

**CONFERENCE
OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
GOVERNMENTS
OF THE MEMBER STATES**

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LIMITE

TRANSMISSION NOTE

Subject: IGC 2000: Contribution from the government of Bulgaria

Delegations will find attached for information a contribution from the government of Bulgaria.

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REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
THE MINISTER

Sofia, February 2000

Dear colleague,

I would like to thank you for your letter dated 10 January 2000 inviting us to express our views on the agenda of the forthcoming IGC as set out in the Helsinki European Council conclusions.

Indeed, Bulgaria is not a party to the IGC, and hence, to the debate on the forthcoming institutional reforms. Yet, Bulgaria is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute with its own position as far as the scope of the agenda is concerned. This interest on our side is further emphasised by the fact that the opening of the IGC coincides with the start of the accession negotiations of Bulgaria with the EU.

At the advent of these events, I wish to share with you that Bulgaria is interested in joining a more united and stronger Union, capable of preserving the inherent dynamics of the integration process and possessing democratic, transparent and operational decision-making mechanisms. To this end, we assume that EU Member States will make every effort at a comprehensive, revolutionary reform that will be implemented as soon as possible. Bulgaria remains confident that it will join an enlarged Union governed by sound, effective and operational decision-making institutions.

H.E. Dr. Jaime Gama
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Republic of Portugal

It is our expectation that the Conference will be concluded successfully by the end of the year 2000, and that the ratification process will take place by the end of the year 2002 so that enlargement will not be delayed. There is a wide agreement, and Bulgaria completely adheres to it, that it is of major importance that the forthcoming IGC focus on the Amsterdam "leftovers" (size and composition of the Commission, the weighting of the votes in the Council and the extension of qualified majority voting in the Council) which have a direct bearing on enlargement.

We hope that, the irreversibility of the enlargement process and its practical implementation will not be delayed neither postponed because institutional reform is incomplete, but, on the contrary, will be politically and constitutionally guaranteed.

The institutional reform that will be discussed in the framework of the forthcoming IGC will constitute a clear sign for the capability of the present generation of European leaders to attain, in the same time frame, the two fundamental objectives lying ahead of the EU: the enlargement and the speed of the integration process.

As far as the size and composition of the European Commission is concerned, our interest is in preserving the formula: one Commissioner per Member State. This possibility would guarantee the full representation of all Member States in the Commission's college.

It is also our understanding that in order to remain effective the autonomy of the Commission and the role of its President should be consolidated and the individual responsibility of the Commissioners clarified.

Our general view on the reassessment of the relative weight of Member States' votes in the Council upholds the reform proposal that is aimed at preserving the balance between large and small Member States. In this line of thoughts, I must admit that my country shares the concern of the Portuguese Presidency that the Commission's report on the institutional reform published on January 26th puts the interests of the large Member States to the forefront.

As for the issue on the extension of qualified majority voting in the Council, Bulgaria shares the overall opinion expressed in the eve of the forthcoming IGC that the application of qualified majority should be the rule save for some categories of decisions of a constitutional nature.

Bulgaria welcomes, in conformity with Member States' intention, the revision and further enhancement of the concept of closer co-operation as provided for in the Treaty of Amsterdam. We believe that the flexibility concept could contribute to the speedy implementation of the enlargement process. Thus, we are confident that the deepening of the integration process should not be opposed to enlargement.

In addition, I would like to express my anticipation that my country will be involved to the greatest possible extent in the deliberations on the Common Security and Defence Policy as well as on the Charter on Human Rights that go parallel to the preparation for the opening of the IGC.

I hope that the convening of a follow-up Intergovernmental Conference on issues related to further deepening of the integration process would allow a possible participation of the present candidate countries, including Bulgaria. In the light of this perspective we look forward to being kept well informed and regularly consulted on the problems included in the forthcoming IGC's agenda.

Looking forward to our continued co-operation inspired by the common endeavour – and obligation – we all have to realize, I remain

Yours Sincerely,

Nadezhda Mihailova