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TURKEY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

The Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) that the EU will be convening this month will be taking momentous decisions that will determine how the Union will develop and function in the future. As a candidate country, Turkey has a particular interest in following the process that will have an effect on her as well. Therefore, we welcome the invitation of the Portuguese Presidency to present our views.

Turkey has observed closely the deepening and enlargement of the EU and all the proceedings of the past IGCs which have led to the Union assuming its present structure. As non-member, Turkey is not in a position to claim that it knows all the intricacies of the Union's mechanisms. Nevertheless, we will be offering our views in the hope that they will be considered helpful. Naturally, these views are based on Turkey's own experience of the Union and are limited in scope, due to the fact that we are not yet a member.

THE SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION

The most important duty of the Commission is to act coherently and expeditiously, and to take the necessary initiatives on a timely basis. These aspects must be preserved. The role of the Commission as the executive arm of the Union calls for each member state to be represented on it. Ideally each member should have at least one Commissioner. However, the fact that membership will increase nearly two-fold once the present enlargement process is completed, may call for flexibility and sacrifice on the part of member states.

In this respect, in order not to overburden or to separate further the functioning of the Commission, it may be preferable to preserve the current number of 20 Commissioners or at least not increase its size to the extent that it becomes unmanageable. This would mean that the present arrangement that entails larger member states to have more than one Commissioner, would have to change. Such a situation would most likely arise after 2004. If the ceiling of 20 Commissioners is to be preserved then this would call for each member to have only one Commissioner when this number is reached.

Eventually the membership will exceed this number (20). When this happens two suggestions come to mind:

- a) In order for each member to be represented during the term of the college, for some Commissioners the five-year term could be split up. It could be either two two and a half year periods or a two and three year division. The way to decide which Commissioners with what portfolios would follow this course should be determined by the President who shall be nominating them in common accord with the Member States. The role and number of the Vice-Presidents can be enhanced in order to establish a balance between member states. However, this suggestion has the disadvantage of depriving the Commissioners from using their experience during their whole tenure.
- b) A more retainable suggestion is to contemplate the creation of Deputy-Commissioners (DC). A division of labour and a rotation between the Member States on who will have a DC should be envisaged. In order not to discriminate against smaller members, the larger members should also agree that they could have DC's. Thus, a small member may interchange with a large one during the five year term.

THE WEIGHTING OF VOTES IN THE COUNCIL

The objective clearly is to have the Council function as efficiently as possible, whilst limiting the use of the veto right to a minimum of subjects of vital importance as possible. In this respect, it seems that the weighting system has so far performed satisfactorily. With enlargement, new members will force a new calculation. This is an intricate procedure in which Turkey does not feel that she has sufficient knowledge to voice any major preference. Nevertheless, we understand that the current threshold of 71 % seems to be adequate.

POSSIBLE EXTENSION OF QUALIFIED MAJORITY VOTING (QMV)

Qualified majority voting has demonstrated that it is an efficient means in decision making. The way in which the EU functions and how it is perceived in international affairs will rest on its decision making mechanism. Hence, the future of the EU will be shaped by how far this manner of decision making is taken. Turkey believes that it is a useful device that should be extended as far as possible. The areas in which Community policies will apply will have to expand in conjunction with the deepening of the EU. Clearly this entails its extension to second and third pillar areas. Nevertheless, it is understandable that certain subjects will still need to be decided by unanimity. Although majority voting should be the general rule, those areas in which unanimity will be required should be narrowed down and identified as clearly as possible.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament has steadily gained more responsibility and weight within the EU. Streamlining the procedures of the relationship between the EP and the other institutions of the Community was a welcome step and should be monitored to see its effectiveness in practice. In this respect, the size of the EP is another factor that must be considered. The currently imposed ceiling of 700 members will be challenged after 2004 when the membership of the EU expands. A Parliament of 28 members will require a balanced representation from each country. However, efforts to find an equitable distribution between the population sizes of the smallest and largest members should not make the structures of the EP too cumbersome. In this respect, once the ceiling of 700 is reached, it would be preferable to keep this limit and modify the number seats allocated to each country. Any modifications of the national allocation of seats should take into account the need to preserve the demographic representativeness of the Union.
