

## **Intervention by Peter Hain, UK Government Alternate, on EU external action at the 11 July Convention plenary**

The UK wants Europe to be a powerful player on the international stage with a strong and successful external policy, using all our trade, international development and Community instruments, CFSP and its new addition of ESDP. So I welcome the four issues raised in the Praesidium paper:

First, although the Seville reforms are an important start, more needs to be done to get real and essential coherence in the EU's external policy. So my proposal would be that the new external relations sub-formation of the General Affairs Council should be chaired by the High Representative. Most people recognise that, amongst the other problems with the rotating Presidency system, it detracts from continuity and therefore from an effective European Union foreign policy. Without reform, a serious foreign policy will not be deliverable. And Washington will ignore Europe and we will not get the partnership that Mr Peterle of the Slovenian Parliament rightly called for.

Second, on common interests, I agree with the Praesidium paper that we need to look at the role of the European Council and GAERC. All of us - both member states and the Commission - need to bring our different knowledge and expertise to the table. We should consider whether the External Relations Commissioner and the High Representative would make joint proposals to the Council.

Third, flexibility. We should make a strength and asset of the historical and traditional diversity within the Union. For example, in East Timor Europe acted promptly and effectively because the Netherlands and Portugal had close associations there.

Equally, a Member State may wish to act because of this own national interest while the Union chooses not to, as Britain did in Sierra Leone. And what Elmer Brok called a coalition of the willing should not be seen as a challenge but an asset to the Union.

Fourth, although the appointment of the High Representative has provided a clearer Union voice, this should be strengthened by giving him the formal right of initiative in CFSP and a greater say in CFSP resources. He should also attend Commission meetings on external policy.

Former Yugoslavia is a striking example of what Europe can do - consistent diplomacy, co-ordinated with the USA and Russia; tough economic and political sanctions; promise of aid and engagement to democratic forces; and active engagement of Chris Patten and Javier Solana.

Britain wants Europe to be a global force for good: preventing and solving conflict; conquering world poverty; supporting international environmental protection; backing human rights and democracy; promoting equality and social justice. But as Bobby McDonagh from Ireland said, CFSP will only be as strong if it draws on the experience and assets of the Member States. And, as he said, communitisation simply will not work. The strength of Europe's foreign policy is based on its member states' commitment, not on Community rules; and the legitimacy of Europe's foreign policy must be based on its accountability to national parliaments. We are ready to contribute fully to the collective effort, using our global diplomacy and our other assets. We need strong institutional structures at Union level. But we must also recognise that this sort of collective effort requires tailor-made procedures and methods of operation and a clear link back to national parliaments.

My suggested reforms will, Mr President, help to deliver this.