

CONV 522/03

CONTRIB 218

COVER NOTE

from	Secretariat
to	The Convention
Subject :	Contribution by Mr Péter Balázs, member of the Convention - “Proposal on a “Four wheel drive” rotating Presidency of the Council”

The Secretary-General of the Convention has received the contribution in annex from Mr Péter Balázs, member of the Convention.

Contribution presented by Mr Péter Balázs, member of the Convention**Proposal on a “Four wheel drive” rotating Presidency of the Council**

Any reform of the Council Presidency has to respect three basic principles:

- the equality of Member States
- improved efficiency and consistency
- the stability of the Council by providing strengthened continuity

In the current system the last two elements are not properly ensured, therefore a change is necessary, but with a firm guarantee to protect the first (equality) principle.

A team presidency composed of four countries (“four wheels”) for a longer period of time than the current six months could provide both of the lacking elements.

- The maintenance of the rotation system ensures appropriately the equality of member states.
- Stability and continuity would be achieved by the extension of the presidency’s duration.
- Consistency and efficiency would be guaranteed by the “rolling system”, i.e. by two member states leaving and two other joining to the team at regular intervals.

The allocation of responsibilities (Council configurations) should be agreed within the team, based on the experiences and capacities of the members (country-profiled division of labour). The chairmanship of intermediary bodies (Coreper, etc.) and working groups should follow the nationality of the President of the relevant Council.

Members of the team Presidency at ministerial and Coreper level would have a coordinating committee meeting at regular intervals to organise proceedings and to monitor implementation.

The duration of the Presidency would be one year. By applying the “rolling, four wheel drive system” at the end of each six month period two members (“the two front wheels”) would leave when two new countries join. Thereby each member state would have its turn of Presidency every six years. The one year length can also harmonise with the Commission’s annual working programme. This frequency is more favourable than the current model (7.5 years), notwithstanding the 12.5 years

resulting from the automatic extension of this model to 25 members.

The extended duration will increase the visibility of the Council externally as well as for the home audience, while a careful division of labour of the “four wheel drive presidency” will increase its efficiency by alleviating the heavy burdens of a full scale presidency.

Key benefits of the proposed model above are:

- respect of all basic principles (equality, efficiency, stability)
- providing a healthy equilibrium of member states
- preserving the current institutional balance

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