

Statement by Mr Henrik Hololei
Alternate Member of the Convention
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on articles 14-23 of the draft Constitutional Treaty

15-16 May 2003, Brussels

Thank you, Mr Chairman.
Ladies and gentlemen,

We have heard a large number of interventions yesterday on the institutional arrangements of the Union. I would like to give my full support to the ideas voiced by all those whose Governments have signed the paper “Principles and Premises” about Reforming the Union Institutions and presented by D.Roche, D.Rupel, T.Tiilikainen, H.Farnleitner, E.Lopes, J.Kohout, R.Martikonis, S.Kalnieta as well as many others.

It is very important that the Union should also in the future be a Union of equal member states, co-operating efficiently on the basis of the community method. I am convinced that the imminent enlargement of the Union does not constitute a good excuse for a radical reform of so far well served decision-making.

As has been stressed by previous speakers, an efficient Council is crucial for the sound functioning of the Union. But we should not forget that the discussions on the Council did not start here at the Convention and have been going on for some time already. Important compromises that maintained the institutional balance and guaranteed equality of Member States were made in Nice and it makes no sense to start the discussion from square one again. What is the logic behind the sweat and tears during the discussions in Nice if we do not allow it to function in practice. We MUST give Nice a fair chance! The size and principles of the composition of the Commission, weighing of votes in the Council and the size of the European Parliament should be left untouched by the Convention. Dear colleagues, I do not agree at all that by doing that we fail to comply with Laeken declaration. On the contrary, in doing so we preserve the most important values and principles of the EU.

The Councils and the European Council should continue to be presided by Member States rotating on an equal basis. This would help to guarantee equal opportunities for all Member States and involve them in steering Europe on the highest level. I do not believe the argument that the Union lacks continuity with rotating presidency – rather any other form of chairmanship would significantly increase problems of co-ordination. We would arrive at the multiplication of bureaucracy, thus making Europe less efficient and alienating our people even more. We must keep the structures as simple and transparent as possible. Long-term continuity of the agenda should be achieved by multi-annual work programmes, strengthening the post of Secretary General of the Council and other similar means but not by creating new high-level posts and expecting them to solve all our

problems. I do not see a place in the institutional system for a Permanent President of the European Council and lifting the European Council among the Union institutions.

The European Commission should remain the true engine of European integration also in the future. How should this Commission look like? In my opinion, all Member States should take part in the work of the Commission on the basis of absolute guaranteed equality. I am not convinced of the argument that the smaller the Commission, the more effective its work. Many states have governments that are by far bigger than the future Commission and nobody insists they are unworkable. EU is not only about efficiency but much more than that. Efficiency cannot override principles of democracy and equality. If that happens then it is a completely different Union and a worse one.

One Commissioner per Member State provided there is full equality makes the decisions of the Commission more legitimate for governments and citizens. It also gives the Commission more visibility among its citizen. This would be even more supported when the Commission would be headed by a strong and able President. I agree with those speakers that have underlined the need to increase the democratic legitimacy of the President and who have supported the creation of a Joint Electoral College for the election of the Commission President. This would enable to involve the national parliaments in the European affairs in a very visible way.

We all want the Convention to be a success. This depends very much on the outcome of discussions of institutional issues. We safeguard a success if we do not depart from principles that vast majority of present and future Member States share - to maintain and reinforce Community method; to preserve the institutional balance; to respect the equality of Member States and not to create new institutions as well as enable them to operate as openly as possible. Otherwise we do not only challenge the successful outcome of the Convention but the future of the European Union itself. Do we really want to challenge that?

Thank you, Mr President