

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

THESSALONIKI EUROPEAN COUNCIL

19 AND 20 JUNE 2003

1. The European Council met in Thessaloniki on 19 and 20 June 2003. The meeting was preceded by an exposé by the President of the European Parliament, Mr Pat Cox, followed by an exchange of views concerning the main items on the agenda.

I. CONVENTION / IGC

2. The European Council welcomes the Draft Constitutional Treaty presented by the President of the Convention, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. This presentation marks a historic step in the direction of furthering the objectives of European integration:
 - bringing our Union closer to its citizens,
 - strengthening our Union's democratic character,
 - facilitating our Union's capacity to make decisions, especially after its enlargement,
 - enhancing our Union's ability to act as a coherent and unified force in the international system and
 - effectively deal with the challenges globalisation and interdependence create.
3. The European Council expresses its gratitude to the President of the Convention, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the Vice-Presidents, Jean Luc Dehaene and Giuliano Amato, the members and the alternate members of the Convention for the work they have accomplished. The Convention has proven its usefulness as a forum for democratic dialogue between representatives of governments, national parliaments, the European Parliament, the European Commission and civic society.
4. The European Council considers that the presentation of the Draft Constitutional Treaty, as it has received it, marks the completion of the Convention's tasks as set out at Laeken and, accordingly, the end of its work. However, some purely technical work on drafting Part III is still required, this work needing to be finished by 15 July at the latest.

5. The European Council decided that the text of the Draft Constitutional Treaty is a good basis for starting in the Intergovernmental Conference. It requests the future Italian Presidency to initiate, at the Council meeting in July, the procedure laid down in Article 48 of the Treaty in order to allow this Conference to be convened in October 2003. The Conference should complete its work and agree the Constitutional Treaty as soon as possible and in time for it to become known to European citizens before the June 2004 elections for the European Parliament. The acceding States will participate fully in the Intergovernmental Conference on an equal footing with the current Member States. The Constitutional Treaty will be signed by the Member States of the enlarged Union as soon as possible after 1 May 2004.

6. The Intergovernmental Conference will be conducted by the Heads of State or Government, assisted by the members of the General Affairs and External Relations Council. The representative of the Commission will participate in the Conference. The General Secretariat of the Council will provide the secretariat support for the Conference. The European Parliament will be closely associated and involved in the work of the Conference.

7. The three candidate countries – Bulgaria and Romania, with whom accession negotiations are underway, and Turkey – will take part in all meetings of the Conference as observers.