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BEGELEIDENDE NOTA

van: het secretariaat

aan: de Conventie

Betreft: Bijdrage van de heer Lamberto Dini, lid
- "A European Foreign Minister"

De secretaris-generaal van de Conventie heeft van de heer Lamberto Dini, lid van de Conventie, de bijdrage ontvangen die in bijlage dezes staat.

A European Foreign Minister

To increase the authority and effectiveness of the Union's foreign and security policy

In a contribution submitted to the Convention in July (CONV. 180/02), I examined the historical and political reasons that make it necessary to equip the European Union with the instruments needed to conduct a credible foreign, security and defence policy. To date, in fact, the common foreign policy has had to be satisfied with infrequent and always fragile successes.

European citizens, public opinion in our countries, want the Convention to give Europe the means with which to pursue a clear foreign policy. They want a Europe able to play an international role commensurate with the strength of its economy and traditions. It is the world, beset by crises extending beyond traditional geographical confines, that is calling upon today's united Europe, which has succeeded in driving out the demons of nationalism and war, to diminish the risks entailed by unilateralism in international relations. The United States has warned us that in this age of globalization and shared responsibilities a Europe unable to equip itself with the instruments needed to pursue a common foreign, security and defence policy will be pushed to the sidelines of history.

In redesigning the institutions of Europe for the twenty-first century, the Convention must not disappoint these expectations.

A foreign policy having the necessary clarity and authority can be achieved only by reducing the number of voices with which the Union speaks. Personal relationships built up over time, ties of affinity and trust, are an important component of foreign policy.

At present the spokesmen for Europe on the international stage include the President of the Council of the day, the President of the Commission, the High Representative and the Commissioner for External Relations. Foreign chancelleries, which already find it hard to credit the representatives of the Union with a role, accustomed as they are to dealing with the often long-standing and distinguished diplomatic corps of the member states, are bewildered by the kaleidoscope of European faces with which they come into contact.

This situation must be corrected, albeit with the necessary pragmatic and prudent gradualism.

The proposal I put forward in my earlier contribution, and renew here, is to bring together in a single person the functions of the High Representative and the Commissioner for External Relations. It would not be a question of communitizing foreign policy but of giving the same person two different mandates: one from the Commission, the other from

the Council for the matters for which it is competent.

A broad consensus appears to be emerging within the Working Group on External Action with regard to the idea of having just one authoritative voice for the Union's foreign policy. In his remarks at the Italian Senate on 30 October, the President of the Convention himself proposed the creation of "a proper European Ministry for Foreign Affairs by enhancing the role of the High Representative for the common foreign and security policy".

Bringing together the two roles also appears consistent with the decision of the Convention to unify the three pillars.

Their unification could be cemented by providing for the Foreign Minister to be the Vice-President of the Commission, on the one hand, and Chairman of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the EU countries, on the other.

It is therefore a question of entrusting the High Representative with a more clearly political function, endowed with the power of initiative and relieved of the bureaucratic duties of Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, while anchoring the position firmly to the centre of the Commission's institutional structure.

The dual nature of his role would allow the Foreign Minister to arrive at an effective synthesis of the performance, in the past sometimes marked by contradictions, of the two functions, without one prevailing over the other. It would satisfy both those who wish to see the extension of the Community method to foreign policy and those who wish this to remain in the sphere of intergovernmental cooperation.

Bringing the two functions together in one person would strengthen the policy of the Foreign Ministry by deploying the resources the Commission commands; conversely, it would ensure that the political authority of the Commission's economic diplomacy matched the quantity of financial resources already allocated to this activity.

The Foreign Minister would thus not be an antagonist of the Commission, in which he would participate fully as a member. He would not be bound by it, however, as regards the more strictly political aspects of foreign and security policy, where his task would be to implement the guidelines and strategies formulated by the Council.

The introduction of such a post would also make it necessary to rethink the internal organization of the Commission. At present the division of powers between the Commissioner for External Relations and the Commissioner for Development leaves a large grey area in which competences tend to overlap or at least not to be arranged in a coherent manner. For instance, the Commissioner for External Relations tends to have almost exclusive competence for relations with some geographical areas, going from the Mediterranean to the Balkans, and consequently engages in the direct management of interventions that can easily be defined as development cooperation (consider the MEDA programme). On the other hand, the Commissioner for Development does not only manage development policies, together with humanitarian aid, but also has power to negotiate in relations with the ACP countries and with the so-called overseas territories; he also represented the European Union in world development conferences, from Monterrey to Johannesburg.

Such overlappings and switchings of competences currently prevent the Union from benefiting fully from its role as the largest international provider of aid; to translate this important activity into political and diplomatic strength. It would therefore be useful for the Foreign Minister / Commission Vice-President to have all the powers of negotiation, while the Commissioner for Development should be entirely responsible for the planning and implementation of programmes and individual interventions, and possibly also for their coordination with national and other Community policies in this field.

Considering the importance of the functions we propose to assign to the Foreign Minister, a procedure would be needed for his appointment — with a sufficiently long mandate — similar to that for the election of the President of the Commission. Only a high degree of legitimation will give the Minister the authority to make full and effective use of the structures of both the Commission and the Council.

This choice would give a face to European foreign policy and enable it to develop according to the impulse given by the Foreign Minister, who, endowed with the power of initiative, would be able stimulate and lead the Council of Foreign Ministers to define clear and consistent policies.

Lastly, I am convinced that in order to achieve these objectives it is necessary to introduce qualified majority voting in the Council, except for questions bearing on defence or of a purely military nature. As Jacques Delors has recently noted, the latter will require the introduction of flexible or variable mechanisms (such as closer cooperation) that will allow a vanguard of countries to move further ahead if they wish.

In my experience as Foreign Minister, all too often I saw basically marginal decisions drag on from one Council meeting to the next for lack of agreement. The Community experience has shown, however, that the threat of a vote tends to make it easier to reach unanimity rather than isolate the more reluctant countries.