

Working Group VII

Working document 41

Working group VII – "External Action"

Subject: **The comments by Mr John Cushnahan to the preliminary draft final report of Working Group VII on External Action (WD 021 - WG VII)**

Members of Working Group VII will find hereafter comments by Mr John Cushnahan, member of the European Parliament, alternate member of the Convention.

Improving the effectiveness of EU Foreign Policy

Observations from John Cushnahan MEP, Alternate Member

1. A Single Voice

Whilst great effort is devoted to ensuring that there is no inconsistency between the positions adopted by the High Representative and the External Relations Commissioner, there is a worry that at best this institutional structure will be prone to duplication and lead to a slower response and at worst it could result in disagreement.

In order to ensure coherence between foreign policy decisions and the deployment of instruments in the field of external relations, the function of the High Representative and the Commissioner for External Relations should be merged.

- a. The new office must be underpinned by an appropriate legal basis and should be named the European Union Foreign Secretary.
- b. He/she should be selected from the Commission by the Heads of State in consultation with the President of the Commission and subject to the approval of the Parliament. This would provide the necessary legitimacy and democratic authority to act on behalf of the European Union and its citizens. A single representative for EU foreign policy would enhance its credibility, coherence and visibility.
- c. The EU Foreign Secretary should have the right of initiative.
- d. The EU Foreign Secretary should be given the leading role in terms of crisis management. At times of emergency the ability to produce a rapid response will be critical. Structures facilitating this and based on the need for consultation and accountability should provide the same freedom to act as afforded to the UN Secretary General in similar circumstances.
- e. The EU Foreign Secretary must be provided with sufficient budgetary and personnel resources to discharge his/her role.

2. Streamlining Decision Making

The EU has the potential to have a strong, coherent foreign policy and exert real influence on the world stage. For example, compared to the United State, we have more than double the number of diplomats in five times as many embassies. We provide over one half of all development assistance throughout the world. Additionally, we have concluded many political and trade agreements with countries and regions around the world. Yet, despite the tremendous opportunity for influence offered by all of these, our decision making process undermines our global potential. It is too slow; agreement by unanimity results in a weak and hesitant policy and even then member states often express divergent opinions.

The present ineffectual decision making procedures will become even more cumbersome in an enlarged Europe. It is imperative that Foreign Policy be decided by qualified majority voting. However, member states that either 'opt out' or adopt a policy of 'constructive abstention', will not be allowed to oppose the agreed EU policy. To further strengthen an EU foreign Policy, a system of sanctions against any member state who takes unilateral action in defiance of agreed EU foreign policy, should be introduced.

3. Better Co-ordination

Additionally, we should use our instruments in the policy areas of trade, development and justice and home affairs to support clear political objectives at the heart of our foreign policy. We should use trade and aid agreements to promote EU policy in the fields of good governance, human rights, non-proliferation etc.

Countries that work with us in the promotion of these values should be rewarded, those that don't should be penalised.

Furthermore, this policy approach should also apply to member state governments and not simply the EU institutions.