

Sevilla, Spain, 21 June 2002

Address by Pat COX to the European Council in Seville

There are four general issues that I propose addressing in my statement - enlargement, economic reform, institutional change, immigration questions - and I will make one or two general remarks at the end.

ENLARGEMENT

Can I say at the outset how much I appreciate the extraordinary intensity of the efforts of the Spanish Presidency during the enlargement negotiations. The kind of dogged and detailed work that you have undertaken does not always make the headlines, but the last six months have been the most productive in preparing the way for enlargement. It is an extraordinary achievement of your Presidency.

The European Parliament believes that politically 2002 is the year of enlargement. There is nothing to be gained by delay. On the contrary, delay runs the risk of making the enterprise more complex, or derailment. Now is the time.

Parliament has been playing, and will continue to play, a vigorous role in promoting enlargement and maintaining all necessary momentum since the European Council in Barcelona. As part of this commitment, I have carried out official visits to nine of the accession States. I will visit Slovakia next month and Romania and Bulgaria in the early autumn.

There are many observations from these countries which I could share with you in detail. To summarise, I have seen at first-hand the extraordinary transformation that has been achieved on the *acquis communautaire*. This requires an extraordinary and a generous response from the Union

However, there is an unmistakable sense that our political partners are reaching the limits of their elasticity. They cannot keep stretching. The time has come now for the political leaders of the Accession States to deliver, in order to save their own credibility. They have been running hard; they can see the finishing tape. Copenhagen is the target. We cannot let them down.

On behalf of the European Parliament, I would commend the establishment, jointly with Council, of a comprehensive political road map for after the Copenhagen Summit. If agreement is reached in Copenhagen in December, and if the necessary draft texts reach us quickly, I pledge that Parliament will give sufficient priority to delivering its assent at the earliest possible moment in the first quarter of 2003. I will personally underline with public opinion and in the media our determination to conclude within this deadline.

We have sometimes been consumed by the details of the *acquis communautaire*. I appreciate that there needs to be a debate on direct payments, for example. But we must start moving towards the macropolitics of enlargement itself, in all its aspects: it is time to sell enlargement to the people, to underline the benefits and the enhanced security. I am convinced that the moment has come for the politicians to re-possess the agenda.

I was pleased to see recently that Heads of Government like Chancellor Schüssel, in his interview with the Financial Times, and Chancellor Schröder, in his Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung interview, have shown a willingness to lead from the front on these issues, which is exactly what is required.

The European Parliament has decided to organise a special plenary session next November where 202 elected representatives of the Accession States will be fully integrated into our proceedings and a debate on enlargement. This will take place after the special European Council meeting in Brussels and before Copenhagen. I am most grateful to Prime Minister Rasmussen and Romano Prodi for having agreed to take part with me in this politically significant event.

We are also committed in practical and budgetary terms to granting observer status to the elected representatives of those States whose accession may be decided in Copenhagen, and to do this as soon as there is political agreement on the new accession Treaties.

We also need to look at granting appropriate special support for the transition in Romania and Bulgaria, to demonstrate our irreversible commitment to those countries on accession. The political wind is now in the sails. On certain issues - Kalliningrad, the situation in Cyprus, Turkey - the European Parliament is willing to make its contribution by an intensification of parliamentary dialogue.

ECONOMIC REFORM DELIVERY

I announced to you in Barcelona my intention to develop a partnership with Council to deliver economic reform. This partnership for delivery continues to bear fruit.

Of the priorities you indicated in Barcelona in the field of financial services, we adopted a financial collateral Directive in May. We fast-tracked a decision on international accounting standards to prevent future problems like those of Enron, and ensure top quality regulation in this area. We delivered our second readings on insurance mediation and distance marketing. On the four other issues - supplementary pensions, market abuse, prospectuses and financial conglomerates -

and the internal market on gas and electricity, we await your common positions, so that we can move to closure.

PARTNERSHIP FOR REFORM

Enlargement makes the reform of our Institutions an imperative, but that reform is already indispensable if we are to rekindle support for European integration and heighten respect for our European Institutions. Reform of each of our Institutions and a partnership for reform of all the Institutions. On the precise agenda for reform, the Convention will address those issues which require Treaty changes. We should also be looking at what we can do now.

You will be discussing the important report on Council's working methods. We support any move in the direction of greater openness, particularly when Council is legislating, and the proposed new role of the General Affairs Council goes in the right direction. Some of my colleagues have expressed reservations about the proposed merging of Development and External Affairs Councils, given the Union's increasing donor capacity. I would be grateful if you could address this particular concern.

The Commission has put on the table important changes to the financial regulations where we reached agreement with Council in June, and on time.

For the Kinnock package on administrative reform, we expect to give our view, in time, before the end of the year, so that the package can be approved on schedule under the Greek Presidency.

For Parliament itself, we have embarked on an ambitious reform programme, streamlining our own Rules of Procedure, and reorganising our services.

One issue, - for Parliament of great significance - a common Statute for Members of the European Parliament, requires agreement with you. I have been given a mandate by all the political group leaders to hold exploratory talks at the highest level. We are seeking an agreement on the basis of two principles: equality of treatment for all MEPs, and transparency for their allowances.

I would greatly appreciate the assistance of the Spanish Presidency in the remaining days of its responsibility, as well as the incoming Danish Presidency, so that we can move towards a fair, reasonable, balanced, transparent and accountable solution.

It is a question which concerns the image of the European Parliament, and of the Union in general. It is important for all the Institutions. We have all to gain from the credibility that would flow from an agreement in good time before the 2004 elections.

Some things we can do on our own; other reforms require a collective effort. The Commission's Action Plan on better regulation is not a technical matter. Our citizens want a Europe which legislates when necessary, which does not seek to regulate every aspect of the lives of all Europeans. Where legislation is necessary, it must be well done; accessible, clear and coherent. Public acceptance of Europe depends on making a success of this. Legislation should be well-prepared; its impact precisely evaluated; it should be the subject of intense pre-consultation, and national parliaments must have an opportunity to be involved early in the process. This requirement for an enhanced role for national parliaments was underlined at the recent Madrid Conference of Speakers of the European Union. All three Institutions have a vital role. Seville can give a clear signal.

If you in your conclusions ask all three Institutions to work together on this, and to reach an interinstitutional agreement by the Copenhagen European Council, you will give fresh impetus. Our cooperation requires good technical preparation, and the active involvement of the political representatives of each of our Institutions, in order to reach a clear political agreement on a matter which is essentially political, not merely technical.

I ask you personally, Mr President, to ensure that your conclusions here this weekend lay down a precise objective, and a clear mechanism for reaching it, which is acceptable to us all.

IMMIGRATION

The profile of the debate on immigration has been raised considerably in recent weeks. The public should know that these questions are not being raised by the European Union for the first time; we were already committed to the adoption of a common asylum and immigration policy in Tampere in 1999, a policy with instruments to safeguard respect for fundamental rights and freedoms. You took this forward in Laeken. We have to make this point in order to confront the view that in holding these discussions now we are just reacting to populists, and explain this to the press. The common asylum and immigration policy that we are looking for must be based on responsibility for our global obligations, fundamental rights and the conventions we have entered into.

I myself have come to Seville directly from the meeting, held earlier this week in Bari, of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum, which reunites 180 parliamentarians from the EP, 15 Member States and from 12 Mediterranean countries.

At that meeting in Bari, with parliamentarians from countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia or Morocco, the Forum adopted a resolution on migration containing certain key paragraphs: one on co-responsibility for combating illegal

immigration and crime-related problems; the other providing not a negative but a positive linkage between cooperation on immigration issues and aid.

The significance of this is that it is a commitment, not just by European Parliamentarians and national MPs, but also parliamentarians from the southern banks of the Mediterranean. It is a plea to invest in co-responsibility.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, permit me to make two or three comments as an Irish politician on the Treaty of Nice:

- To you as members of the European Council, I hope that you can deliver a Declaration on Irish neutrality in the clearest possible language which will allay fears, and which I will strongly support.
- To the Taoiseach, let me tell him that I will personally campaign actively and positively in the next referendum to secure a positive result.
- To the other Member States and Institutions who may consider themselves concerned, I ask you to give Ireland sufficient space to deliver that positive result.

Finally, I thank most sincerely all those Prime Ministers who have taken the time to meet me and to discuss so many questions of common concern since the last European Council meeting in Barcelona.