

Dr. DIMITRIJ RUPEL
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ljubljana, 7 February 2000

Your Excellency,

I would like to thank you for your letter of 10 January 2000, concerning the Intergovernmental Conference on Institutional Reform of the European Union.

I have noted with satisfaction that in accordance with the conclusions of the Helsinki European Council the Candidate Countries will be given the opportunity to be regularly informed about the developments of the IGC and to exchange views on the issues discussed at the conference.

Furthermore, I appreciate the invitation of the Presidency to present our positions on the issues discussed at the Conference.

Slovenia believes that the Intergovernmental Conference should concentrate on three issues which are: the size and composition of the European Commission, the re-weighting of votes in the Council of Ministers, and the extension of qualified majority voting. In our opinion, the widening of the agenda might delay or distort the goal of the Intergovernmental Conference. I am convinced that these questions are also of significant importance for the Candidate Countries in the light of their future membership of the European Union. Hopefully, the results of the IGC will prove to be of benefit to everybody.

In order to give a contribution to the issues discussed in the framework of the IGC, we would need and appreciate a substantial platform from the Presidency for the discussion. At this stage, we are, however, able to indicate some of the general standpoints relating to the main issues.

It is our belief that each Member State should have one commissioner. Furthermore, we support the extension of the qualified majority voting, with unanimity reserved for constitutional issues and other clearly defined exceptions. As for the question of re-weighting of votes in the Council, we are of the opinion that the interests of small countries should be secured.

His Excellency Mr. Jaime José Matos de Gama
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic
L I S B O N

In view of the fact that the institutional reform is a prerequisite for the EU enlargement, Slovenia expects the Intergovernmental Conference to be completed by the end of 2000 under the French Presidency in order to complete the ratification procedures in the Member States by the end of 2002. I hope that such a dynamic would allow the EU to admit those new Member States that will meet the necessary criteria by the 1 January 2003.

Slovenia will follow with great interest the negotiations in the framework of the Conference and the positions expressed by the Member States. We are, in fact, greatly interested to present Slovenia's positions and to have the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Conference.

In conclusion, I would like to express my best wishes for every success of the Portuguese Republic during its Presidency.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.