# Conference of Presidents

**Minutes**

of the meeting of Thursday 18 May 2000
from 3 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Louise Weiss Building, Room R1,1

**Strasbourg**

**Contents**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Adoption of draft agenda</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Adoption of the preliminary draft agenda for the June part-session (Tuesday 13 - Friday 16 June 2000)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Statements by the President</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Exchange of views on the draft framework agreement and the annexes thereto on relations between Parliament and the Commission – fixing of the procedure for adoption</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> Letter dated 25 February 2000 from Mr DESAMA forwarding the change proposed to Article 9 of the implementing provisions governing the work of interparliamentary delegations</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong> Letter dated 8 May 2000 from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI forwarding the opinion of the Conference of Committee Chairmen on the composition and tasks of the Steering Committee of the Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> Letter dated 13 April 2000 from Mrs SÁ CARVALHO indicating Portugal’s willingness to organise the second meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Forum on a date after October 2000</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. **Activities of the parliamentary committees** .................................................................28

8.1. Letter dated 3 April 2000 from Mr BROK and Mr COX on the procedure for the drawing up of reports on enlargement and the timetable for debates in plenary – opinion of the Conference of Committee Chairmen ..........28

8.2. Letter dated 13 April 2000 from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI concerning a draft decision on the verification of the Copenhagen criteria and, in particular, compliance with the Community patrimony in the applicant countries ......................................................................................................................31

8.3. Letters from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI, Mr NAPOLITANO and Mr WATSON on the dispute as to powers and responsibilities between the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and the Committee on Citizens’ Freedoms and Rights with respect to the Commission proposal concerning public access to documents of the institutions - possible clarifications to be made to Annex VI to the Rules of Procedure .................................................................32

9. **Proposals for decisions without debate** ........................................................................33

9.1. Letter dated 24 March 2000 from Mr BROK seeking authorisation to accept an invitation to send a delegation to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea .................................................................................................................................33

9.2. Letter dated 11 April 2000 from Mrs DAHL inviting Parliament to send a delegation to attend the 9th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, to be held in Malmö on 4-5 September 2000 ..................................................................................33

9.3. Letter dated 21 April 2000 from Mr OBIA forwarding an invitation from the parliamentary and governmental authorities of Congo-Brazzaville for Parliament to send a delegation to that country .................................................33

9.4. Letter dated 26 April 2000 from Mr SCHWIMMER inviting Parliament to attend the European Session of the Conference ‘All different, all equal – from theory to practice’, to be held in Strasbourg from 11 to 13 October 2000 – letter from Mr WATSON concerning the meeting of the working party ..............34

9.5. Note dated 10 May 2000 from the Secretary-General concerning the request from the EDD Group for authorisation for its Bureau to meet in Oporto on 19 and 20 June 2000 (week set aside for committee meetings) .........................35

10. **Urgent matters and other business** ...............................................................................36

10.1. Letter dated 11 May 2000 from Mrs KREHL seeking the sending of an ad hoc delegation to the Northern Caucasus region of the Russian Federation ......36
10.2. Request from the GUE/NGL Group for authorisation for its Bureau to meet in Budapest on the afternoon of 29 June and the morning of 30 June (Friday free of parliamentary business) .......................................................... 37

10.3. Delegation to observe the elections in Zimbabwe ........................................ 38

11. Items for information .............................................................................................................. 39

12. Date and place of next meeting .......................................................................................... 40
CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS
MINUTES
of the meeting of
Thursday 18 May 2000
STRASBOURG

Mrs Nicole FONTAINE, President of the European Parliament, opened the meeting at 3.10 p.m.

Present:

Mrs Nicole FONTAINE, President

Political group chairmen

Mr POETTERING (PPE-DE)
Mr BARÓN CRESPO (PSE)
Mr COX (ELDR)
Mrs HAUTALA /Mr LANNOYE (Verts/ALE)
Mr WURTZ (GUE/NGL)
Mrs MUSCARDINI (acting)/Mr BERLATO (acting) (UEN)
Mr BONDE/Mr BLOKLAND (acting) (EDD)

Non-attached Members (1)

Mrs GARAUD

Also present:

Mr PRIESTLEY, Secretary-General

(1) Present pursuant to Rule 23(2) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament.
Invited:

for Item 2:

Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI, Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairmen

for Item 5:

Mr DESAMA, Chairman of the Conference of Delegation Chairmen

for Item 8.1:

Mr BROK, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy

for Item 2:

the Council represented by Mr WALL

the Commission represented by Mr EECKHOUT
Mr LAU

the Economic and Social Committee represented by Mr DI MURO

* * *

Office of the President

Mr RØMER
Mr RIBERA
Mr HANZ
Mrs DUCLOUX
Mrs ALBANI-LIBERALI

Office of the Secretary-General

Mr AGUIRIANO
Secretariat

DG I  Mr  VANHAEREN/Mrs RINGELSTEIN/Mrs F. RATTI/
     Mr  PORTA
DG II Mr  OLIVARES MARTÍNEZ/Mr PERILLO
DG III Mr  ROLVERING/Mr DUCH-GUILLOT
Legal Service Mr  SCHOO

Political Groups

Mr  WELLE/Mr LICANDRO/Mr PEDERSEN   (PPE-DE)
Mrs  VERGER/Mr LAFOREST/Mrs RYAN      (PSE)
Mr  JENSEN/Mr BEELS                   (ELDR)
Mr  BEHREND/Mrs TSETSI/Mr FERGUSSON   (V/ALE)
Mrs  D’ALIMONTE                       (GUE/NGL)
Mr  BARRETT/Mr PRETE                  (UEN)
Mrs  O. RATTI/Mr DESTOUCHES           (TDI)
Mr  REYNOLDS                          (EDD)

Secretariat of the Non-attached Members

Mr  VECCHIO VERDERAME                 (NI)

Mr KYST, Mr SÁNCHEZ RODRÍGUEZ and Mrs VANDENBOSCH acted as secretary to the meeting.
1. Adoption of draft agenda

The Conference of Presidents

- noted the draft agenda (PE 290.699/BUR.);
- decided

• to take the following item without debate:

  9.4. Letter dated 26 April 2000 from Mr SCHWIMMER inviting Parliament to attend the European Session of the Conference ‘All different, all equal – from theory to practice’, to be held in Strasbourg from 11 to 13 October 2000 – letter from Mr WATSON concerning the meeting of the working party

• to hold over consideration of the following items:

  9.1. Letter dated 24 March 2000 from Mr BROK seeking authorisation to accept an invitation to send a delegation to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
  9.2. Letter dated 11 April 2000 from Mrs DAHL inviting Parliament to send a delegation to attend the 9th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, to be held in Malmö on 4-5 September 2000
  9.3. Letter dated 21 April 2000 from Mr OBIA forwarding an invitation from the parliamentary and governmental authorities of Congo-Brazzaville for Parliament to send a delegation to that country
  9.5. Note dated 10 May 2000 from the Secretary-General concerning the request from the EDD Group for authorisation for its Bureau to meet in Oporto on 19 and 20 June 2000 (week set aside for committee meetings)
• to debate, under Item 5, at Mr WURTZ’ request, the issue of the composition of ad hoc delegations

• to enter, under Item 10: ‘Urgent matters and any other business’, the following items:

10.1. Letter dated 11 May 2000 from Mrs KREHL seeking the sending of an ad hoc delegation to the Northern Caucasus region of the Russian Federation

10.2. Request from the GUE/NGL Group for authorisation for its Bureau to meet in Budapest on the afternoon of 29 June and the morning of 30 June (Friday free of parliamentary business)

10.3. Delegation to observe the elections in Zimbabwe (at the request of Mr BARÓN CRESPO)

- adopted the draft agenda, with these changes.
2. **Adoption of the preliminary draft agenda for the June part-session (Tuesday 13 – Friday 16 June 2000)**

The Conference of Presidents

- heard a statement by the President that Mr STAES, who had felt unwell during the morning sitting, had now recovered;

- noted a letter dated 17 May 2000 from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI concerning the recommendations of the committee chairmen with regard to the fixing of the agenda (PE 290.718/BUR.) and a note dated 18 May 2000 from Mr VANHAEREN on the planning of the European Parliament’s legislative work (PE 290.720/BUR.);

- considered, on an item-by-item basis, the preliminary draft agenda for the June part-session (13-16 June 2000) on the basis of a table drawn up by the Directorate-General for the Presidency following a meeting held on 18 May 2000 with the secretaries-general of the political groups, bearing in mind the planning of parliamentary business for the plenary sittings, and adopted it with the following changes:

**JUNE**

**Tuesday**

- decided to enter voting time at 5.30 p.m.

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- scheduled a debate, at either the July or September 2000 part-session, in the presence of the European Commission on mergers in the telecommunications sector.
3. **Statements by the President**

3.1. **Dispute as to powers and responsibilities between the Committee on the Environment and the Committee on Agriculture**

The Conference of Presidents

- noted a statement by the President concerning the outcome of the meeting held on 16 May 2000 between the Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairmen and the Chairmen of the Committee on the Environment and of the Committee on Agriculture relating to the dispute as to powers and responsibilities on the Commission proposal on undesirable substances in animal nutrition, following the Conference of Presidents’ invitation of 11 May 2000, whereby:

  . the legislative proposal on undesirable substances and products in animal nutrition would be referred to the Committee on the Environment as the committee responsible, because the draft legislation in question gave priority to the attainment of public health objectives,

  . the Commission proposal on compound animal feedingstuffs would now be referred to the Committee on the Agriculture as the committee responsible, the two referrals now being subject to an enhanced Hughes Procedure,

which had been proposed by the Conference of Committee Chairmen as an interim solution. Subsequently, a permanent arrangement for the allocation of powers and responsibilities would have to be found, with the agreement of the committees concerned.

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3.2. Reply to the observations set out in the preliminary report of the Court of Auditors concerning expenditure by the political groups

The Conference of Presidents

- noted a statement by the President who said that, at its meeting of 16 May 2000 in Strasbourg, the Bureau had adopted, by a large majority and with a few changes, the draft joint reply to the observations set out in the preliminary report of the Court of Auditors concerning the utilisation by the political groups of appropriations entered against Items 3707 and 3708, so that the current procedure might move forward.

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3.3. Statute for Members

The Conference of Presidents

- noted a statement by the President who said that the Group of Eminent Persons had met on 16 and 17 May 2000 in Strasbourg. On 16 May 2000, the Group had met the Committee on Legal Affairs; on 17 May 2000, it had met the President, and she had been assured that everything would be done to ensure that its recommendations were submitted within the deadlines laid down;

- noted a statement by the President who said that the Statute for Members Contact Group had met on 17 May 2000 in order to finalise a draft reply to the issues relating to wording and legal drafting. That reply would shortly be submitted to the Council, as announced at the subsequent meeting with Mr SEIXAS DA COSTA.

*   *
*   *
3.4. **Organisation of Friday sittings in Strasbourg – flights to and from Strasbourg**

**The Conference of Presidents**

- **noted** a statement by the President concerning the consideration, scheduled for the next meeting of the Conference of Presidents on the basis of a report drawn up by Mr PROVAN, Vice-President, of the internal reforms to be made to the way in which Parliament works, including organisation of the Friday sittings in Strasbourg;

- **heard** a statement by Mrs GARAUD, Non-attached Member, who took the view that the routine repetition of requests for verification that a quorum was present must be avoided;

- **heard** a statement by Mrs MUSCARDINI, acting Chairman of the UEN Group, who felt that requests for verification that a quorum was present were designed to impede parliamentary business at the Friday sittings in Strasbourg. She hoped that consideration of this issue would also include flight schedules to and from Strasbourg;

- **noted** a statement by the President who said that, with regard to flight schedules to and from Strasbourg, a questionnaire was currently being drawn up and would shortly be forwarded by the French authorities in order to establish the needs of Members who used Strasbourg Airport on Fridays.

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3.5. Technical checks on air quality in the premises of the European Parliament

The Conference of Presidents

- noted a statement by the President and information from the Secretary-General that Members and staff had received a notice from the Quaestors concerning technical checks on air quality in the Louise Weiss Building in Strasbourg and on the measures taken to guarantee air quality inside the building;

- heard a statement by Mr BARÓN CRESPO, Chairman of the PSE Group, who called for checks to be carried out regularly and for Members and all staff to be informed thereof;

- heard a statement by the Secretary-General who said that
  
  - with the agreement of the President, the Quaestors had distributed a notice to all Members and staff to inform them of the presence of legionella in three humidifiers (switched off and located in machine rooms) and of asbestos fibres in Room S 3.4. in the Louise Weiss Building in Strasbourg,
  
  - a second check in Room S 3.4. had revealed no traces of asbestos fibres, a finding which was in line with the certificate issued by SERS that none of the undertakings employed on the construction of the building had used asbestos,
  
  - the Administration had taken the measures required to destroy the legionella culture, to replace the humidifiers affected and to sterilise the circuits.

He proposed informing Members and staff of the results of follow-up checks carried out. Full documentation was available for inspection in the offices of the DG VI services concerned;

- heard a statement by Mr COX, Chairman of the ELDR Group, who welcomed the manner in which the issue had been addressed and asked if similar checks had been carried out in Brussels;
- heard a statement by Mrs MUSCARDINI, acting Chairman of the UEN Group, who thought it essential for regular checks to be carried out and for the air-conditioning system to be better regulated;

- heard a statement by the Secretary-General who said that the Quaestors had agreed that stringent and regular checks on air quality should be carried out on Parliament’s premises in the three normal places of work. He proposed that the remarks made by the Conference of Presidents be forwarded to the College of Quaestors;

- noted the President’s initiative to ask the French Public Health and Hygiene authorities to check the conformity of the measures taken with current legislation and to ask the Quaestors to give instructions for regular checks to be carried out on the functioning and quality of the air-conditioning systems on Parliament’s premises in the three normal places of work.
4. **Exchange of views on the draft framework agreement and the annexes thereto on relations between Parliament and the Commission – fixing of the procedure for adoption**

The Conference of Presidents

- noted the following documents:

  - a proposal dated 15 May 2000 from the President concerning the draft framework agreement between the European Parliament and the European Commission (PE 290.713/BUR.),
  - several proposals on this subject from the following political groups:
    - PPE-DE (PE 290.723/BUR.)
    - ELDR (PE 290.725/BUR.)
    - Greens/EFA, in the form of remarks (PE 290.722/BUR.)
    - EDD (PE 290.724/BUR.),
  - a letter dated 3 March 2000 from Mr PRODI, President of the Commission, concerning the Commission’s observations on the conduct of the discharge procedure in respect of the financial year 1998 (PE 288.812/BUR.);

- heard a statement by the President who said that the text of the draft framework agreement, submitted for consideration in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Conference of Presidents on 11 May 2000, constituted an attempt at reaching a compromise with a view to the meeting with Mr PRODI and Mrs Loyola DE PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI scheduled for 8 June 2000. Some aspects still remained to be clarified, with particular regard to paragraphs 12 and 19 (principle of the annuality of the discharge) and to Annex III;

- heard a statement by Mrs HAUTALA, Chairman of the Greens/EFA Group, who took the view that Parliament should harden its stance on the issue of the conditions of access to confidential documents referred to in paragraph 19 so that they also covered information required under the codecision procedure and information concerning every financial year and not simply the year to which the
discharge procedure related, as well as rapporteurs for committees and, as regards competition, the chairman of the committee concerned;

- heard a statement by Mr COX, Chairman of the ELDR Group, who wondered what the procedure would be for the consultation of the available documents as well as the status of the various contributions by the political groups. He proposed that the key aspects of the discussion be identified and that the President be mandated to submit a final recommendation to the Conference of Presidents;

- heard a statement by the President who proposed that an exploratory debate be held on the basis of the views of the political groups which would be incorporated into a document to serve as a basis for a discussion in the political groups before the meeting scheduled for 8 June 2000 with Mr PRODI and Mrs L. DE PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI;

- heard a statement by Mr WURTZ, Chairman of the GUE/NGL Group, who took the view that the text submitted constituted a preliminary draft framework agreement which could be amended in the light of the conclusions of the debate;

- heard a statement by Mr BARÓN CRESCO, Chairman of the PSE Group, who recalled that the President retained her negotiating mandate, which had not been used in a manner commensurate with the desired level of representation because of the institutional scope of the framework agreement. He referred to the problems caused by the conferring on a committee of the role of negotiator which belonged to Parliament and by the concept of the discharge procedure, which was quite current in the budgetary framework, as a search for instances of fraud, although there was nothing in current Community law to underpin that view;

- heard a statement by Mrs GARAUD, Non-attached Member, who noted critically that the problems which had arisen during the negotiations were caused by the lack of a suitably acknowledged basic document, one which, moreover, should be submitted to the House and without delay;
- heard a statement by Mr BONDE, Chairman of the EDD Group, who agreed to the groups’ contributions. He referred to his Group’s amendments to paragraph 20 (version (c)) which sought to ensure that Parliament might also receive documents ‘released’ to the press, in accordance with the commitment given by Mr PRODI to the House;

- heard a statement by Mr POETTERING, Chairman of the PPE-DE Group, who urged that all undefined notions should be deleted, that the ELDR Group’s position on the discharge be incorporated and that rapporteurs be empowered to establish direct contact with the Commission in the case of the information referred to in Annex III;

- heard a statement by Mr WURTZ, Chairman of the GUE/NGL Group, who was in favour of very sensitive or confidential documents being forwarded to the President for a decision on the action to be taken thereon (hence amending the second subparagraph of paragraph 19 and points 1.4. and 3.2. of Annex III);

- heard a statement by Mr BARÓN CRESPO, Chairman of the PSE Group, who took the view that the ELDR Group’s amendment to paragraph 19 raised the problem of the possible discovery of indications of fraud or criminal activity where the Commission’s Administration would have to contact the judicial authorities, and that would be incompatible with the search for ‘a mutually acceptable solution’;

- heard a statement by Mrs MUSCARDINI, acting Chairman of the UEN Group, who noted that the aim was to develop an instrument which would make relations between the two institutions transparent and enable Parliament to exercise its powers, as Mr PRODI had announced when he was elected;

- heard a statement by Mr COX, Chairman of the ELDR Group, who supported Mr POETTERING’s view and said that:
the ELDR Group’s amendment did not prejudice other discharge procedures different from the current one, but it did require a method of gaining access to the documents relating thereto which were not sub judice,

the Commission could accept the text of the draft Annex III which had emerged from the negotiations, although the possibility should not be excluded of committee chairmen informing rapporteurs of the substance of confidential information,

use of that right of access to information must be treated as a privilege, with the Commission thus being able to justify its demand for discretion,

the President must take responsibility for bringing the negotiations with the Commission to a successful conclusion;

- heard a statement by Mr LANNOYE, Chairman of the Greens/EFA Group, who recalled that, since Article 276 of the EC Treaty referred to ‘necessary information’, those words should be incorporated into paragraph 19 in order to avoid any dispute as to what was ‘relevant’. Rapporteurs should also be entitled to receive confidential documents, and, wherever the problem of the Commission’s neutrality arose, that entitlement should be extended to cover cases that had been closed;

- heard a statement by Mrs GARAUD, Non-attached Member, who took the view that the confusion arose from the fact that Annex III referred to the discharge procedure, a matter governed by the Treaty and by the Rules of Procedure and the accounting nature of which precluded the processing of specific confidential information. In cases other than those relating to the discharge, it should suffice for the President to ask the Commission for additional explanations on the basis of a request from the body responsible, with confidentiality being respected. In cases where there was a suspicion of fraud, criminal and OLAF procedures would apply;
heard a statement by Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI, Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairmen, who took the view that a document would remain confidential if there were sufficient guarantees – which she felt must be explicit – that its confidential nature would be maintained. One of the remarks made by the Greens/EFA Group, calling for access to disciplinary and judicial documents, would be inadmissible;

noted, following a concluding statement by the President, the observations and guidelines of the political groups, with particular regard to paragraph 19 of the draft framework agreement and to Annex III thereto, with a view to the final negotiations to be conducted by the President with the Commission which should precede the next ordinary meeting of the Conference of Presidents on 8 June 2000 in the presence of Mr PRODI and Mrs Loyola DE PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI, so that the draft framework agreement and the annexes thereto might be submitted to the House for approval at the June part-session, provided that the Commission had, by then, approved the same texts. The framework agreement might be signed jointly by the Presidents of the two institutions during that same part-session in Strasbourg in order to commemorate this event;

noted a statement by the President who referred, following the unanimous invitation from Parliament’s Bureau and the indications of the Conference of Presidents, to her meeting with Mrs STAUNER, in the presence of the Chairman of the Committee on Budgetary Control and of the Secretary-General, during which Mrs STAUNER had confirmed that nothing she had written in her letter to Ms SCHREYER, Member of the Commission, could have been used as grounds for the presumptions made. Measures would be taken to ensure that similar problems did not recur;
heard a statement by Mr BARÓN CRESPO, Chairman of the PSE Group, who wondered about the validity of the apologies offered privately by Mrs STAUNER during this disagreeable incident - and apparently contradicted by her written reply to the President – and of her assurances that she would not, in future, encroach on the preserves of the rapporteur for the discharge (Mr KUHNE), of Parliament, of the Bureau and of the President;

heard a statement by the President who said that the written reply predated her meeting with Mrs STAUNER during which it had been indicated that the powers of each rapporteur for the discharge, one in respect of Parliament’s budget and the other of the Commission’s budget, would henceforth be respected;

heard a statement by Mr POETTERING, Chairman of the PPE-DE Group, who noted that it was for the Conference of Presidents to draw conclusions from a statement by the President.
5. Letter dated 25 February 2000 from Mr DESAMA forwarding the change proposed to Article 9 of the implementing provisions governing the work of interparliamentary delegations

The Conference of Presidents

- noted the following documents:

  • a letter dated 25 February 2000 to the President from Mr DESAMA, Chairman of the Conference of Delegation Chairmen, forwarding amended draft implementing provisions governing the work of interparliamentary delegations (PE 288.798/BUR. + annexes),

  • the Decision of the European Parliament of 21 July 1999 on the number and composition of the interparliamentary delegations and delegations to joint parliamentary committees;

- heard a statement by Mr DESAMA, Chairman of the Conference of Delegation Chairmen, who outlined, further to Parliament’s Decision of 21 July 1999, the proposals submitted by the Conference of Delegation Chairmen, with particular regard to the criteria to be applied for the appointment of Members travelling as members of delegations to joint parliamentary committees: two-thirds of the active members, with the possibility, in exceptional cases, for the President to authorise a higher number, on a proposal from the Conference of Delegation Chairmen. He also drew attention to the fact that the provision of active interpretation in three languages was inadequate when applied to meetings of the joint parliamentary committees;

- heard a statement by Mr POETTERING, Chairman of the PPE-DE Group, who asked for greater flexibility in the wording of Article 8, second paragraph, concerning the European Parliament delegation to the Euro-Mediterranean Forum;
heard a statement by Mr WURTZ, Chairman of the GUE/NGL Group, who took the view that, if the work of the delegations constituted official parliamentary business, it was incomprehensible for restrictions to be imposed which were not required by Parliament’s Decision of 21 July 1999 and that, on the contrary, the view that they constituted some kind of a reward should result in their being abolished;

heard a statement by Mr BARÓN CRESPO, Chairman of the PSE Group, who welcomed the proposals as an attempt to correct a decision which was difficult to implement and which had been taken at the beginning of the parliamentary term on financial grounds;

heard a statement by Mr LANNOYE, Chairman of the Greens/EFA Group, who shared Mr WURTZ’ views in so far as the proposed limits might penalise genuinely active Members or might prove unjustified if they resulted in problems in the recruitment of a sufficient number of participating members;

heard a statement by Mr COX, Chairman of the ELDR Group, who thanked Mr DESAMA for his proposals and suggested that the Conference of Presidents endorse them;

decided, following a concluding statement by the President and after a vote, to approve the draft implementing provisions governing the work of interparliamentary delegations, with the following two reservations:

- the interpretation of Rule 170 of the Rules of Procedure, which would be given after the matter had been referred to the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, and

ANNEX I
6. Letter dated 8 May 2000 from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI forwarding the opinion of the Conference of Committee Chairmen on the composition and tasks of the Steering Committee of the Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue

The Conference of Presidents

- noted the following documents:

  - a letter dated 8 May 2000 from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI forwarding the opinion of the Conference of Committee Chairmen on the composition and tasks of the Steering Committee of the Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue (PE 290.685/BUR.),
  - a letter dated 25 February 2000 from Mr DESAMA concerning the opinion of the Conference of Delegation Chairmen on the Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue (PE 288.793/BUR.),
  - a note dated 15 September 1999 from the Secretary-General concerning the Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue (PE 280.381/BUR.);

- heard a statement by Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI, Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairmen, who took the view, on the basis of the proposals submitted, that the establishment of the Steering Committee would provide an instrument for the attainment of the objectives of the Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue (TLD);

- heard a statement by Mr POETTERING, Chairman of the PPE-DE Group, who thought that the proposals submitted by Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI were acceptable. However, he hoped that the composition of the Steering Committee would be reviewed so that Parliament as a whole was better represented;
heard a statement by Mr WURTZ, Chairman of the GUE/NGL Group, who supported Mr POETTERING because of the many and varied areas where Parliament had powers and responsibilities which were not referred to in the proposal for the composition of the TLD’s Steering Committee;

heard a statement by Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI, Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairmen, who said that the Steering Committee included representatives of the committees concerned horizontally by the TLD. That did not prevent either sectoral committees from participating in the TLD or its having a ‘political’ composition, although its role was simply that of a liaison committee;

heard a statement by Mr LANNOYE, Chairman of the Greens/EFA Group, who said that the Secretary-General’s note threw further light on the matter and that the composition of the Steering Committee, which was not neutral, must reflect the political families in Parliament so that issues such as consumer protection and public health might be treated in a balanced manner;

heard a statement by Mr BARÓN CRESPO, Chairman of the PSE Group, who referred to the proposal from the US Ambassador that contacts be established with the legislative committees. That must not result in a dispute about proportional representation, since technical coordination was the issue involved;

heard a statement by Mr WURTZ, Chairman of the GUE/NGL Group, who asked for the debate to be postponed because of its highly political substance;

heard a statement by Mr DESAMA, Chairman of the Conference of Delegation Chairmen, who recalled the imminence of elections in the USA;

decided, following a concluding statement by the President, to give its agreement of principle to the proposals from the Conference of Committee Chairmen
concerning the tasks of the Steering Committee of the Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue (TLD);

- agreed to hold over to its next meeting its decision on the composition and chairmanship of the Steering Committee of the Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue.
7. Letter dated 13 April 2000 from Mrs SÁ CARVALHO indicating Portugal’s willingness to organise the second meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Forum on a date after October 2000

The Conference of Presidents

- decided to hold over consideration of this item to a forthcoming meeting.
8. **Activities of the parliamentary committees**

8.1. **Letter dated 3 April 2000 from Mr BROK and Mr COX on the procedure for the drawing up of reports on enlargement and the timetable for debates in plenary – opinion of the Conference of Committee Chairmen**

The Conference of Presidents

- noted the following documents:

  - the aforementioned letter from Mr BROK, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy (PE 288.924/BUR.),
  - the aforementioned letter from Mr COX on the exaggerated remarks made in connection with the enlargement procedure (PE 290.635/BUR.),
  - a letter from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI on the timetable for the reports on enlargement (PE 290.666/BUR. + annex);

- heard a statement by Mr BROK, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy, who took the view that Parliament’s working methods needed to be developed so that it could reach a consistent position on enlargement in line with Mr COX’s proposal, supported by the Conference of Committee Chairmen, that an annual debate be held, preferably in early October, which would cover every aspect of the enlargement process. The large number of documents provided for would entail a change in his original proposal, with the October debate being divided into two parts: (a) the horizontal reports of the parliamentary committees, preceded by a concluding resolution drawn up by his committee and (b) the twelve reports relating to the applicant countries. He proposed that the debate on the method to be used in subsequent years be held over because of the growing gulf in negotiations with the various countries;
heard a statement by Mr BARÓN CRESPO, Chairman of the PSE Group, who emphasised the desirability of altering the timetable so that an oral question, drawn up by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, might be tabled to the Commission in October before the tabling of the reports on the applicant countries. He proposed that the debate be held in February 2001, after the Nice European Council, an approach which would be in accordance with the events in that delicate political period. In order to avoid the risk of a large number of haphazard initiatives, he proposed that the Committee on Foreign Affairs’ country-by-country reports be tabled after consideration of the Commission’s progress reports, with a number of horizontal issues being tackled in accordance with an enhanced Hughes Procedure;

heard a statement by Mr COX, Chairman of the ELDR Group, who referred to his proposal that an annual debate on enlargement be held, a debate which would become a central element in which all the representatives of civil society would participate, thereby enabling political account to be taken of the aspirations of ordinary people on this issue and the process to be launched over a longer term;

heard a statement by Mr POETTERING, Chairman of the PPE-DE Group, who supported Mr BROK’s proposals;

heard a statement by Mr WURTZ, Chairman of the GUE/NGL Group, who supported Mr BROK’s efforts to achieve consistency, which were not incompatible with the own-initiative reports of the parliamentary committees, within the time frame suggested by Mr BARÓN CRESPO;

heard a statement by Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI, Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairmen, who recalled that the Conference of Committee Chairmen had reached agreement on Mr BROK’s proposals and said that the ‘own-initiative’ reports, authorisation for which had been requested by several parliamentary committees and in respect of which a derogation had been sought, would automatically become opinions to be incorporated into a global
report. She proposed that better use be made of the Friday morning sittings in Strasbourg by devoting them to the debates referred to by Mr COX;

- heard a statement by Mr BROK, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy, who preferred not to wait until February 2001 for the holding of the debate and to establish Parliament’s position before the European Council meeting in Nice;

- heard a statement by Mr BARÓN CRESPO, Chairman of the PSE Group, who warned against the danger of entering into the detail of the negotiations as early as October, before the Commission had published its report, since that would cause considerable confusion;

- heard a statement by the President who suggested that an agreement of principle be sought on the proposals submitted by Mr BROK and Mr COX, even if it meant subsequently revising the timetable envisaged, and on Mr POETTERING’s proposal that they should be put to the vote;

- decided, following a vote, to approve the proposals submitted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs relating in particular to the holding of a general debate on enlargement, during the first October part-session in Strasbourg, on the basis of

  - the twelve reports to be drawn up by that committee on the Commission’s regular reports in 1999 on the progress made towards accession by the applicant countries (in accordance with the referral announced at the sitting of 21 January 2000),

  - a report by the Committee on Foreign Affairs including a horizontal resolution and incorporating all the own-initiative reports drawn up by the specialist committees (as listed in the annex) and the global opinions drawn up by the committees concerned.

ANNEX II
8.2. Letter dated 13 April 2000 from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI concerning a draft decision on the verification of the Copenhagen criteria and, in particular, compliance with the Community patrimony in the applicant countries

The Conference of Presidents

- decided to hold over consideration of this item to a forthcoming meeting.
8.3. **Letters from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI, Mr NAPOLITANO and Mr WATSON on the dispute as to powers and responsibilities between the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and the Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights with respect to the Commission proposal concerning public access to documents of the institutions - possible clarifications to be made to Annex VI to the Rules of Procedure**

The Conference of Presidents

- noted the following documents:

  * the letter referred to above from Mr NAPOLITANO, Chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (PE 290.660/BUR.),
  * a letter from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI, Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairmen (PE 288.853/BUR. + annexes) and, annexed thereto, two letters from Mr NAPOLITANO and Mr WATSON,
  * a letter dated 16 May 2000 from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI on the allocation of powers and responsibilities among the committees (PE 290.714/BUR.);

- called on the President, on a proposal from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI, Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairmen, to continue the negotiations between the chairmen of the committees concerned, the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and the Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, with the assistance of the Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairmen, with a view to reaching agreement on the referral announced at the sitting of 13 March 2000 with regard to the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (COM(2000) 30 – C5-0057/00 – COD 000032).
9. Proposals for decisions without debate

9.1. Letter dated 24 March 2000 from Mr BROK seeking authorisation to accept an invitation to send a delegation to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

9.2. Letter dated 11 April 2000 from Mrs DAHL inviting Parliament to send a delegation to attend the 9th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, to be held in Malmö on 4-5 September 2000

9.3. Letter dated 21 April 2000 from Mr OBIA forwarding an invitation from the parliamentary and governmental authorities of Congo-Brazzaville for Parliament to send a delegation to that country

[Consideration of these items was held over to a subsequent meeting of the Conference of Presidents].
9.4. Letter dated 26 April 2000 from Mr SCHWIMMER inviting Parliament to attend the European Session of the Conference ‘All different, all equal – from theory to practice’, to be held in Strasbourg from 11 to 13 October 2000 – letter from Mr WATSON concerning the meeting of the working party

The Conference of Presidents, taking a decision without debate,

- noted the following documents:

  - a letter dated 26 April 2000 to the President from Mr SCHWIMMER, President of the Council of Europe, on the subject referred to above and, annexed thereto, a provisional programme and explanatory note (PE 290.691/BUR. + annexes),
  - a letter dated 3 May 2000 to the President from Mr WATSON, Chairman of the Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, concerning the meeting of the working party responsible for making preparations for the Council of Europe conference referred to above (PE 290.712/BUR.);

- decided to approve the participation of a delegation of fifteen Members of the European Parliament, to be appointed by the political groups in accordance with the rolling d’Hondt system, possibly from among the members of the Committee on Citizens’ Freedoms and Rights, at a European Conference, to be organised by the Council of Europe from 11-13 October 2000 in Strasbourg, entitled ‘All different, all equal – from theory to practice’;

- appointed Baroness LUDFORD, member of the Committee on Citizens’ Freedoms and Rights, to represent the European Parliament in the technical working party responsible for the preparations for the European contribution from the Council of Europe Conference referred to above to the UN World Conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, with a view to the meeting scheduled to be held in Strasbourg from 23 to 25 May 2000; agreed that this appointment should be made in accordance with the rolling d’Hondt system to be implemented by the political groups.
9.5. Note dated 10 May 2000 from the Secretary-General concerning the request from the EDD Group for authorisation for its Bureau to meet in Oporto on 19 and 20 June 2000 (week set aside for committee meetings)

[Consideration of this item was held over to a subsequent meeting of the Conference of Presidents].

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10. **Urgent matters and other business**

10.1. Letter dated 11 May 2000 from Mrs KREHL seeking the sending of an ad hoc delegation to the Northern Caucasus region of the Russian Federation

The Conference of Presidents

- decided to hold over consideration of this item to a subsequent meeting.
10.2. Request from the GUE/NGL Group for authorisation for its Bureau to meet in Budapest on the afternoon of 29 June and the morning of 30 June (Friday free of parliamentary business)

The Conference of Presidents, taking a decision without debate,

- noted the request dated 8 May 2000 to the Secretary-General from the GUE/NGL Group referred to above (PE 290.726/BUR.);

- decided to authorise the Bureau of the GUE/NGL Group to meet in Budapest on the afternoon of 29 June and the morning of 30 June (Friday free of parliamentary business) in accordance with the rules governing political group meetings adopted by the Bureau on 27 November 1996 and with the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 21 October 1999.
10.3. **Delegation to observe the elections in Zimbabwe**

The Conference of Presidents

- decided to hold over consideration of this item to a subsequent meeting.
11. Items for information

The Conference of Presidents

- noted the following documents:

11.1. Letter from Mrs PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI, Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairmen, on the procedure for the authorisation of reports drawn up on the basis of Commission documents forwarded for information (COS documents) and, annexed thereto, draft rules (PE 288.808/BUR. + annex);

11.2. Letter from Mr LICANDRO, Deputy Secretary-General of the PPE-DE Group, concerning a change to the list of delegation members (PE 290.715/BUR.).
12. **Date and place of next meeting**

The Conference of Presidents

- **decided** that it would hold its next meeting on Thursday 8 June 2000 in Brussels (from 2.30 p.m. onwards in the presence of Mr PROVAN, Vice-President responsible for internal reform, and, from 4 p.m. onwards, of Mr PRODI and Mrs Loyola DE PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI).

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The meeting closed at 6 p.m. on Thursday 18 May 2000.

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