach agreement on a number of shared objectives guaranteeing sustainable social protection for pensioners and also sound public finances.

On 1 June 2001 all the Member States submitted a National Action Plan on Social Inclusion in which they explain how they will try to achieve their goals. These plans also describe the indicators and monitoring methods to be used to assess policies. Analysing these national action plans should make it possible by the end of the year to formulate an initial set of conclusions on future European collaboration on **the fight against poverty and social exclusion**. This collaboration will allow the Member States to teach each other - through the application of 'good practice' - ways of organising the dialogue with the players involved: NGOs, the social partners, the poor and socially excluded groups.

At both national and EU level, we must use the open coordination method to continue examining ways of developing pertinent quantity and quality indicators, both to measure poverty and social exclusion, and to devise and assess a policy of social inclusion. Such indicators must be linked to income, employment, housing, education, health and other criteria. The commitment of the target group itself is critical: the use of indicators is not based solely on technical expertise, but also on a platform supported by all interested parties, which includes the poor and the socially excluded.

**The social economy** is a critical factor in achieving a social Europe with a strong sense of solidarity. The Presidency will endeavour to promote the social economy, serving as a fulcrum between the public and private sectors, and paying special attention to the groups in our society that are at greater risk. More specifically, the Presidency wish to tackle the specific features of the social economy from three angles: social insertion, active involvement and/or active citizenship, and a socially responsible entrepreneurial spirit.

## **II. A NEW CURRENCY AND A NEW ECONOMIC AGENDA**

Euro notes and coins will go into circulation on 1 January 2002. Never before will the reality of the European Union have been so patently clear to its citizens. For the first time in the history of the EU, its citizens will see the tangible results of European integration in their everyday lives. The successful launch of the euro will bolster confidence in the European Union and in the single currency.

During the Presidency, the final steps will be taken towards **putting euro notes and coins into circulation**. Monthly monitoring by the European Commission and the Eurogroup will make it possible to closely follow the transition in the various Member States. It is crucial that the Member States implement their measures in parallel.

A massive information campaign will also be launched to help make the euro better known. That campaign must ensure the smooth, efficient introduction of euro notes and coins. In this connection, the main aim is to eliminate any existing concerns on the part of vulnerable social groups as well as small and medium-sized businesses.

The Presidency of the Eurogroup should lead to the development of a **consistent economic policy**, whereby the prerequisites for this include enhancing the coordination of economic policy amongst the Member States and improving the dialogue with the European Central Bank. Ultimately, this situation should lead to a common economic and social policy in support of monetary union. In the various Council meetings held under its aegis, the Presidency will actively prepare for the social and economic summit to be held in Barcelona in 2002. The social, economic and ecological aspects of this policy must be treated in a balanced way.

The Presidency will organise the first debate on the scope of what is required and the objectives to be pursued by the future **regional policy** with a view to enlargement. Action needs to be taken now to secure the future of this solidarity policy with regard to disadvantaged regions.

The introduction of euro notes and coins will mark a turning point down the road heading towards a **genuine single market**. The single market has still not been achieved in full. For instance, financial markets need to be integrated. The Presidency will make efforts to push through a fiscal package. Simultaneous progress in the three areas covered by the package – tax on savings, taxes levied on businesses, interest and charges – is crucial here. Negotiations under way with all third countries - in particular Switzerland - will be pursued with a view to reaching a final agreement in 2002 on a draft directive on taxes levied on savings. Moreover, in consultation with the European Commission the Presidency will verify the extent to which a study can be carried out on the advisability, feasibility and any conditions associated with a tax on flows of speculative capital.

The Presidency will therefore **endeavour to complete the single market**. The correct operation of the single market is a key concern in this connection. After all, an efficient internal market has positive consequences for everyone, consumers and business. In this respect, consumers' interests must be a priority, so as to guarantee the continuity and regularity of services of general interest, the equality of users, and also funds that are sufficient to safeguard these principles, with a view to the ultimate adoption of appropriate legislation. The emphasis for the Presidency here will be on examining the overindebtedness of private individuals, eliminating barriers to the movement of services; continuing with the liberalisation of essential sectors such as gas, electricity, telecommunications (by reviewing the telecoms package), postal services and transport; promoting the competitiveness of our businesses, and reducing the general level of public subsidies across Europe in a harmonised manner. The joint work programme of the three Presidencies (French, Swedish and Belgian) will serve as the common thread here, so that the various target dates set at the Lisbon and Feira Councils can be met. In this connection, particular attention will be paid to aspects concerning social and environmental impact.

The Presidency wants to finalise the negotiations on the **European company statute**. Special attention will also be paid to implementing a special policy for small and medium-sized enterprises. There will be three key factors in this connection: actual implementation

of the European Charter for Small Businesses; access to funding; and improved rules governing the awarding of public contracts.

Where **consumer protection** is concerned, safety must be the top priority. The Presidency will pay particular attention to the Commission's action plan for consumer policy, emphasising the role and rights of consumers with respect to the market, as well as new forms of regulation. It will also be necessary to make substantial progress on the work to modify the Consumer Credit Directive with a view to boosting protection from overindebtedness.

If the European Union intends to become the world's most competitive, most dynamic knowledge economy, it will have to focus more attention on **research and innovation**. Research and development are drivers of employment and economic growth. The creation of a European Area of Research and Innovation is critical. The Presidency will actively contribute towards the adoption of the EU Regulation on the Community Patent. It will also pay special attention to the Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Development as well as to the increased mobility of researchers and students. Finally, the Presidency aims to continue developing the European Space Strategy.

The Presidency has very specific objectives in mind where **the information society** is concerned. One of our central concerns is to offer all citizens, including specific groups of users such as the handicapped, elderly and individuals with few qualifications, access to information and communication technologies. This means that access to the Internet must be less expensive, faster and more secure. This also means that the telecommunications market must be fully liberalised. Further, we must bridge the digital divide in order to prevent the emergence of new forms of illiteracy. Lastly, consumer protection within the context of e-commerce must offer the same guarantees available in traditional commerce. The ethical aspects of the information society will have to be taken into account.

### **III. THE EUROPEAN AREA OF FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE**

The European Council in Tampere held in October 1999 adopted an ambitious and detailed action programme which is intended to result in the establishment of a common area of freedom, security and justice. This area must be open and controllable, based on European principles of openness, freedom and hospitality, solidarity, non-discrimination, respect for human rights, human dignity and the values of a multicultural society. At the European Council in Laeken, scheduled for December 2001, the Presidency will highlight all the progress that has been made in this connection.

The Presidency will first and foremost strive to draw up **a common policy regarding asylum and immigration** and thus intends to contribute towards the establishment of an area of freedom that is open and controllable.

As for **asylum**, the Presidency plans to harmonise the procedures for granting asylum to and receiving refugees. Refugees are entitled to the protection of the European Union. Under no circumstances may we deviate from this approach and definitely not in 2001, which marks the 50th anniversary of the Geneva convention. Nonetheless, the costs incurred in this connection must be divided up fairly and it must be established precisely which Member State is to process which requests for asylum.

On the subject of **immigration**, an international conference will consider an appropriate policy taking account of the various facets of the problem, namely prevention and the establishment of partnerships with immigrants' countries of origin, the management of flows of migrants, economic migration, integration, employment. The Presidency will also tighten up the measures designed to combat illegal immigration, particularly where trade and trafficking in human beings is concerned. The candidate Member States must also be involved in efforts to bolster common arrangements for monitoring the external borders of the EU governed by the Schengen Agreement. Indeed, with the support of the European Union they will in future be included in the associated surveillance system. One notable element in the raft of measures aimed at combating the trade in human beings will be a "high impact" operation organised on the future external borders of the European Union. Finally, the basis for integration - which is already partly covered by instruments such as family reunification, non-discrimination, the fight against racism, xenophobia and negationism - will be underpinned by ensuring that the status of persons who have been resident in the Union for a long time converges with that of European Union citizens.

An area of security that inspires confidence in Europe's citizens will also be established by conducting a common policy for **fighting organized crime**. By consolidating the status of Eurojust, a standing body of magistrates vested with powers to investigate crimes, the Presidency intends to shore up legal cooperation with regard to criminal matters. To buttress the cohesion of police cooperation, Europol will be given greater operational capabilities and broader responsibilities, which will benefit cooperation between the various police forces in the Member States. The Presidency also plans to encourage greater standardisation in sentencing and the approval of priority elements of policy such as trade in human beings, the sexual exploitation of children and the battle against racism and xenophobia. Based on the example set by the Belgian organisation *Child Focus*, a recommendation aimed at promoting the work of organisations which offer assistance in tracking down lost persons has been drawn up. Finally, attempts to promote the application of the principle of mutual recognition of verdicts will continue by implementing pilot projects in areas such as asset freezing and the collection of fines.

The Presidency views the gradual **mutual recognition of verdicts reached in civil and commercial law**, and especially child visiting rights as a crucial instrument enabling the emergence of an efficient, transparent and accessible area of justice. To this end, the Presidency intends to defend the principle of legal assistance in connection with cross-border disputes and will strive to set up a network that guarantees both closer cooperation between the various bodies involved in civil law and better information for the general public.

Whilst bearing EU **enlargement** in mind, the Presidency will subject candidate Member States' implementation of the *acquis communautaire* in the area of justice and home affairs to the closest scrutiny. More resources will be freed up for combating the trade in human beings and fighting organised crime, especially where the western part of the Balkans is concerned. The Presidency will also place on the agenda the deepening of the policy governing **cooperation with the Mediterranean countries** participating in the Barcelona Process, the main emphasis here being on the problem of abductions by parents. Other key areas include cybercrime and the battle against corruption in the context of the transatlantic dialogue.

#### **IV. THE CONCERN TO GUARANTEE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE**

The aim of sustainable development is to guarantee our citizens a healthy environment and to harness economic progress for the benefit of mankind by continually improving not only people's standard of living, but also and above all their quality of life. If this new model of development is to be put in place in Europe and throughout the world, then some non-sustainable modes of production and consumption will have to be changed so that we can successfully unhitch economic growth from the use of resources and pollution.

This shift in modes of production and consumption in Europe, both with respect to Community policy and efforts to cushion the impact on the global environment of our current models, in keeping with the notion of sustainable development, is one of the Presidency's key objectives.

The Presidency will endeavour to implement **the Sustainable Development Strategy** adopted at the Göteborg Summit in June 2001. This new strategy sets out a medium and long-term framework designed to steer all the Union's policies in the direction of sustainable development, in all its three dimensions (economic growth, social cohesion and protection of the environment), by examining the following six topics: climate change, threats to public health, the exhaustion of natural resources, poverty and social exclusion, the ageing population, mobility and territorial development.

The Presidency will monitor the implementation of this strategy on an ongoing basis by fixing hard-and-fast objectives and establishing real indicators that will enable an annual assessment to be made by the respective spring summits.

**The environmental dimension** of sustainable development must revolve around sustainable modes of production and consumption. This approach applies both to Europe's policy on the environment and its integration into the Union's other policies, and to its integration into the external dimension, where the Presidency will be called upon to defend Europe's views in global contexts.

Where Europe's environment policy is concerned, the Presidency will prioritise the implementation of a Community strategy on climate change; the management of chemical products and pesticides; the preventive, sustainable development of waste and the promotion of 'green' products; the tracking and labelling of genetically modified organisms; and public participation in environment policy. As for the inclusion of environmental

considerations in other Community policies, the main focus of attention will be on the transport sector.

**Climate change** is threatening future prosperity and the economic progress of the entire planet. Effective international cooperation is required if emissions are to be reduced. The position taken up by the new US administration has profoundly altered the situation. Notwithstanding this, the Presidency will try to relaunch the Kyoto process.

The battle against climate change, waged by implementing a sustainable energy policy, lies at the heart of sustainable development policy at both the European and planetary levels. The European Union must set an example by implementing an ambitious European Programme of Common and Coordinated Policies and Measures before the global summit on sustainable development, scheduled for 2002. This programme should include an agreement, albeit perhaps not a unanimous one, on the harmonisation of energy tax and on a framework directive on tradable emission permits, as well as new measures designed to bolster energy efficiency and promote renewable sources of energy.

By setting such an international agenda for European policy where environmental matters are concerned, the Presidency will put its full weight behind the negotiations on climate change with a view to ensuring that the Kyoto Protocol is ratified, and behind preparations for the world summit on sustainable development and international governance where the environment is concerned. Consequently, EU enlargement must encourage the candidate Member States to integrate this new concept of sustainable development into their respective national policies.

Where **energy policy** is concerned, the Presidency will continue with the initiatives launched by the Swedish Presidency with respect to renewable energy and energy efficiency. In this context, the Presidency specifically hopes to make further progress on the subject of ecotaxes. At the same time, the Presidency is subscribing to the view that the commitments made in Kyoto should be respected. This will entail adopting the Directive on the promotion of renewable sources of energy, which will constitute a first step towards the establishment of a genuinely European market of renewable energy. On the other hand, the Presidency will strive to make headway in connection with the Directive on energy efficiency in buildings. The most important conclusions expected from the Green Book on Security of Energy Supply will pave the way for an analysis of the role played by renewable sources of energy and the decline in demand as an instrument for reducing energy dependency on third countries.

Considerations of citizens' quality of life and long-term mobility will guide the Presidency with respect to its **transport policy**, where special emphasis will be placed on environmental protection, the enhancement of safety and the improvement of working conditions. On the environmental front, the Presidency will ensure that the Annual General Meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) sets exacting international standards for pollution and aircraft noise. The implementation of a second package of measures, dubbed "Erika", concerning maritime safety, will also be monitored very closely. The debate on the Commission White Paper on transport policy until 2010 will provide an opportunity to reflect on the future of the Common Transport Policy, in terms of the specific integration of policies on transport and the environment, managing the rising demand for transport, taxing infrastructure and switching freight to less pollutant modes of transport.

Where safety is concerned, the Presidency will try to ensure that the Member States reach an agreement on extending the use of speed limiters to vans. The debate focussing on the Third European Road Safety Action Programme will enable the discussion of issues such as the targeted objectives, the elimination of blind spots for heavy goods vehicles and the protection of pedestrians in the event of collisions. The Presidency undertakes to ensure that the opening up of transport markets is accompanied by adequate social measures and

working conditions, in particular by reviewing lorry drivers' working hours, driving times and rest periods and also the question of the training they receive. Finally, the launch of the GALILEO satellite navigation system will be the subject of a historic decision at the end of the Presidency.

Logically, **policies on health, the environment and food safety** must be included in the framework of sustainable development, especially where the safety and quality of foodstuffs, the use of chemical substances and issues associated with infectious diseases and resistance to antibiotics are concerned. Consequently, the battle against various forms of illness and pollution must be fought by ensuring that all the actors involved engage in joint action and aim to secure the well-being of the public at large. Increasingly, public authorities are having to face up to new health problems associated with pollution caused by human activity. The Presidency will pay special attention to this entire sector by making a major effort on the legislative front, and will strive to adopt a Community action programme in the public health sector as well as a Recommendation concerning the use of antibiotics for humans, a Directive relating to the advertising of tobacco products and a Directive governing quality standards and the safety of blood. In addition, this being Mental Health Year, the Presidency will pay special attention to this problem.

Faced with successive crises in the **agricultural sector**, the common theme running throughout our Presidency will be the aim of restoring confidence, namely for consumers, producers and everyone else involved in food production. To this end, the main topics covered will be the spread of BSE and the upkeep of the ban on animal protein in animal feed.

At the international conference on foot and mouth disease planned for this autumn, the Presidency will strive to make the most of the lessons learnt during the crisis to once again take up the question of vaccination and the traceability of animals.

Where the Common Agricultural Policy is concerned, the Presidency will be open to discussions on its future plans, but will be careful not to allow itself to be guided by emotional arguments or to take any hasty decisions where sustainable agriculture is concerned. The schedule agreed in Berlin will constitute the timeframe in this regard.

Another area will involve common market organisations (CMOs), the priority here being to restore the situation in the beef sector to normal. Owing to the considerable headway made in numerous areas, the Presidency could find itself following up the reports on CMOs for fruit and vegetables and the CMO for potato starch, as well as the establishment of a CMO for ethyl alcohol. Depending on the progress made, the Presidency might also be able to handle the reform of the CMO for rice and also examine numerous Commission reports, notably the one on the European Union's supplies of plant protein.

**Food safety** concerns will constitute a second priority. The aim here is to finalise all the preparatory discussion so that the European Food Authority can be up and running by the beginning of 2002. The European Union has learnt its lessons from the BSE and dioxin crises, and on the basis of this experience, the Presidency must monitor the realisation of the European Food Authority and closely follow and, if possible, finalise the rules and regulations governing hygiene, labelling and the traceability of new foodstuffs for people and animals.

The Presidency will continue the debate on the in-depth reform of the **Common Fisheries Policy** based on the Commission's discussion paper.

## **V. THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

From a historical viewpoint, the actual implementation of enlargement touches the very spirit of the European Union and the sharing of fundamental values with respect to political democracy, respect for human rights, a market economy and peaceful coexistence according to the rule of law. By undergoing a process of enlargement, Europe can return to normality, take a further step along the path of equality and continue on its way whilst at the same time never losing sight of the ideal of progress benefiting as many people as possible.

The conclusion of the Intergovernmental Conference in Nice opened the way for the biggest operation of **enlargement** that European construction will have known since its creation in the late 1950s. We have a unique opportunity to conclude the unification of Europe. This undertaking constitutes a massive challenge, not only for the 15-strong European Union, but also for the 13 countries that are candidates for EU accession. Consequently, enlargement constitutes one of the Presidency's main priorities. The Presidency undertakes to continue the accession negotiations in close collaboration with the European Commission, following the indicative guidelines approved by the European Council of Ministers.

With a view to supporting the technical work done by the European Commission and on the basis of the responses provided by the candidate Member States, the Presidency will try to keep up **the pace of negotiations**. By so doing, the Presidency will respect the signal sent out in Nice with regard to the European Union's determination to inject fresh momentum into the negotiations and prepare for the accession by the end of 2002 of those countries that manage to conclude their negotiations in time.

Following up on the efforts already made by the previous Presidencies, the Presidency will organise its work in such a way that headway can be made immediately, in July, with the launch a series of projects which still require negotiations. The Presidency will deal in even greater depth with issues that are already the subject of negotiations with a view to bringing them to as swift a conclusion as possible.

Bearing in mind the principle of **advanced differentiation** at the various stages of the negotiation process, the common theme running through any action will involve treating every would-be EU Member State on its own merits, on the basis of the real, wholesale integration of the *acquis communautaire*.

The informal European Council due to be held in Ghent in October will present the heads of state and government with a first opportunity to assess the state of play in the negotiations on the basis of an evaluation report and tables charting the progress made as drawn up by the European Commission.

A major step forward in the context of the evaluation process will be made in November when the regularity reports and revised reports of the partnerships for accession, and also a strategy document, have been published.

The European Council to be held in Laeken in December should be an opportunity to sum up all the progress made over the six months of the Presidency as well as indicating where ground still has to be made up. The summit will also underscore the path already travelled and what yet remains to be done and should also provide the impetus required to guarantee a fruitful continuation of the negotiations during 2002.

By adhering to the spirit of the European Parliament's Resolution of October 2000 and the decisions taken at the European Councils of Nice and Göteborg, the Presidency is highlighting the political importance of significant participation by candidate Member States in the next European elections organised in 2004.

The Presidency will pursue its efforts aimed at devising a partnership for accession with **Turkey** and will monitor with interest the efforts made by Turkey in its capacity as a candidate Member State to meet the criteria laid down for accession in Copenhagen.

Enlargement represents a vast challenge for the candidate Member States. Consequently, there is every reason to make the effort required in terms of keeping the candidate Member States properly informed. An attempt will also have to be made to ascertain in which ways **the public** demand for information can best be met.

## **VI. THE INTERNATIONAL ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The Presidency will continue the efforts made by previous presidencies with a view to improving the effectiveness and consistency of the external action of the EU and its Member States. This means an enhanced role for the Secretary General/High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and closer cooperation between the latter and the European Commission. The standing bodies set up by the Nice European Council will be used by the Presidency to develop the day-to-day management of the CFSP and to help build a global view of crisis management. This approach will ensure that the European Union can make the best possible use of all of the means of action available to it (humanitarian, development cooperation, commercial, financial, political, diplomatic and military) to intervene in a coordinated manner at every stage of a crisis (before, during and after conflicts).

The European Councils between Cologne and Göteborg all decided that the Union should gradually take up its responsibilities for preventing conflicts. Following up on the work done by the Swedish Presidency, the Presidency will strive, with the help of the Commission and the Secretary General/High Representative, to identify real instruments for prevention.

The EU Presidency will continue developing the **European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)** by implementing the decisions taken in Helsinki, Feira and Nice. In this regard, keeping public opinion and national parliaments informed will be essential for ensuring that this process can go on being pursued.

The Presidency must, with the help of the High Representative, finalize work with a view to declaring the European Union operational in terms of its crisis management capability. If we are to achieve this aim, the European Union will need its own permanent military structures. Crisis management procedures will have to be validated and discussions will continue with a view to agreeing **fixed mechanisms of interaction between the European Union and NATO**. Indeed, the development of the ESDP must result in a real strategic partnership between the European Union and NATO on the issue of crisis management, whilst at the same time respecting the autonomy of each organisation.

The Presidency intends to continue with and extend regular dialogue with those European countries that are members of NATO but not members of the European Union, and with the other EU candidate Member States, with a view to being able to consult them outside times of crisis and as broadly as possible.

Moreover, we must continue to **monitor the military capability objectives** and the commitments entered into by the Fifteen at the Engagement Conference held in November 2000. A capability review conference will be organised under the Presidency, which will also launch the debate on the concept of exercises and the work on drafting a White Paper on European defence. Finally, specific attention will be focused on health issues affecting both military personnel and civilian populations in any operations staged by the European Union.

The Presidency will continue the work already underway on **the civilian aspects of crisis management**. The aim is to continue the work done by past presidencies in the areas of policing, consolidating the rule of law and civilian protection. A ministerial conference will be held on the Fifteen's commitments in terms of policing and the Presidency will stress the issue of training (voluntary personnel for civilian crisis management, magistrates entrusted with providing judicial assistance for the re-establishment of the rule of law).

In the face of numerous and often unpredictable developments in international relations, The Presidency believes that the Union must be capable of consistently using all the instruments at its disposal to contribute to the efforts of the international community aimed at **stabilizing regional conflicts**.

The Presidency will concentrate as a priority on **the Balkans region**. Working closely alongside the High Representative and the Commission, it will further develop the process ratified by the Zagreb Summit and the negotiation of Stabilisation and Association Agreements with a view to promoting regional stability and cooperation and in an effort to foster the economic and social development of these countries, bringing them closer into line with the structures of the European Union. The pursuit of the objectives of regional cooperation (especially in the field of Justice and Home Affairs), democracy, respect for the rule of law, human rights and the rights of national minorities will sometimes require the Union to become involved in crisis management operations in association with other international bodies, such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations and NATO.

In the light of the present instability in the **Middle East**, the Presidency will work closely together with the High Representative and the Commission to continue the Union's efforts to prompt the parties involved to resolve their differences through dialogue and negotiation, as required by the Madrid Process and the Oslo Accords.

The Presidency will work to ensure that the European Union becomes more closely involved in accompanying **the peace processes in central Africa and in the Great Lakes region**. In association with the competent international organisations, it plans to draw up an inventory of all humanitarian needs and the requirements for rebuilding the health sectors, national infrastructures, judicial systems and the democratisation process. The Presidency will submit proposals to its partners with a view to developing a plan of action for peace and development in central Africa. In Council meetings the Presidency will launch discussions based on Commission reports on how conflicts can be prevented in Africa and on the relationship between humanitarian aid, rebuilding work and development aid on the African continent.

The coming weeks and months will reveal whether a new round of talks in the **World Trade Organisation** will be possible or not. The Presidency will be totally committed in this regard. One crucial element of this is the drafting of a balanced and all-encompassing agenda which takes account of the interests of developing countries, the precautionary principle, the internal and external transparency of the WTO, cultural diversity and the environmental and social dimension.

As and when necessary and taking full account of the Union's foreign policy priorities, the Presidency will develop **a political dialogue with third countries and groups of countries** if this strengthens the external identity of the Union. It will be careful to build a Justice and Home Affairs dimension into any such dialogue whenever the Union's concerns in this regard can effectively be dealt with.

The **United States** is a strategic partner with which the European Union enjoys privileged

relations. The cooperation between the two must increase and become more effective as the European Union makes further headway along the road to full integration and acquires a foreign and security policy with the associated shared means of action. Extending the dialogue on Europe's security and defence policy will also help to revitalize and renew transatlantic relations.

The European Union also has an intensive programme of cooperation with **Canada**, touching on all universal topics of concern. Special attention will continue to be focused on the various aspects of human safety and security for which Canada and the European Union have developed a shared set of objectives.

**The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)** plays a major role in redefining security issues in this part of the world. The Presidency will seek in particular to bolster the role played by the Union within this organisation.

The Presidency will continue its dialogue with **Russia** with a view to developing a strategic partnership and cooperation in all areas of common interest. It will encourage the Russian government to pursue its efforts to establish the rule of law and a market economy. It will also continue its talks on the consequences of EU enlargement, especially with regard to the region of Kaliningrad. In accordance with the decisions of the Cologne European Council, the Presidency will present a plan of action for the implementation of a common EU-Russia strategy.

The Presidency will strive to maintain a political dialogue with the Russian Federation on certain specific topics of joint interest and on international political issues, including those concerning European security. On this subject, the question of stabilising the regional crises affecting Russia (including Chechnya) will be regularly discussed with the aim of finding political solutions to current conflicts.

The Presidency will continue to engage in political dialogue with **Ukraine** as set out in the common strategy and in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with that country. In accordance with the decisions taken by the Helsinki European Council, an action plan will be presented at the start of the Presidency. Political dialogue on issues relating to European security will also begin. In this regard, questions concerning the effects of EU enlargement will also be considered, as well as the measures adopted by Ukraine to reform its economy and establish the rule of law.

The Presidency will try to maintain the dynamism of the **Euro-Mediterranean partnership** in place since 1995 and frequently referred to as the Barcelona Process. It will continue with the talks between the European Union and various countries (Algeria, Lebanon and Syria) aiming to conclude Association Agreements. It will ensure that the European Union continues to support the economic reforms that the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean area have begun with a view to creating a free-trade zone by 2010. The 27-country Barcelona Process ministerial meeting will examine cultural, social and human issues and will kick off with a forum on the promotion of women's rights.

The European Union-**Africa** summit in Cairo could result during this Presidency in a ministerial meeting seeking to tackle important issues concerning the future of Africa (conflict prevention, debt, regional economic integration, the environment, food safety, democracy and human rights, the fight against AIDS and other pandemics, and the return of cultural heritage). The Presidency intends to pursue and intensify dialogue between the European Union and African regional organisations such as ECOWAS, the SADC, etc..

The Presidency will work to ensure that EU action contributes to efforts for the universal

application of existing instruments for **non-proliferation and disarmament**. It will focus in particular on the fight against antipersonnel mines, the nuclear test ban treaty, strengthening multilateral instruments for dealing with ballistic proliferation and the pursuit and, if possible, reinforcement of the cooperation programme with Russia on disarmament and non-proliferation.

With the help of the Commission Communication on **Human Rights**, amongst other things, the Presidency will do everything it can to strengthen the cohesion of the Fifteen in European Union initiatives, positions and approaches for the promotion of human rights. Special emphasis will be placed on the rights of children and women, the fight against racism and the abolition of the death penalty.

The Presidency will strive to **develop the role played by the European Union in the United Nations system** by continuing the work already done to strengthen the consistency and visibility of EU action in all UN bodies, to strengthen coordination and information with regard to the Security Council, to develop the dialogue between the European Union and the UN on conflict prevention and crisis management, especially in the context of the implementation of the recommendations of the Brahimi report on UN peacekeeping operations.

Moreover, The Presidency will concentrate in particular on the following issues: the rationalisation of the follow-up mechanisms of the major conferences, in the context of the follow-up given to the Millennium Declaration, the development of a global mechanism for controlling the diamond trade and the conclusion of the preparatory work for the creation of an International Criminal Court.

Where **development cooperation** is concerned, most attention will be focused on making the Cotonou Agreement operational via thematic cooperation plans with countries involved in conflicts and the involvement of civil society in helping to identify, plan and implement cooperation actions.

The **Cotonou Agreement** between the European Union and the ACP countries provides for the development of policies in favour of peace and the prevention and resolution of conflicts. The Presidency is keen to continue the work begun by the Swedish Presidency in this area, and will issue a communication aimed at improving cooperation with fragile countries and bolstering the European Union response capability in crisis situations.

The Cotonou Agreement is innovative insofar as it emphasises the involvement of civil society at every stage of development cooperation. This dimension is of the utmost importance because it is an integral part of the strengthening of the democratisation process. The Presidency is eager to begin implementation of this aspect which is a direct contribution to the process of sustainable development.

In addition, special attention will be focused on strengthening operational coordination on the ground. To this end, an assessment of how the guidelines adopted at January's exploratory debate are being applied will be another important aspect of the work done by this Presidency.

## **VII. THE FUTURE OF EUROPE**

The new Treaty of Nice paved the way to **the largest enlargement operation in the history of the European Union**. This is commonly referred to simply as 'enlargement', but in actual fact it is a genuine transformation. A European Union consisting of 25, 27 or even more Member States will look radically different to today's EU. That is why it is absolutely essential to begin pondering and discussing the question of how to organise the post-

enlargement EU. What powers should it have? How should it be financed? What institutions should it have? How will decisions be taken?

The Nice European Council in December 2000 approved the 'Declaration on the Future of the European Union', which calls for a far-reaching debate on the future of the European Union. It would be advisable not only to involve the Member States in the debate, but also those countries which are candidates for EU accession, national parliaments, the European Parliament, the regions and public opinion in its entirety.

Nice gave the Presidency the task of sketching out the parameters governing the debate, with instructions to do so at the end of 2001 in the **Laeken Declaration**. This debate should, in turn, lead to a fresh Intergovernmental Conference in 2004. In preparing the Declaration, the Presidency will draw from a number of different sources:

- the broad debate that has since got under way in all the Member States. This debate must of course be continued after 2001. The Presidency will nevertheless seek to distil a series of provisional results from the current debate. It will also aim to draw conclusions that could prove useful for the Laeken Declaration;
- contributions from the European Parliament and the European Commission;
- contributions from the national parliaments;
- contributions from constitutionally created regions;
- the many research projects and the suggestions made by research institutes, think tanks and experts;
- the close contacts that the Presidency will be maintaining with each Member State;
- contributions from the social partners and civil society.

Firstly, **the problems facing Europe** must be analysed. The European Union has lost contact with its citizens. One segment of public opinion currently adheres to the notion that the European Union sometimes interferes too much in the lives of its citizens; that the European Union sometimes abuses the legal bases set out in the various treaties and thereby encroaches upon the powers of the Member States; that the European Union suffers from a lack of transparency; that it is too bureaucratic; and that it does not have adequate democratic legitimacy. Making sure that we once again listen to our citizens will help to secure subsequent stages of the unification process.

Secondly, the very **agenda** of the debate must be discussed. The aim is not to come up with final answers now. That will be left until the end of the process. However, the idea is to ask specific questions in order to encourage the debate on all issues that are of relevance to the future of Europe. The "Declaration on the Future of the European Union" (approved in Nice) contains four themes that must be covered by the debate - although there are others as well. However, the Presidency plans to open up the agenda to a global project for Europe. This project must answer the fundamental question of knowing how to structure political life within an enlarged European Union. At the Laeken Council a framework should be devised for addressing all issues of relevance to the future of the European Union:

- the constitutionalisation of the European Union (the values and challenges of the European Union, the simplification of the Treaties, the enlargement of a modernised Community method);
- the re-organisation of powers, a process in which the objectives and instruments of EU policy are better defined and decided. The powers of the European Union and the powers of the Member States should also be defined more clearly. This re-organisation of powers must not lead to any changes to the *acquis communautaire*, nor may it halt the momentum of integration;

- the direct or indirect funding of the European Union, so that we once again operate with the EU's own resources;
- the institutional and inter-institutional architecture, albeit paying attention to the role played by federal entities and the dialogue with the social partners and civil society.

Apart from the agenda of the debate, the Laeken Declaration will also set the timetable and method used for the far-reaching debate to be pursued in years to come.

