Accession Treaty: European Parliament recommendation for a financial frame (Rule 96 (4) EP Rules of Procedure)

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The Foreign Affairs Committee, in cooperation with the Budgets Committee, adopted a joint recommendation drafted by the two committee chairmen, Elmar BROK (EPP-ED, D) and Terence WYNN (PES, UK), on the introduction in the draft Accession Treaty of a financial framework. The report warned that the inclusion of budgetary figures for the ten candidate countries in the Accession Treaty (referred to therein as "maximum enlargement-related appropriations") would be an infringement of Parliament's budgetary prerogatives, and would appear to subject those countries to a separate and extra-restrictive regime. This, it said, would be in breach of the fundamental principle of the equality of Member States. MEPs interpreted this move by the Council as a signal that the latter "intends to abandon" the Interinstitutional Agreement on the budget procedure and the Financial Perspective. They stressed that if Council insisted on preserving Annex XV to the Accession Treaty containing those figures, Parliament could only continue budgetary cooperation if Council agreed to raise the ceiling for the budget category "Internal Policies" by EUR 600 million for the 25 Member States until 2006 and if it also agreed to make pre-accession aid available to neighbouring countries as well. The report added that, if Annex XV and the wording "maximum enlargement-related appropriations" therein were maintained, the Member States should clarify that this wording does not imply that separate expenditure ceilings for the new Member States are created but that the financial perspective remains a single and indivisible framework. It urged the Member States and the Council to follow these recommendations in order not to delay the signing of the Accession Treaty (Parliament, whose assent is needed for the accession of any new country, is due to vote on the accession of the 10 applicant countries at its Strasbourg session in April 2003).