

Speech by Mr. Guntars Krasts
Member of the Latvian Parliament
Alternate Member to the Convention

Convention “Protocol on the role of the National Parliaments”

Brussels, 18 March 2003

Mr President,

In Europe, we are designing here in the Convention, which is evidently moving towards higher degree of integration, requires to reconsider the role of the National Parliaments, with which citizens of European Nations feel natural linkage. That would bring EU closer to citizens of the EU Nation States – what mainly this Convention is about.

The European Affairs Committee of the Latvian Parliament was established in 1995 basing on the principles applied in Scandinavian Parliaments. The competences of the Committee are defined in the Parliament’s rules of procedures, obliging the government to have an approval by the European Affairs Committee to its positions before they are submitted to the EU. This functioned well during the negotiation process and the same practice will be applied after Latvia becomes a member state.

I agree with the provision laid down in the draft protocol, that the threshold of one-third of the National Parliaments having reasoned opinions on the Commission’s proposal non-compliance with the principle of subsidiarity should be sufficient.

I am confident that there is no need to raise it by setting minimum up to two-thirds – as some suggested here. That would be undemocratic reduction of possibility for the National Parliaments to have their word.

However I would like to stress that the draft protocol on the National Parliaments reflects the Final Report of the working group “On the Role of

National Parliaments” in a limited degree. Therefore, from my point of view, several important issues of the Final Report of the Working group did not find reflection in the draft Protocol.

For the legislative proposals made available by the Commission and the date when it is placed on the agenda of the Council - the six-week period must be respected. Within this period no preliminary agreements of the Council working groups shall be made. This would ensure that National Parliaments are given rights to express their views before the decision by the Council takes its decision.

- There should be a possibility open, I mean the Second possibility, for the National Parliaments to apply the early-warning system also in later stages of the EU decision taking process, if there is reasonable opinion provided by at least one-third of the National Parliaments, as to non-compliance of the draft common position with the principle of subsidiarity.

When at least two – thirds of the National Parliaments have opinion of non-compatibility of the Commission legislative proposal with the principle of subsidiarity, the proposal shall not be preceded further. The concerns expressed by 2/3 of the national parliaments evidently will point serious violation of the principle of subsidiarity. This threshold is widely applied to amend the National Constitutions.

In addition, I would like to mention that the National Parliaments should ensure their capacities to be a responsible and active players in the EU decision making process and shall also have mechanisms to review the practical implementation of EU policies and enforcement of the *acquis* in their countries.

Thank you