

Brussels, 4 February 2004

Pat COX calls for Constitutional Treaty to be agreed before June European Elections

Speaking today in Budapest at the 16th meeting of the Presidents of the Parliaments of countries participating in the enlargement process, Pat Cox MEP, President of the European Parliament said,

"My appeal today is for the Europe of 25 to work in the spirit of compromise to ensure that the draft constitutional treaty can be in place before the next European elections in June."

"The challenge, and it is one for leadership at the highest level, is to find the collective European spirit which escaped us last December and the understanding that working together makes us stronger than working separately."

"My own sense is that there is a change in mood which we need to build on - a refusal to slip backwards and a renewed will to step forward together towards European integration."

"Today in Budapest the Presidents of the Parliaments participating in the enlargement process called on governments in the IGC to deliver, before the European elections, a Treaty representing a workable and acceptable constitutional settlement."

European Parliament President Pat Cox today received a letter from the President of the Italian Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi calling for the new European Constitution to be agreed before the accession of 10 new Member States and the European Parliament elections in June. The Italian President stresses that the institutional renewal of the Union cannot be delayed. Commenting on the letter, Pat Cox said,

"I thank President Ciampi for his constant and committed support for the process of European integration and for his continued tireless work towards achieving a European constitution. I welcome his genuine and firm support for the role of the Parliament in this context."

"I share the President's concern that a new Union of 25 countries will be ill-equipped with today's treaties to meet tomorrow's challenges. And his belief that this draft Treaty offers us the best guarantee of democracy and transparency in the construction of Europe."

"Mr. Ciampi's initiative coincides with my own aspirations and the clear will of the European Parliament - as stated in its resolution of January 29th - calling for the completion of an agreement on a new constitutional Treaty before next June."

"My determination, on behalf of the Parliament, is to continue to argue that leaders must take courage, be ambitious and find the collective political will and wisdom to settle."