

Speech by Mr Józef Oleksy, Representative of the Sejm of the Republic of
Poland at the plenary session of the Convention
Brussels, 15th of May, 2003

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The creation of a permanent chairman of the European Council will serve the internal efficiency of the Union and clarify its external representation, provided the Chairman successfully cooperates with the EU Foreign Representative. Many of us had exactly this in mind when supporting the idea at an early stage of the debate. We should not perceive the creation of the permanent chairman of the Council as an attempt to establish a chief for the whole Union! We are talking about a chairman of only one institution! This should in no way weaken the community factor. A permanent chairman - yes, but not as a new institution that would compete with the supranational bodies, especially the European Commission. That is why I am not sure whether the creation of an additional "board" in paragraph 3 of article 16 a would not adversely influence the existing delicate institutional balance within the EU.

In order to guarantee a coherent system, it is crucial to preserve some elements of rotation in the formations of the Council of Ministers together with the permanent chairman of the European Council. That is why I propose to replace the current wording of art. 17 a and create a Team Presidency composed of four Member States holding the presidency of a council formation during two years.

The allocation of responsibilities within the Team Presidency should be agreed within the team. The team presidency based on a system of equal rotation ensures equal treatment of all member states.

On qualified majority voting: The Nice formula constitutes a fruit of a difficult compromise between the Member States and should not be changed! An attempt at changing the Nice provisions, which guarantee a right balance between the bigger and the smaller member states could become a source of great controversy, hampering the agreements on issues of greater constitutional importance.

As far as the Commission is concerned, I suggest keeping the rule whereby one country has the right to have one commissioner. It is of special importance because of legitimacy concerns in the new member states. Moreover, the effectiveness of the Commission depends more on its structure than on the number of commissioners. We could think of the formula proposed by the Presidium after a transitional period, which would be the first term of the Commission after enlargement.

Finally, I support the role, which is given to the European Parliament in electing the President of the European Commission. As far as the "positive discrimination" clause referred to in article 18 a is concerned, it could in my view become part of the Union informal custom, but should not be inscribed in the Constitutional treaty.

Thank you for your attention.