

Intergovernmental Conference IGC: revision of the Treaties, the financial interests and the European Prosecutor

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PURPOSE: presentation of a report of the Tampere European Council on progress in the Union in 1998 to the European Parliament. CONTENT: The report seeks to provide an update of the progress of the Union in 1998, the year in which the future enlargement of the Union and the setting up of the future enlargement of the Union and the launch of the euro. The main themes dealt with in the report are the following: 1) preparations for the euro: on 3 May 1998, the Council took an historic decision to allow the participation of 11 Member States in the euro from 01.01.1999. The parities between European currencies were fixed definitively on 31.12.1998 and from 01.01.2002, only notes and coins denominated in euro will be used in the 11 participating countries. Economic policies will remain the responsibility of Member States, although increased coordination will permit better links between national economic policies; 2) role of employment and social affairs: in 1998, the Union gave absolute priority to employment resulting in the creation of some 1.7 million jobs and reducing the unemployment rate below the 10% mark for the first time since 1992. The implementation of employment guidelines and their integration in national action plans (NAPs) gave a new impetus to combating unemployment in the Member States. The Member States also set quantifiable objectives and additional deadlines to reduce unemployment. Efforts however need to be made with a view to strengthening multilateral surveillance of the implementation of the guidelines. 3) enlargement: the process started on 30.03.1998 and membership negotiations started with 6 countries: Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, Czech Republic and Slovenia. In this context, great importance will be attached to the preaccession process with the introduction of partnerships linking the Union with each candidate country. 4) AGENDA 2000: it was in 1998 that the important negotiation took place within the Union concerning AGENDA 2000 to prepare the work to be undertaken from 2000-2006. Agenda 2000 has three objectives: reform of the existing policies of the Union (common agricultural policy, structural and cohesion policies), to create new instruments to deal with immediate challenges such as enlargement (new financing instruments, in particular), and to give the Union an appropriate financial framework. The overall package of these various reforms was adopted in mid-1999 in Berlin. 5) an area of freedom, security and justice: several aspects in this field were launched in 1998; in particular, with regard to combating drugs and organised crime. In 1998 also, the EUROPOL Convention was ratified and the High Level Group on asylum and migration was created. 6) environmental protection and sustainable development: given that the issue of the environment is of increasing concern to citizens, the Union embarked on some important legislative initiatives to protect the environment: the adoption of the Auto-Oil programme that seeks to reduce emissions from cars, adoption of an action programme for sustainable development, reform of the common agricultural policy while respecting environmental standards, etc. 7) internal market, engine for job creation: with the introduction of the Action Plan in favour of the single market, the Union accelerated the number of measures taken to facilitate the free movement of goods in the Union and to increase the competitiveness of businesses, relaunching employment. Great attention was paid to the SLIM programme which aims to simplify legislation concerning the internal market. Consumer protection also became an important issue for the Union (in 1998, the Regulation on GMOs was adopted). In the field of energy, the Directive on the internal market for natural gas adopted. Other work was undertaken in 1998 in the field of transport, telecommunications and maritime safety. The Fifth Framework R&D Programme was also adopted. 8) the implementation of the Amsterdam Treaty: work commenced with respect to the implementation of the Amsterdam Treaty, in particular in the field of the CFSP or in view to integrating the Schengen acquis in the Community domain. Relations between the Union and the WEU were also intensified. At the same time, a debate on a European defence policy was opened with the purpose of giving the CFSP credible operational capacities; 9) Europe in the international arena: the Kosovo crisis and the Middle East peace process were the main issues dealt with in foreign

policy terms in 1998. Particular attention was also paid to relations with Russia, Ukraine and the New Independent States of the former USSR. As far as Kosovo is specifically concerned, the Union initiated dialogue between the Serbs and Albanians with the sending of a special Union Envoy. 10) challenges for the future: several aspects will need to be dealt with in order to face the challenges of the new Millennium: safeguard employment, improve safety and quality of life (in particular strengthening police cooperation in combating organised crime), human rights and relations with third countries, reform of institutions and the enlargement process. With respect to the CFSP, particular attention should be paid to Russia, the Ukraine, the Mediterranean region and above all the Western Balkans.