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SUMMARY

from	Secretariat
to	Working Group VII (External Action) and Working Group VIII (Defence)
Subject :	Summary of the Joint meeting held on 14 November 2002

Outcome of Proceedings

1. Exchange of views on the civil and military aspects of crisis management

- The Chairman opened the discussion by welcoming the opportunity for both Working Groups to meet together to discuss how to pursue a coherent approach to crisis management. He recalled that the 'Defence' Working Group had already looked specifically at the defence aspects of this issue at an earlier meeting. He suggested that the discussion be based on the questions set out in the introductory document which had been circulated to members of both Working Groups (Working Document 16).
- A number of speakers underlined that the value of EU action lay in its ability to draw on a wide range of instruments. In order to ensure effective deployment of these instruments, a coherent approach to crisis management was essential. Some considered that such an approach would depend on the establishment of a single institutional structure. Others preferred to work to improve existing cooperation. Several took the view that the Council should assume the main role of providing overall political control in crisis management, although it was also noted that the Council should not be allowed to impinge on existing Commission prerogatives. One speaker considered that the effectiveness of crisis management would be enhanced by a reform of the Council Presidency system.
- Several speakers called for organisational improvements at the centre to be matched by improved coherence on the ground. The value of Special Representatives was noted in particular.

- Many of those who spoke considered that the PSC should be the focal point for crisis management. It should act as a consultative body and a relay point for information to the Council. Several speakers highlighted the advantages of the PSC being chaired by the High Representative in the event of a crisis.
- More generally, there was considerable support for strengthening the role of the High Representative in crisis management, although it was noted that this issue needed to take into account the outcome of the wider discussions on the future role and responsibilities of the HR. Some called for the HR to chair the Foreign Affairs part of the General Affairs and External Relations Council as well as the PSC. It was also suggested that the HR should be allowed to present options for action by the EU in crisis management situations.
- On financing, several speakers underlined the need for both flexibility and speed in the financing of crisis management operations. Some underlined that crisis management operations should as far as possible be funded from the Community budget, albeit with improved procedures (such as recourse to a reserve fund) to allow for rapid disbursement. Some supported the proposal to establish a start-up fund to finance the preliminary stages of an operation. Several cautioned against any such fund on the grounds that it could fall outside the normal budgetary control procedures.
- Several additional points were addressed. It was suggested that crisis management operations would require a UN Security Council Resolution; a number of others considered that in many cases this would not be needed. One speaker called for measures, including sanctions, to ensure respect by Member States for agreed EU positions. There was also a call for adequate parliamentary control of crisis management operations, including a role for both National parliaments and the EP.

2. Hearing of Commissioner Patten.

[Commissioner Patten's intervention has been circulated to members of Working Groups VII and VIII as Working Document 29]

- Commissioner Patten responded briefly to several points which were made during the course of the general discussion by speakers who intervened after him. He agreed in particular on the need for the provision of adequate and timely resources for financing crisis management operations and suggested that this could be done in the framework of the Community budget. He also agreed on the need for appropriate accountability, and suggested building on the existing informal meetings of representatives of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the national parliaments and European Parliament. He supported a strong role for the PSC, although regretted that this had not originally been constituted at the level of political directors. He said that he would support a separate chapter on defence in the Treaty if there was enough substance to go in it. He considered that the unanimity requirement in CFSP could not continue in an enlarged Union, and that consideration therefore needed to be given to ways of promoting a greater use of QMV.

- The Chairman concluded that both groups supported the aim of ensuring coherence in crisis management, with a full role for civilian instruments. There was also a large consensus on the need to strengthen the role of the future HR, as well as the PSC, although without prejudice to the other institutions. There was support for better coordination on the ground, possibly through greater recourse to Special Representatives. There clearly needed to be adequate financing available for crisis management operations, with coherent budget management procedures, and consideration should be given to the appropriate methods for financing the preparatory stages. The two chairmen would coordinate on how to ensure that all these elements were reflected in the two group reports.
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