

**Intervention by Dr. Nahtigal at the plenary session of the European Convention, 11 July 2002, on external action of the EU**

The area of CFSP should be tackled with great deal of caution and hasty decisions should be avoided. One could agree with the statement that the external relations of the EU do not correspond to the economic power of the integration. It is therefore right that CFSP is separately discussed by the convention. It is crucial to reduce this gap - the gap between the economic and foreign affairs aspect.

When seeking to strengthen the role of the EU in foreign affairs, a cautious approach should be taken and we should resist the temptation to strengthen this aspect of political integration forcefully and at any cost.

It is a fact that it took 50 years to introduce a common currency, that is the monetary union. In this period the Coal and Steel Community gradually deepened. It has been only 10 years since the Common Foreign Security Policy was put in place and only 3 years since the inception of European Security and Defence Policy.

On the other hand the problem of efficiency of the CFSP has nothing to do with the forthcoming enlargement of the EU. As stressed by Jacques Delors: "European foreign policy will be no more difficult with 27 members than it is now with the present 15 members - don't look for excuses, it is not the enlargement which will cause obstacles."

We should also note that six-month rotation of the EU Presidency itself does not represent an obstacle for a more efficient CFSP. The problem arising from frequent changes of the Presidency can be overcome by adopting longer term working programmes, binding on several consecutive Presidencies. In this way we could provide for the continuity of the EU functioning in foreign policy, without marginalising the role of small member states.

A good example for that is the recent decision of the Seville council to reorganise the GAC (General Affairs Council) and separate its agendas and sessions horizontally and by foreign political issue of the EU.

The urgently needed strengthening of the foreign policy image of the EU can be attained also through enhanced cooperation between the Council and the Commission - especially through closer linkage between different aspects in the EU external action - I mean trade, development, foreign policy and other aspects. The High Representative could play an important role in this linkage.

In this way we could overcome the rigidity of the present three-pillar structure. The actions of the High Representative so far have fully met the initial expectations. Therefore we see this office to have the greatest potential for even greater linking role between various fields of EU foreign affairs.

Under the present circumstances it is unlikely that the principle of unanimity in CFSP would be abolished. The method of enhanced cooperation gives additional opportunity to improve the efficiency of the CFSP. This is, however, limited to special cases, when not all of the member states are willing to participate in certain activities of the CFSP (and ESDP); but they do not oppose these activities either. Of course in these cases they should be given all opportunity to join at a later stage under the same conditions.

Our goal remains to hear the EU speaking with one voice at the global level in the nearest possible future. In order to reach this goal, we have to find a way, which will lead to organic development of common institutions' functioning, at the same time paying utmost attention to the differences between member states and their interests.