

Statement by Mr. Henrik Hololei
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on External Action

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

All the speakers today have wished for a more efficient and coherent foreign policy of the Union. As regards how to achieve it, I will also have to agree that the report elaborated under the chairmanship of Mr. Jean-Luc Deheane has suggested useful ways for achieving such a policy.

First, it is necessary to view different aspects of external actions in one common framework. In this regard I agree with the proposal for a single chapter in the future Constitutional Treaty dealing with those different actions. I believe that the foreign policy goals listed in the report will also enable us to put first things first and let the common foreign and security policy, common trade policy and development cooperation of the Union to pursue the same aims.

A single framework is especially necessary for financing the external actions. Today Member States spend much more on foreign policy or development assistance than does the Union. Thus it would not always be more necessary to allocate more funds to those areas but to see that the funds are spent in a concerted way. It is rather evident that if words about a stronger role of the Union in world affairs will not be matched by similar contributions in financing then we will not be able to move beyond the rhetoric.

An efficient foreign policy requires efficient decision-making. At the same time the decisions made must meet the expectations of the public and respect the diversity of Member States. How to reconcile these two demands? There are no easy solutions here. On the one hand it is the opinion of my Government that decisions in the principal questions of foreign policy will have to be made on the basis of unanimity also in the future (and certainly in the matters related to defence). At the same time sufficient flexibility should be guaranteed and implementing decisions within the unanimously agreed framework may be adopted by qualified majority voting. Furthermore, in line with the suggestions of the report, more use could be made of the possibility for constructive action allowed by the EU Treaty. Also given the potentially different views in a Union of 25, one should allow for enhanced cooperation also in the field of foreign policy where a 'coalition of the willing' may pursue actions in the name of the whole Union.

The decision-making suggestions above certainly concern only the common foreign and security policy – in the field of trade policy and development cooperation we support the use of QMV in all matters.

The Union needs more visibility in the field of foreign policy – this we all agree upon. This visibility could be further increased by strengthening the role of the High Representative. He should become the true ‘External Representative’ of the Union as suggested in the report. Nominated by the Member States, he should be the representative of the common interest, supported by autonomous finances and all other necessary means for efficient functioning. His representative role should also include leading the EU delegation at political cooperation meetings with third countries. We prefer that the post of External Representative should be kept separately from the post of Commissioner. However, we would also not exclude a possibility for ‘double hatting’. No matter which of these solutions will be chosen, this will also to a certain extent help to reduce the workload of the presidency, enabling it to concentrate it more on internal Union matters.

I believe that when looking at the potential outcomes of this Convention, it is in the field of external action where we can achieve most progress compared to modest results achieved so far in this area. Thank you for the attention!