Preparing the next intergovernmental Conference for the year 2000

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The European Parliament adopted the report by Giorgos DIMITRAKOPOULOS (EPP/ED, GR) and Jo LEINEN (PES, D) on the preparation of the reform of the Treaties and the next Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC). The Parliament states firmly that a European Union comprising such a large number of states must have the means to achieve its joint political, economic and social objectives and, therefore, that the next reform of the Union must strengthen the institutions and make them more efficient, transparent and democratic, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of the Union in the eyes of the citizens and enabling it to cope with enlargement, play an active role in the world, better serve citizens and enhance fundamental rights and internal security. It regards it as essential that the following objectives should be achieved when the next reform of the Union is carried out: - a broad public debate and total transparency, - an ongoing dialogue with the applicant countries, - the establishment of a procedure for greater democratic control over the process of drafting and adopting changes to the Treaties, and - coherent results. It declares that the agenda of the next reform of the Union, and hence the negotiating brief to be adopted by the European Council, must include, with a view to the enlargement the following points: - the constitutionalisation of the Union: bringing Europe closer to citizens: this implies, in particular, the unification of the Treaties in a single text and the division of that text into two sections, 1) a constitutional section comprising the preamble, objectives of the Union, fundamental rights and provisions governing the institutions, decision-making procedures and the various competences, and 2) a second section defining the other areas of the current Treaty; the EP also takes the view that the IGC must alter the procedure for the future revision of the Treaties on the basis of the Union's dual legitimacy in order to democratise the revision process by introducing a power of co-decision for the institution which represents the States and that which represents the citizens. - Sufficiently ambitious institutional reforms: the EP calls for the IGC to launch a reform of the institutions by changing their composition, tasks, cooperation and organisation with a view to strengthening their democratic nature and, hence, their effectiveness and responding to the increase in the number of members of the Union; it restates its firm belief that qualified majority voting (QMV) and codecision should become the normal method for general legislative Community-level decision-making; it considers that firm decisions must now be taken as regards the re-weighting of votes within the Council and the composition of the Commission; it considers that, in the context of an enlarged Union, it is both necessary and possible to improve the workings of the Council in numerous ways without calling for a revision of the Treaty, and that these improvements should be included in the same calendar as the next IGC; it recalls that the ceiling of 700 planned for the size of the European Parliament implies that there will also have to be a review of the number of seats per Member State, and it will make a proposal accordingly; it calls for clarification of the existing Treaty provisions asregards the possibility of collective resignation of the Commission and asks to be given the same right as the Council to apply to the Court of Justice for the compulsory retirement od an individual Commissioner; it calls for the Prodi procedure whereby the President of the Commission may dismiss an individual Commissioner to be written into the Treaty; it expresses its opposition to any attempts to challenge at the IGC the Commission's monopoly of right of initiative under the first pillar. It considers it desirable, with a view to enlargement, to continue the debate on flexibility: the rules adopted should aim at reducing the possibility of blocking actions by any of the Member States ans at safeguarding the EU's single institutional framework. Given that it considers that the democratic quality of the EU needs to be further improved, it calls for its own role to be strengthened, particularly in budgetary matters ans as regards appointments to the institutions and bodies of the European Union. - Greater integration: it demands that Parliament be made responsible for its own working arrangements and calls for a reinforcement of the protection of the Community's financial interests and in particular the obligation of the Member States to combat fraud. - Strengthening the external role of the EU: it calls for the instruments of the CFSP to be strengthened and for the integration of the WEU in accordance with a clear timetable; it

calls for the strengthening of the provisions concerning external economic relations, including the Community's participation in multilateral international organisations, and for these provisions to be brought together in one section of the Treaties; it calls for the assent procedure to become the general rule for the conclusion of all significant international agreements, including decisions taken on the provisional application or the suspension of agreements as a result of human rights violations or failure to respect democratic rules. - Area of freedom, security and democracy: strengthening of procedures relating to this area, especially with a view to improving citizens' access to the European Court of Justice. - Strengthening economic and social and employment policy: the EP calls for the IGC agenda to include the examination of suitable proposals for strengthening the role of the political institutions of the Union in defining the Union's economic, social and employment policy guidelines, with a view to improving the synergy and balance between these policies in the EU in order to provide a frame of reference for independent monetary policy decisions to be taken by the European Central Bank.