Statement following the informal European Council meeting in Lisbon (18- 19 October 2007)

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In the presence of Portuguese Prime Minister, José Sócrates, MEPs debated the outcome of the Lisbon summit and expressed their views on the new Treaty to be signed on 13 December, 2007.

Introducing the debate, Hans-Gert Pöttering, the European Parliament President, congratulated the Portuguese Presidency and the European Commission and welcomed the overall success of the Treaty. He also recalled the European Parliament's President's right to vote, which was unfortunately not discussed at the European Council.

Council: the Portuguese Prime Minister stressed the need for a rapid agreement on the Treaty and was satisfied that the IGC had reached and agreement on 18 October. He cited the main points of the agreement, namely, the Ioannina clause (guarantees will be provided on the Ioannina compromise without affecting the integrity of the decision making process by qualified majority); (ii) declarations regarding the division of powers between the Member States and the EU and providing for the participation of the European Parliament in the appointment of the EU High Representative for foreign affairs and security policy; (iii) the agreement on the composition of the European Parliament (750 plus the President); (iv) the enhanced legislative role of the Parliament, particularly as regards budgetary matters; (v) the extension of qualified majority in the Council in the area of freedom, security and justice; (vi) the legal status given to the Charter of fundamental rights.

Commission: President Barroso welcomed the consensus on the Treaty. Recalling that the EU needs strong institutions, he stressed that the new Treaty represented an improvement on the Nice Treaty in particular on two issues: the integration of the Community method, on the one hand, and the legal force given to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, on the other. The President of the Commission also highlighted other improvements such as enhancing the role of the European Parliament in the legislative process, strengthening the role of national parliaments and a stronger presence in the EU on the international stage through the High Representative for foreign policy, who will also be the Vice-President of the Commission.

Most MEPs welcomed the new Treaty and the agreement reached in Lisbon. However, some members criticised the similarity of the new text with the Constitutional Treaty and the absence of a referendum for its ratification.

The positions expressed by the different political groups may be summarised as follows:

- **EPP-ED**: the Group welcomed the agreement, signalling a new momentum that will enable the EU to initiate the reforms needed to fight terrorism and climate change.
- In order to encourage the participation of citizens before the 2009 elections, the President of the group stressed the need for more transparency and improved communication as regards the role of the Parliament and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. More attention should be brought to the Council's qualified majority decision-making process that will extend Parliament's responsibility to areas such as judicial and police cooperation, environmental protection, economic policy or immigration. He also stressed that the future High Representative and the President of the Council elected for two and a half years would improve the democratic practices of the EU.
- **PES**: while acknowledging the irrefutable progress in relation to the Nice Treaty, the President of the Group expressed concern that the EU does not grant more attention to the challenge of social

equity. He called for a more social European legislation, and the extension of codecision to the area of agriculture.

- **ALDE**: the leader of the Group felt that the changes introduced in the Reform Treaty would enable the EU to meet the challenges of globalisation. However, he regretted the complexity of the text whose scope has been altered by the existence of opt-outs and derogations.
- **UEN**: the President of the Group considered that the new Treaty was heading in the right direction, that of simplifying the decision-making process. He congratulated all the institutions for working in a cooperative fashion, recalling the right of elected officials to defend the rights of their people. Lastly, he was opposed to the idea of presenting the Treaty to citizens as a step prior to a future Treaty.
- **Greens/EFA**: the Group was a firm advocate of the Constitutional Treaty. However, it stated that it could not join in the praise for the Reform Treaty. It deplored the dismantling of the work carried out by the Convention, arguing that the new Treaty brought less protection to citizens. It considered its ratification important in order progress to the next stage.
- **GUE/NGL**: the Group President deplored the EU's inflexibility on issues that concern the citizens most. Responses to the following issues are essential in his opinion but have not been clarified by the Treaty: (i) the binding framework of EU economic and social policies; (i) the concentration of essential powers in institutions which are inaccessible to citizens, national parliaments and even governments; (iii) military aspects of EU foreign policy.
- **IND/DEM**: the representative of the group expressed strong criticism of the Treaty, saying it was in fact identical to the Constitution. He has called for a referendum in the UK, while hoping that national parliaments have the final say. For the same reasons, the representative of the ITS Group called for each country to hold a referendum on the ratification of the Treaty.
- **NI**: while stressing the need for a new Treaty, the member who spoke insisted that the rights of citizens should be guaranteed. She regretted that there were countries that did not want to include the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the Treaty.

Parliament's representatives at the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) made the following comments:

- **Elmar Brok (EPP-ED, DE)** said that the new Treaty contained significant improvements for democracy due to the extension of codecision and qualified majority. He welcomed the fact that Parliament will now be co-legislator and will have budgetary control. He also welcomed the legal status given to the Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- **Enrique Baron Crespo (PES, ES)** welcomed the fact that for the first time, representatives of Parliament were able to participate in the work of the IGC. He was pleased that the Portuguese Presidency had followed the Parliament by recognising citizenship and giving the Charter legal status. He believed that democratic scrutiny would be necessary in the future to successfully implement the concept of solidarity.
- **Andrew Duff (ALDE, UK)** considered that the new Treaty, even if lacked the simplicity of the Constitutional Treaty, contained essential reforms and represented a major step forward for democracy and unity of the Europe. However, he criticised the United Kingdom's position on the issue.

Concluding the debate, José Sócrates, on behalf of the Council, stressed that the EU would be more democratic and in a stronger position to meet the global challenges and occupy its rightful place on the international scene. Having reassured the President of the Parliament on his right to vote, he noted that it was up to each Member State to choose the appropriate means for ratification. He insisted on the democratic legitimacy of parliamentary representation.

The President of the Commission reiterated that the information campaign on the Treaty remained within the national authorities' remit.