

Dear Minister Gama,

Many thanks for your letter in which you ask me to convey to the Portuguese Presidency the Polish position regarding the agenda of the IGC as defined in the conclusions of the European Council in Helsinki.

I treat your letter as a point of departure for further, deeper discussion between European Union member states and the candidate countries on the institutional reform.

Poland is interested in conclusion of the institutional reform in the year 2000, so that the process of enlargement is not delayed. We are confident that thanks to the reform the Union will become more efficient, closer to its citizens and equipped with effective decision-making mechanisms. The agenda of the Intergovernmental Conference should be a function of the goal that the European Council in Helsinki put before the European Union: attaining readiness for enlargement by the end of 2002.

Allow me to present the following comments on the main points of the IGC agenda: every member state should retain the right to propose a candidate for member of the European Commission. However, the efficiency of the European Commission college will not depend so much on the number of its members, as on the transparency of its structure and clear division of responsibilities between the respective Commissioner. The scope of issues with the European Commission is concerned has increased several-fold since the establishment of the Communities. An even more numerous college of Commissioners than the present one would still be comparable to the size of cabinets of certain member states.

H.E. Jaime Gama
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Portugal
President of the Council of the European Union

The demographic criterion should remain the principle governing the division of votes in the Council of the European Union. We are in favour of such an adjustment of the vote-weighting system so as to ensure balance between large and smaller countries.

Extended application of the principle of qualified majority voting should be preceded by a thorough analysis of all the articles in the treaties wherein the principle of unanimity still applies. Unanimity should still apply with regard to issues of constitutive character, such as amendment of treaties, enlargement, main nominations, the system of own resources, as well as matters of major significance to present and future members. Any changes in this sphere should be subordinated to the requirement of maintaining the efficacy of the decision-making mechanisms of the European Union after enlargement.

We believe that the Intergovernmental Conference could also address the principles of allocating seats in the European Parliament, while retaining the limit of 700 members.

The conclusion of the European Council in Helsinki provide for the possibility of expanding the agenda of the Intergovernmental Conference to include questions connected with the implementation of the Treaty of Amsterdam and other matters considered significant by member states. Among the former, one could mention improvement of the efficiency of the European Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors. Also, it is probable that consideration will have to be given to codifying the decisions taken in Helsinki concerning the establishment of new bodies responsible for the implementation of the Common European Security and Defence Policy (Political and Security Committee, Military Committee and Military Staff). If the need arises to incorporate the issue of *closer cooperation* (articles 43–45 of the Treaty) into the program of the IGC, I feel that emphasis should be placed on its effective utilization. However, considerable caution should be exercised in any expansion of the agenda of the Conference, in order to avoid its prolongation beyond the year 2000.

Poland expects regular dialog regarding the institutional reform, both at political and experts' level. Also, the candidate countries should have access to Conference documents. This would enable them to closely follow its work and to prepare for their functioning in the Union changed by the decisions of the IGC.

Poland hopes that the European Union – which will emerge in a new shape as a result of the work of the Intergovernmental Conference and the accession of new members – will be a cohesive body, capable of decisive and logical action, both in internal and foreign policy. Naturally, the building of the new Union cannot proceed against the will of the citizens, hence the importance which Poland attaches to the transparency of the integration process. We are acting on the assumption that since the said process is not based on negotiations – as Robert Schumann noted – but on joint searching, there is no need to conceal the existing differences, open discussion being the only way of reaching joint decisions.

Hoping to receive the information – mentioned in your letter – concerning the timetable of meetings and consultations scheduled during the Portuguese Presidency, I take this opportunity to convey to you, Excellency, expressions of my highest respect.

Bronislaw Geremek