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**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT, MR JOSEP BORRELL FONTELLES
PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS**



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*Directorate-General for the
Presidency*

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Speech by President Josep Borrell
European Council
Brussels, 17 December 2004

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should first like to thank the Dutch Presidency for the openness it has shown towards Parliament. I should also like to salute the good judgment it has shown in placing the emphasis on the issue of 'Communicating Europe' at a time when public information is taking on the utmost importance.

A month ago, I gave you the undertaking that Parliament would do everything necessary in order to ensure that a strong Commission that had broad support in Parliament could get down to work. We have honoured that undertaking.

But to work on what precisely?

On 26 January 2005, President Barroso will present his work programme for 2005 and the multiannual programme for the next five years. For the first time, anticipating the entry into force of the Constitution, he will put forward an Interinstitutional Agreement on the adoption of that five-year programme.

We in Parliament are willing to negotiate this agreement, which will supply us with all a framework for our next five years' work.

In the meantime, our political priorities will focus on a number of issues. I shall start with that of the financial perspective.

Parliament takes its central role in the financial perspective process extremely seriously, and without Parliament there can be no financial perspective.

Together, we need to come to an agreement on the period 2007-2013. With a view to this, Parliament has set up a temporary committee, which I have the honour to chair, with a view to adopting a considered and cogent opinion. We shall base our deliberations on the Commission's proposals.

We want agreement and we want to reach it on schedule. But we do not want just any agreement.

What is more, the Member States will first need to come to an agreement among themselves.

In this connection, six Member States have formally stated their position on the proposals that were submitted by the Prodi Commission and officially taken over by the Barroso Commission. A comparison between the figures is revealing.

The first thing to do is to compare like with like. It is absurd to compare a Commission proposal for payment commitments with a proposal from six Member States for commitment appropriations.

What we need to compare is:

- a Commission proposal for € 1 025 billion for the period 2007-2013, or 1.26% of GDP in commitment appropriations, and
- a proposal from six Member States for € 815 billion for the same period, or 1% of GDP in commitment appropriations.

The proposal from the six Member States means a reduction of € 210 billion compared with the figure put forward by the Commission.

Will this figure of 1% mean that we will be obliged to scale down our political objectives and unravel the undertakings entered into?

I should like to remind you that any failure to reach an agreement between Parliament and the Council on the new multiannual financial framework would mean:

- renegotiating each EU policy on an annual basis; and
- a return to the annual budgetary procedure provided for in the Treaties, involving an agreement between the two arms of the budgetary authority. I feel certain that neither the Council nor Parliament have any wish to return to the battles of the past, in which each side sought to impose its viewpoint.

I cannot see how the Council can reduce the financial allocation and at the same time face up to the new challenges and priorities awaiting the Union, given that you have already set the figures for agricultural expenditure up until 2013.

When I speak about challenges and priorities, I am referring in particular to:

- completion of the current enlargement and the next enlargement;
- safeguarding cohesion policy, a true instrument of Community solidarity;
- the Union's growing role in the world and new policies, with particular reference to research and education.

Allow me to say that it is strange to see that the Member States that are in favour of further enlargement (and here I am thinking in particular of Turkey) are also those that are the least in favour of adequate funding.

I have the feeling that, more and more, what the Council wants is 'more Europeans but less Europe'.

Europe cannot be had on the cheap. Mr Barroso said as much the other day in Parliament.

There is no need to worry, however. Contrary to all the rumours, Parliament is not a careless budgetary authority, and this is borne out by the figures.

- during the period 1988-2003, of the two budgetary authorities, it was the Council which most increased the expenditure coming under its responsibility, namely compulsory expenditure; furthermore, while the national budgets of the 15 Member States increased on average by 22.9% between 1996 and 2002, the Union's budget grew by only 8.2%.

The message that I would like to put across is that the negotiations must not be confined to a 'battle' over figures and percentages but must also focus on a European project, the funding for which must be commensurate with the Union's ambitions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before moving on to the central issue facing this European Council gathering, namely Turkey, allow me to touch upon other issues also on the agenda.

The controversy surrounding the decision on Turkey prevented the importance of your decisions on Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia from being properly appreciated. We support the efforts made in connection with Bulgaria, because they enabled that country to make a start on the road towards accession on schedule.

As regards Romania, we continue to believe that further efforts are required in order to make the judicial system more independent and to ensure that less use is made of emergency decrees and that more is done to eradicate corruption at all levels. In Parliament's view, Romania must quite clearly be subject to the same conditions as Bulgaria. I can, however, tell you that, despite the technical difficulties, Parliament will do all in its power to hold the assent vote on the conclusion of the negotiations on 13 April.

EU Human Rights Representative

Your decision to appoint an EU Human Rights Representative is being viewed with some concern in Parliament. As you know, our institution has played a pioneering role in this policy and was the instigator of the human rights clauses that are now included in our international agreements.

On the one hand, human rights have always been a central pillar of our approach to the Union's external policy, and such an appointment could enhance the importance of human rights in this work.

On the other hand, there is concern about Parliament's ability to scrutinise the Union's work in this field. Parliament has worked well with the Commission in this area and we are keen to ensure that this work continues.

How would such a representative report to Parliament on his or her work? I would ask you to consider such questions before signing up to an idea which could cause difficulties or is at risk of becoming purely symbolic.

Middle-East peace process

Last month, King Abdullah of Jordan told Parliament that a window of opportunity had opened for the peace process, but that it would be open for two years only. The presidential elections to be held on 9 January in Palestine are an important stage in keeping this process open, which is why Parliament will be sending 30 MEPs, the largest electoral observation delegation ever sent by our institution.

Ukraine

For once, the European Union has demonstrated that it is capable of showing leadership on the world stage. I think that we can congratulate the High Representative for Foreign Policy, Mr Solana. I intend to visit Ukraine after the elections and the inauguration of the new parliament in Kiev, as a symbol of Parliament's support for the democratic process.

Turkey

Parliament, in its vote two days ago, called on you to open negotiations with Turkey 'without undue delay'. Last night Mr Balkenende announced that the negotiations with Turkey will be opened on 3 October.

The date chosen is in line with Parliament's position.

I hope that Turkey will, this very day, be able to accept the conditions which you decided on yesterday.

The outcome of the vote was clear: 407 votes in favour and 262 against. However, what Parliament voted in favour of and what it rejected are equally important. Parliament roundly rejected any Plan B, any 'privileged partnership' and any other alternative to full membership. Our position is clear and final. Of course, the fact that negotiations are opened does not mean they will be completed. No one can predict the final outcome of any accession negotiations. But the objective of opening negotiations has to be full membership.

It is clear - and I know that this point has been intensively negotiated with Mr Erdogan - that the opening of negotiations implies the recognition of Cyprus by Turkey. There will be 25 countries at the table, among which will be Cyprus and Turkey.

It is obvious that if you negotiate with someone you are by that token recognising them.

Parliament has debated its position at great length. Over the last few months, the Turkey issue has absorbed almost all of Parliament's energies: we have had lectures, visits including those of Prime Minister Erdogan and Leyla Zana, independent reports, visits of delegations to the region, hearings on women's rights and human rights, and so on.

During my visit to Turkey, I found that everyone, from the authorities to the human rights lawyers, from the Greek Orthodox patriarch to the trade union leaders - everyone, I repeat - was pleading for negotiations to be opened. It was clear that the prospect of membership has been THE driving force for, and is already the guarantor of political, social and economic reform. A NO to full membership would send this process into reverse.

On the other hand, it is equally clear that the task of bringing Turkey into the EU is an enormous one, and I am not convinced that anyone I met in Turkey was fully aware of the scale of that task. Most of Parliament's report concerns what needs to be done after negotiations open. Parliament needs to forge closer relations with civil society in Turkey.

We are also faced with the major task of providing Europe's public with the necessary political explanations. If the Turkish question is perceived as a new Battle of Lepanto or Siege of Vienna, then we will get nowhere.

It is for this reason that Parliament is asking to be consulted on any proposal to suspend negotiations with Turkey. If Parliament holds the key to accession at the end of negotiations, it would be rather strange if it were merely informed of the decision taken, particularly in view of the need to involve Parliament in the task of explaining these negotiations to the general public. How would Parliament go about explaining a decision in which it was not even involved?

Lastly,

Kofi Annan/Iraq

I should like to thank the Presidency for taking the initiative of inviting Kofi Annan to address you. One year ago, Parliament welcomed him to the Sakharov Prize award ceremony, and I believe that he now needs our support. And I would just say this to those who have subjected him to attacks in recent weeks that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones, or, as we say in Spanish 'quien vive en una casa de cristal no debe tirar piedras', or again, as the French say: 'Qu'as tu à regarder la paille qui est dans l'oeil de ton frère? Et la poutre que est dans ton oeil à toi, ne la vois-tu pas?'.

Thank you very much.