Amendment of the Treaty on European Union: convening an intergovernmental conference under art. N of the TUE

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The parliamentary committee adopted the report by Mrs Raymonde DURY and Mrs Johanna MAIJ WEGGEN. The eight priorities which, according to the report, need to be tackled at the conference starting in Turin on 29 March are: 1. An improved definition of European citizenship and enhanced respect for human rights. A full guarantee of legal protection by the European Court of Justice. The cultural dimension should be taken into account. 2. A more effective response to the concerns of the public over internal security in the form of a policy on visas, asylum, immigration and a policy to combat drug trafficking and through judicial cooperation (civil and criminal). 3. Development of the social and ecological dimension and of employment policy and the strengthening of economic and social cohesion. 4. Reinforcing the European Union's external role, notably in safeguarding peace and security by developing a common policy, particularly through greater use of qualified majority voting, the establishment of a Common Analysis and Planning Unit and the integration of the WEU in the Treaty. 5. Increased openness and transparency by means of a reduction in EU decision-making procedures and easier access to Council documents and decisions relating to legislation. 6. Decisive progress towards a more democratic and more efficient Europe by introducing qualified majority voting and a simplified codecision procedure. The European Parliament should be involved in the decision concerning the choice of its seat. 7. Efficient action against the fraudulent use of financial resources at all levels. 8. A simplified, codified and more comprehensible Treaty. The report considered that a system of own resources should be established by 1999, but that this should not involve any extra financial burden for the citizens. The EU should accede to the European Convention on Human Rights so that these rights can be reviewed by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The EU should expressly recognize and protect its minority languages and cultures. A VOLUNTARY EUROPEAN PEACE CORPS: the parliamentary committee proposed that a corps be set up in order to carry out humanitarian missions within and beyond the EU in order to encourage a feeling of belonging to the Union and of solidarity between Member States. The Member States should undertake through a specific Treaty obligation to amend their national legislation in order to strengthen the fight against terrorism. A PRO-ACTIVE POLICY FOR EMPLOYMENT: the Treaty should be supplemented by a new chapter establishing a "Union for Employment" and specifying the common objectives and the procedures to be followed. A Committee on Employment should be set up in order to promote the coordination of the Member States' and the Community's employment policies. THE EXTERNAL ROLE OF THE UNION: decisions should be taken by a qualified majority in every aspect of external policy. Any Member State which was not in agreement with a common position of a military nature should have a dispensation facility but should not be able to veto the common position or joint action. The report rejected the Reflection Group's idea of creating a "high representative" for the CFSP and preferred that this representative function be exercised by a Commissioner appointed in accordance with the procedure for the President of the Commission. The WEU should be integrated into the Union and operate as the European pillar of NATO; traditionally neutral countries would not need to join in its establishment. IN THE INSTITUTIONS: the European Parliament should be given a reinforced role, with assent as regards nominations to the Court of Auditors, the offices of president and members of the executive board of the European System of Central Banks, the director of EUROPOL and the Court of Justice and Court of First Instance. The provisions concerning the power of the Court of Auditors should be revised so as to create an obligation for national administrations and national audit offices to cooperate with the Court of Auditors, particularly with regard to the statement of assurance. The Court should be endowed with judicial powers, including powers of initiative, in order to punish Member States and Community bodies in breach of Community law affecting its financial interests. At the present stage, it was essential to maintain the principle of at least one Commissioner per Member State. The option put

forward by the Reflection Group of having fewer Commissioners than Member States was rejected. The independence of the Commission must be safeguarded and its right of initiative strengthened with a view to enlargement. IMPROVED LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURES: the legislative procedures of the EU should be reformed and reduced to two: codecision and assent. Codecision should be simplified by dropping the phase of intention to reject and ending the procedure either when there was agreement between the Council and Parliament at first reading stage or, when there was no agreement between the Council and Parliament, in a conciliation committee. The report considered that the intergovernmental conference could not open properly until Council had decided on Parliament's participation concerning the presence of observers and the functioning of the interinstitutional conference.