

**Intervention by Mrs Lena Hjelm-Wallén
at the plenary session of the European Convention
held on the 21st March 2002**

“What is expected of the European Union”

Mr President, colleagues of the Convention,

It is clear to us all what this convention is about. The institutional issues. How decisions are made. What the best balance of power looks like.

But we must ultimately ask ourselves: What's the purpose behind different institutional solutions? Therefore I want our discussions to start with the issues. What do we need to do to build a better future for our citizens? In which areas is the European Union the best instrument to use to reach our political goals?

I would like to start by mentioning four areas where I think the union can do more and better.

1. the Common Agricultural Policy where the goals expressed in the Treaty must be modernised and made more consumer oriented to pave the way for reform. However, I am not suggesting that we discuss here the details of a CAP-reform.

2. asylum and migration policy where the community method of decision making could be more generally applied.

3. the cooperation in criminal law and police matters where, while remaining intergovernmental, qualified majority voting could be extended to make the Union better equipped to tackle organised, international crime.

4. We should also seek improvements in the Unions role as an international actor. This is an area where the citizens expectations are high and the Union's possibilities unique.

Our discussions are conducted in the perspective of enlargement. And enlargement certainly will mean changes for the Union. But its objectives and values as enshrined in the Treaties will remain the same. And so will, in my view, its basic institutional foundations. Certainly, adjustments and improvements might be necessary and I will participate in the discussion

with an open mind. The approach should be practical. The objective is to improve the Union's capability to deliver.

When identifying the needs for Treaty changes related to issues like the distribution of competencies and balance of power between the institutions, we should bear in mind the principle of subsidiarity and respect for cultural difference. We should apply adequately the various methods of cooperation that have been developed. Thus the traditional community method and harmonization remains necessary in core areas to guarantee future coherence and keep the Union together. In other areas, the new and open method of cooperation, with common goals but more room for national ways of achieving them, may be a more effective way ahead. Where national sovereignty is concerned, intergovernmental cooperation will remain the basis. Doing this right, we could solve the double aim of strengthening cooperation while keeping the bureaucratic interference at a reasonable level. And thus respond to some aspects of the criticism against the EU.

When it comes to democratic legitimacy and acceptance I believe there are two important aspects: Firstly, to bear in mind that the democratic basis for the cooperation will in the foreseeable future remain the nation states and thus the national parliaments. By saying this I also indicate the importance I attach to the role of the Council in the interaction between the institutions. Secondly, to further develop the openness and transparency of the Union and to make the Union concentrate on areas relevant to the citizens and do so efficiently and responsibly.

A Union close to the citizens must be the objective of our work. We must tackle our task with the ambition of listening to and trying to interpret their wishes, concerns and demands.
