Preparation of the European Council meeting 13-14 December 2007

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MEPs held a debate on the Lisbon Treaty and the forthcoming European Council, on the eve of the signing of the Reform Treaty. The debate focused on the new Treaty, globalisation, the Lisbon Strategy, migration and the situation in Kosovo.

Council: the Council President welcomed the call for a speedy ratification of the Treaty so that it could enter into force early 2009. He announced that the European Council should adopt a declaration on globalisation, which should lay down the foundations for EU action to strengthen policies in the context of the Lisbon strategy for employment and growth, environment, financial market supervision, migration policy and common security policy.

He then discussed the various issues that should be addressed at the European Council:

- the area of freedom, security and justice, including border controls, the common policy on migration and judicial cooperation;
- the new phase of the Lisbon Strategy, which will enhance competitiveness with sustainable industry based on innovation and knowledge;
- agreement on common principles of flexicurity and the European Year for Equal Opportunities;
- the continuation of energy policy,
- the launch of the integrated maritime policy
- and in terms of foreign policy, the crucial EU role in Kosovo and the importance of summits with Brazil and Africa.

European Commission: the President of the Commission welcomed the forthcoming signing of the Treaty and the proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union by the Presidents of the three EU institutions. Stressing the link between the debate on the interest in Europe and that of globalisation, José Manuel Barroso stressed that the Lisbon Strategy has helped to improve the figures in terms of job creation, in particular since the 1980s.

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

- **EPP**: the Group's President welcomed the fact that the signature of the Reform Treaty, after two years of deadlock and uncertainty, dedicates more freedom of movement and integration to European citizens. Considering that the Charter of Fundamental Rights is the most significant innovation of the Lisbon Treaty, he also recalled that the Treaty is crucial for democracy, since it gives more power to the European Parliament and national parliaments, sets a fairer voting system within the Council, and gives a right of legislative initiative for citizens. He focused on another pertinent issue concerning the broadening of the Schengen area to include the Member States who joined in 2004. Lastly, he hailed the extension of police and judicial cooperation between Member States to combat human trafficking and illegal immigration.
- **PES**: the President of the Group expressed the hope that the new policy organisation made possible by the Treaty would meet the major challenges outlined by the President of the Commission. Highlighting the intergovernmental nature of Schengen, he expressed the wish that the new Treaty would make it possible to take a further step in the area of migration. Fearing for the future of the Treaty, he recommended avoiding a celebration before the 27 Member States had ratified it and recalled that the Treaty may only be a transitional stage.
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ALDE: the representative of the group welcomed the proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Treaty of Lisbon which strengthens democracy and improves the EU's capacity to act. He also welcomed the participation of British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. He stressed that the EU should reiterate its refusal to sign a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Serbia before it delivers the war criminals to the International Criminal Court.

- **UEN**: the co-President of the group was confident about the outcome of the referendum to be held in Ireland, provided that the contributions made to the Treaty were clearly visible and that citizens were properly informed about the challenges ahead. He discussed issues of migration, especially from the South of the Mediterranean and climate change and stressed the need to exclude taxation powers from the EU's scope of competences.
- **Green**: the representative of the group called for the new Treaty to be ratified in spite of the fact that it was less ambitious than the draft Constitutional Treaty. Considering that the EU should be more present in Kosovo, he proposed the establishment of a Trans-Balkan Network. On Iran, he asked the EU to play a role regarding the issue of oppression and repression, regardless of the issue of the nuclear threat. He also lambasted the Heads of Government who sell nuclear power stations to countries and then complain that these particular countries are in possession of nuclear weapons.
- **GUE/NGL**: as regards the signature of a new treaty, the Group President said that the EU would be making a big mistake if it considered that this agreement marked the overcoming of the crisis of confidence between the total breakdown of society and the actual social and economic direction of the Union. He also advocated a more equitable partnership with the South, including how to deal with migrants. Lastly, he criticized the absence of the Middle East in the Council's agenda.
- **IND/DEM**: the representative deplored the difficulty in accessing the new text and the impossible comparison between the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty, the latter having been amended on three occasions to avoid comparisons.
- **NI**: regretting that the signature of a new Treaty showed Europe to be out of touch with its citizens, the member who spoke blasted leaders who feared the true verdict of the citizens by denying them the opportunity to express their views through a referendum, while this should in fact be a basic right.

Responding to Members, Manuel Lobo Antunes on behalf of the **Council**, reiterated the concerns regarding Kosovo. Even if, despite the efforts of the EU, it was not possible to reach a consensual solution, the Secretary of State stressed the political commitment of the parties not to resort to violence. He said the debate would continue in the Security Council of the UN and in the event of the failure to find a solution, the EU should take difficult decisions whilst maintaining a united front.

The Vice-President of the **Commission**, Margot Wallström, recalled the obligation to communicate with citizens about the Lisbon Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Turning to the Reflexion Group, it should focus in particular on policy challenges of the future as well as citizens' expectations. The Commission stressed that communication on migration should be based on an integrated approach combining European and national policies. She recalled that the Lisbon strategy has produced results. Lastly, she reaffirmed the EU's commitment to find a solution on the Kosovo issue.