Interparliamentary conference on combating fraud against the Community budget

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The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted unanimously a draft own-initiative report by its chairman aimed at implementing President Klaus HÄNSCH's 'ten commandments', the ten measures he called for at the closing session of the Interparliamentary Conference on combating fraud on the EU Budget. These measures are intended to flesh out the political will - which the European Parliament shares with the Member States' parliaments - to win the battle against transnational fraud, by allocating responsibilities and powers, adding to the body of available legislation, simplifying and consolidating the anti-fraud organization and laying the foundations for cooperation. The measures, drawn up in a spirit of compromise, give a timely impetus - particularly in the light of the work currently under way in the IGC - to the debate aimed at stepping up cooperation, with due respect for subsidiarity, between the EU institutions and the Member States. The head of the Commission's anti-fraud unit UCLAF, Mr Per Brix KNUDSEN, described the report as 'perfectly realistic'. The main measures it advocates include: 1. Inserting in the Treaty a legal basis permitting the adoption of anti-fraud regulations under a co-decision procedure, together with machinery requiring the Member States to safeguard Community finances in an equivalent manner. 2.The harmonization of measures in the administrative, legislative and procedural fields: a.administrative: in particular administrative sanctions and controls, especially as regards exclusion from or withdrawal of the benefit in case of irregularity; b.legislative: -by the early ratification by the Member States of the Convention on protecting the financial interests of the Community, adopted in 1995; -by the conclusion and signature of two protocols, one on the prosecution of officials for corruption, the other on the liability of legal persons and judicial cooperation; c.procedural: by making more homogeneous the legal and judicial instruments employed at the stages of judicial proceedings and of the recovery of sums fraudulently obtained or overpaid. 3.The establishment by the Member States of multi-disciplinary bodies to combat fraud. 4.Defining more closely the role of UCLAF and providing it with a statute which permits it to take concrete action at each stage of the fight against fraud. 5.Stepping up existing administrative cooperation. 6.Establishing genuine judicial cooperation by eliminating existing legal barriers, e.g. by determining which Member State is to handle the prosecution where a fraud has been committed in several Member States