Results of the European Council meeting 13-14 December 2007

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During a plenary debate in Brussels, MEPs discussed with the Council and the Commission, the achievements of the Portuguese Presidency.

Prior to the debate, the European Parliament President, Hans-Gert Pöttering, congratulated the Hungarian Parliament which is the first to have ratified the Lisbon Treaty. He then proceeded to sign the 2008 Budget, welcoming the agreement with the Council for the full financing of Galileo and the European Institute of Technology from the Community budget. As regards foreign policy, he welcomed the fact that the flexibility instrument was to be mobilised to provide funding for Palestine and for CFSP.

Council: expressing its satisfaction on the outcome of the work carried out, the Portuguese Prime Minister focused on three priorities of the Presidency:

(1) the Reform Treaty which helped resolve Europe's institutional deadlock and meet future challenges: the signing of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the need to strengthen the decision-making capacity in a Europe of 27 and lastly, strengthening the institutions in order for them to meet the challenges of the future;

(2) the EU-Brazil summit and the desire to establish an annual dialogue similar to those which already exist with China, India and Russia;

(3) the EU-Africa Summit, which resulted in the definition of a common strategy accompanied by an action plan on the main objectives such as peace, security, climate change, migration and Human Rights

The Portuguese Prime Minister highlighted **other issues** such as: (i) progress made on freedom, security and justice, symbolised by the proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights; (ii) the extension of the Schengen area to new Member States; (iii) combat the use of the death penalty; (iv) progress on the social agenda, notably the common principles of flexicurity; (v) migration policy with "the three pillars of integration, combating illegal immigration and cooperation with countries of origin; (vi) on the economic front, the success in adopting the Galileo project and the directive on a maritime environment strategy: (vii) the adoption of the EU strategic plan for energy technologies and the outcome of the Bali agreement as signs of progress on dealing with climate change.

Lastly, on the political agenda, José Sócrates welcomed the adoption of a **declaration on globalisation** by the European Council, reaffirming the will to invest in innovation, research and education. He also mentioned the planned Reflection Group on the EU Agenda to 2030. The Group will be chaired by Felipe Gonzalez.

Commission: the President of the Commission welcomed the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon. He stressed that the EU had taken initiatives affecting the daily lives of European citizens as regards economic growth and jobs, climate change, energy, migration and innovation. He specifically mentioned the launch of an integrated EU maritime policy.

He also emphasised the importance of the declaration on globalisation and announced the Commission's initiatives for the coming months. He also made reference to issues of migration with the Commission proposals on illegal immigration, illegal employment, and the blue card for highly skilled workers.

José Manuel Barroso announced a package of up-coming measures on issues ranging from migration to energy and climate change. He stressed in this connection the need to work closely with the European Parliament to define common objectives and policies. He also referred to the lifting of Schengen border checks for new Member States as of the 21st of December, whilst stressing the need to reinforce the security of the external borders.

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

- **EPP-ED**: the President of the Group welcomed the fact that the European Parliament would be strengthened by the Treaty. Listing many of the achievements of the EU, he said that European integration could only prosper in a globalised world. He also supported the establishment of a think tank to provide answers to future challenges. He called for the adoption of the Treaty in 2008 in all countries.

- **PES**: the President of the Group welcomed the success achieved by the Portuguese Presidency, particularly with the EU-Africa Summit, relations with Brazil and strengthened relations with Latin America, and in establishing a European day against the death penalty. He criticised the timing for the unveiling of the draft Directive on cross-border health services.
- **ALDE**: the leader of the Group praised the Portuguese Presidency on its success in adopting a Treaty giving Europe the tools to make globalisation work for it as opposed to against it. He also praised the Presidency for its leadership in Bali in the field of climate change, for the 2008 budget agreement and for the definition of a common policy for Kosovo. However, it was more critical about the lack of debate on flexicurity, the blue card for migration and greater labour mobility.
- **UEN**: the representative of the Group congratulated the Presidency on the signature of the Treaty. He stressed that the Bali conference had shown the importance that Europe speaks with one voice on climate change. With regard to Africa, he said that Europe must help Africa develop economically as well as politically, by serving as a model.
- **Greens/EFA**: the Group's representative thanked the Portuguese Presidency for its commitment to Europe, although it would have preferred a more offensive approach from the Member States. She argued that Parliament would have been the most appropriate place to conduct the debate on the future of Europe. She voiced doubts about the strategic partnership with Brazil and called for the EU agreements to constitute an effective instrument for the development of the partner countries, in particular Africa, instead of reflecting the interests of businesses.
- **GUE/NGL**: the President of the Group considered that the European Council should be an opportunity for self-analysis. Regarding climate change, he wondered about the concrete measures envisaged by the EU to achieve its ambitious goals. Lastly, he welcomed the available financial commitment for Palestine but called for a political commitment as well.
- **IND/DEM**: whilst welcoming the signing of the 2008 budget, the group criticised the similarity of the new Treaty with the Constitutional Treaty and the lack of a referendum for its ratification.

Responding to MEPs, José Sócrates, on behalf of the Council, warned against the temptation to settle national disputes on the European political scene. He stressed that the partnership with Brazil highlighted the increasing role played by this country on the international scene.

The President of the Commission felt it was necessary to avoid making the mistake of easily criticising the European institutions and to avoid dividing the European camp before the ratification of the new Treaty.