

**THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION**  
**15-16 April 2002 Plenary Session**

**Speech by Mr. Valdo Spini, alternate Representative of the  
Italian Chamber of Deputies**

In his address to the inaugural session of the Convention, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing said that if we are successful, Europe will have a new role in the world within 25-50 years (the time that has elapsed since the signing of the Treaty of Rome).

What is currently taking place around us makes us realise that we must be successful in bringing forward this target date.

We are reminded by the present crisis in the Middle East, a crisis which has worsened since September, pursuing a retrograde path that was largely predictable but which the international community has been unable to change.

I would say that the novelty that occurred on Wednesday, 10 April, when what has been defined as a "Quartet" emerged in Madrid - the document on the Middle East signed jointly by the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United

Nations - further emphasises this need. Something new for Europe came into being in Madrid, because the signing of that document has made the mission being undertaken by Secretary of State Colin Powell to the Middle East not only an American mission but, in a sense, a mission on behalf of the whole international community.

It is precisely because of the gravity of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian crisis that we must focus our attention more sharply on Europe's capacity to play a foreign policy role. The first task of the European Union is to undertake a peace and co-operation mission in the world, acting in unison, to bring to bear the full weight of our vast continental dimension. If we wish to enhance and accelerate the role of Europe as a political player on the world stage, then particular care must be devoted in the deliberations of the Convention to reforming such structures as the Presidency of the European Council, which must be strengthened both by extending the term of office for an appropriate period of time - to two or two-and-a-half years, for example - and by making the Presidency elective, in place of the present rotating system. This is necessary above all looking ahead to the enlargement of the Community, which will raise the number of member states of the Union from the present 15 to a possible 27.

There is one particularly important deadline that has to be met in this regard. I am referring to the definition of a European Common Foreign and Defence Policy. 2003 is also the year in which we will have to establish the European Rapid Intervention Force, that will be able to use NATO assets, but also to act independently of NATO. According to the doctrine theorised within NATO itself, the creation of a European defence structure "not separate but separable" from NATO will enable Europe to act as Europe, performing international peacekeeping and relief missions. This will mark a major step forward in strengthening Europe's foreign policy. In all likelihood it will also be a Force that the United Nations will wish to use for certain sensitive missions.

We have been asked whether Europe should have more or fewer tasks.

The decision, at least for 12 countries, to create a single European currency, the euro, as an example of some sovereignty being ceded without being matched by the structuring of an adequately corresponding European democratic power, must provide us with the main argument for our response.

This is why we want a fully-fledged European Constitution.

It is not so much to defend the role of the nation states, as some have done, but to build up a system of powers and checks and balances at European Union level, so that the powers that have already been irreversibly shifted to the European tier can be matched by a system of checks and balances and participation that will guarantee the same level of democracy that we have already established at the national level. This is the role of the European Parliament and the role of the Commission, which must also be emphasised.

Let us be bold, not fearful. Let us reject short-term views, and show our ability to look far ahead. This is the ambition that must drive our deliberations at this Convention.