

## **PLENARY SESSION OF THE CONVENTION**

**21 - 22 MARCH 2002**

### **INTERVENTION OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HELLENIC GOVERNMENT AND MEMBER OF THE PRAESIDIUM OF THE CONVENTION**

**Mr George Katiforis MEP**

President, fellow Representatives,

Our Convention on the Future of Europe is the beginning of Europe's Future.

It is a dress rehearsal of enlargement. We have with us, in a process of close co-operation, our future colleagues from the candidate countries. In a few months we shall be working with them, within the same institutions, facing all our common problems. Europe's future is as much theirs as it is ours.

Our Convention is not only a dress rehearsal. It is also a new birth. Within here is being born the Europe of political life of European Institutions, of the political involvement of the European peoples in the European process of development. Until today our institutions lived a life of diplomacy. Diplomacy between governments has taken European integration to this point. Its achievements are not small. Now, however, has come the hour to make the decisive step from diplomatic co-operation between governments to the political involvement of the European peoples in the proceedings.

Involvement of the citizens in proceedings of a political nature means constitutional definition of responsibilities, definition of the role of the institutions, in a manner simple and understandable for the average European citizen. A constitutional text, enriched with the Charter of Fundamental Rights, will be the least our Convention can offer to the European peoples.

Citizens want to participate in the Union both in their European identity but also in their national identity. They demand that the institutions of Europe function in such a way as to not split their political personality, so as not to bring the European citizen into conflict with the citizen of the Member State. They want Europe to support the Member State and the Member State to support Europe. How much Europe and how much Member State is needed to achieve a perfect balance of both elements is not something predetermined once and for all time. It is dependent upon historical developments. We have to avoid drawing up of a "list of competencies" which would run counter to the ever-developing element of European construction. Our guide remains Article 1 of the Treaty on European Union - we are "... in the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen."

It is our belief that at this evolutionary stage of the Union the basic need which prevails is the need for more, not for less Europe. This does not exclude, on certain issues, restitution of responsibilities to Member States. But the general direction cannot be renationalisation of

policies. On the contrary, we need more Europe. A stronger presence, more self-determination, the stabilising presence of our continent on the international stage. We need more Europe for greater and security on our external borders, surrounding the Union. More Europe for greater security of the citizens inside our single space, security against organised crime, security against environmental and alimentary threats. More Europe for greater macro-economic coordination, for faster economic growth, for a better life for the worker, for the achievement of full employment. More Europe for greater solidarity between social groups, between age groups, and between Member States.

More Europe means movement towards a federal perspective, but through effective executive institutions. The Commission may steadily move towards being the administrative power for the management of economic and foreign policy, without losing the right of legislative initiative. The Council, when it makes use of its legislative powers, may be regarded as a second legislative chamber which will express, on the basis of equality, the opinions of Member States. More Europe, finally, means more democracy, i.e. the enhancement of the role of national parliaments, of the European Parliament, of European political parties. All this we have to express in the text of a constitutional nature which we will propose.

Aside from the above, Europe is by its nature a great historical project. The purpose of Europe is Europe itself. It is the restitution of the union of European space and peoples within their historical borders. These borders include both Russia and Turkey and the Near East and the northern coast of Africa.

It is a geographically cohesive area, with a population of one billion people, with the largest income per head compared with any other equivalent area and population, on earth, with an educational level higher than anywhere else, with the best infrastructures.

The enlargement which we have decided upon will take us nearly halfway down this road. The new Member States will not be a burden but the greatest of challenges, our greatest opportunity. They open to us the possibility of a reassignment of capital and work which will cure us from unemployment and put them on the road for development equal to our own. The new Member States will become the launching pad for the final move which will make Europe a leading power of humanity, as our Continent had been for many thousands of years and as it can so become again.

This is the Europe of which we dream.

George Katiforis MEP  
Brussels, 21 March 2002