

Helsinki European Council Summit (10-11 December 1999)

Presidency Conclusions (Extract)

Section I

(...)

The Intergovernmental Conference on institutional reform

14. The European Council welcomes the Presidency's report on the issues raised in relation to the Intergovernmental Conference and setting out the main options the Conference will be confronted with.

15. Appropriate steps will be taken to enable the Intergovernmental Conference to be officially convened in early February. The Conference should complete its work and agree the necessary amendments to the Treaties by December 2000.

16. Following the Cologne Conclusions and in the light of the Presidency's report, the Conference will examine the size and composition of the Commission, the weighting of votes in the Council and the possible extension of qualified majority voting in the Council, as well as other necessary amendments to the Treaties arising as regards the European institutions in connection with the above issues and in implementing the Treaty of Amsterdam. The incoming Presidency will report to the European Council on progress made in the Conference and may propose additional issues to be taken on the agenda of the Conference.

17. Ministers who are members of the General Affairs Council will have overall political responsibility for the Conference. Preparatory work shall be carried out by a Group composed of a representative of each Member State's Government. The representative of the Commission shall participate at the political and preparatory level. The General Secretariat of the Council will provide secretariat support for the Conference.

18. The European Parliament will be closely associated and involved in the work of the Conference. Meetings of the preparatory Group may be attended by two observers from the European Parliament. Each session of the Conference at ministerial level will be preceded by an exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament, assisted by two representatives of the European Parliament. Meetings at the level of Heads of State or Government dealing with the IGC will be preceded by an exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament.

19. The Presidency will take the necessary steps to ensure that candidate States are regularly briefed within existing fora on the progress of discussions and have the opportunity to put their points of view on matters under discussion. Information will also be given to the European Economic Area.