Treaty amending the Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community

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The Committee on Constitutional Affairs adopted, by 20 votes in favour, 6 against and no abstentions, the own-initiative report by M. Iñigo **MENDEZ DE VIGO** (EPP-ED, ES) and Richard **CORBETT** (PES, UK) on the Lisbon Treaty.

The parliamentary committee’s report concludes that, taken as a whole, the Treaty of Lisbon is a substantial improvement on the existing Treaties, which will bring more democratic accountability to the Union (through a strengthening of the roles of the European Parliament and the national parliaments), enhance the rights of European citizens vis-à-vis the Union and improve the effective functioning of the Union's institutions.

More democratic accountability: Members welcome the fact that democratic accountabilitywill be enhanced, allowing citizens to have greater control over the Union's action, notably due to the following improvements: a) all European legislation will, with a few exceptions, be submitted to the dual approval, in equal terms, of the Council and of the European Parliament; b) the prior scrutiny by national parliaments of all legislation of the Union will be reinforced; c) the new budgetary procedure will require the approval of both the Council and the European Parliament for all Community expenses; d) the President of the Commission shall be elected by the European Parliament, on the proposal of the European Council, bearing in mind the elections to the European Parliament.

Strengthening rights of citizens and improving clarity: The report welcomes the fact that the rights of citizens will be strengthened, as a result of the following improvements: a) recognition of the compulsory adherence to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights; b) the introduction of an EU citizens' initiative; c) a clear delimitation of the competences of the Union vis-à-vis Member States; d) the increase of legal protection of citizens; e) new provisions of general application concerning the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, a high level of education, training and health, the elimination of all kinds of discrimination and the promotion of equality between women and men; f) new provisions, which enhance the promotion of sustainable development and protection of the environment, including fighting climate change, and the respect of services of general interest.

The Lisbon Treaty also offers sufficient guarantees that the Union will not become a centralised “superstate”. Certain procedures confirm the specificity of the Union, to which Member States entrust some of their competences and reaffirm the obligation to respect national identities. Finally, a solidarity clause between Member States provides citizens with an expectation of receiving support from all parts of the Union in the event of a terrorist attack or a natural or man-made disaster.

Greater effectiveness: Members highlight: a) the increased use of qualified majority voting rather than unanimity; b) a new system of double majority voting, which will facilitate reaching decisions in the Council; c) that the six-month rotating presidency of the Council will be replaced by a President elected by its members for a two-and-a-half-year term; d) the enhanced visibility of the Union and its capacity as a global actor, notably due to: i) the creation of a Vice President of the Commission/High Representative

for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy who will chair the Foreign Affairs Council, and be able to speak for the Union on those subjects where the latter has a common position; ii) the reinforcement of the Union's capacity to develop common structures in the field of security and defence policy.

The report also highlights that action in the area of justice and home affairswill have more ambitious goals and more effective procedures, no longer using separate intergovernmental instruments and procedures, and will be subject to judicial review, thus promising tangible progress with regard to justice, security and immigration issues. Lastly, the Union’s objectives and competencies in the fields of climate change, energy, space, tourism, sport, public health and civil protection are defined in a clearer way.

Concerns: Members are aware of the widespread regrets that, following the results of the referendums in France and the Netherlands, it was necessary, in order to secure a fresh agreement amongst the 27 Member States, to: a) abandon the constitutional approach and certain of its features, such as a single and structured text; b) postpone the entry into force of the new voting system in the Council; c) incorporate into the Treaty, measures specific to particular individual Member States, in relation to cooperation in police and criminal matters and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Informing citizens: Membersendorse the Treaty and stress the need for all Member States of the Union to achieve its ratification by 1 January 2009. They request that all possible efforts be deployed, both by EU institutions and national authorities, in order to inform European citizens clearly and objectively about the content of the Treaty. With this in mind, MEPs call for a consolidated version of the Treaties to be published as soon as possible.