

Απερίο - Τσίπας

**(EU) EU/GREECE: Costas Simitis to visit Commission on Wednesday**

Brussels, 28/01/2002 (Agence Europe) - In the framework of the routine visits of European Union Heads of Government to the European Commission, Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis will have talks on Wednesday with Commission President Romano Prodi. Mr. Simitis will then attend the weekly meeting of the college.

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**(EU) EU/GREECE: Costas Simitis outlines Greek Presidency's priorities and talks about resuming dialogue with Cyprus - Document on use of NATO capacity under CFDP is "unacceptable"**

Brussels, 30/01/2002 (Agence Europe) - While the European Commission was welcoming Greece's budget discipline on Wednesday (see other article), the Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis was meeting the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, in Brussels and taking part in the College's weekly meeting. The two politicians gave journalists a broad outline of the subject of their "friendly talks", namely Greece's Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers that is due to begin on 1 January 2003, the Cyprus question, the future of Europe, FYROM and the use of NATO capacities in the framework of the CFDP.

Romano Prodi told journalists that Greece played a vitally important role in the Balkans and made a vital contribution to securing the stability and development of the region, which everybody was grateful for. He welcomed the fact that the priorities of the future Greek Presidency coincided with those of the Commission. Mr Simitis then outlined the priorities, starting with enlargement which he saw as a positive factor for the political and economic stability of central Europe, which is why he said that the timetable had to be stuck to and the finishing touches had to be made to the negotiations by the end of 2002. He added that respect for the timetable would send a strong message to countries that are not part of the first wave. They would need to be assured and reassured about being able to join the EU once they'd implemented the necessary reforms. On the sensitive issue of Cyprus, the Greek Prime Minister welcomed the resumption of dialogue between President Cleride and Rauf Denktash, the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, hoping that the Turkish Cypriots would soon be making proposals that would make it possible to move towards solutions. Costas Simitis laid emphasis on the political leverage of Cyprus joining the EU in terms of finding a solution to the conflict that has lasted nearly thirty years. Asked about his country's disagreements with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, he was not very forthcoming, simply stating that Greece had agreed with FYROM that their dispute should be settled in the framework of the United Nations. The Greek Prime Minister stressed that southern Europe was facing a wave of immigrants from Africa and Asia, but that the implementation of the decisions taken at the Tampere European Summit concerning immigration, clandestine immigration and asylum would be the top priority under the Greek Presidency. The process that was launched in Lisbon would not be ignored either, he added, noting that it would have to be full speed ahead with regard to technology and training. Mr Simitis said that social cohesion was a very important area, as was the opening up of certain markets to competition that have not yet been liberalised. In terms of the future of Europe, he clearly came out in favour of

political union under a federal system, but that current mechanisms that had proved their value should be kept. He said it would be necessary to take account of the increased weight of the Convention, which he hoped would find ways of approaching solutions in terms of the CAP and cohesion. He summed up by saying that the EU was on the verge of a difficult but equally enchanting period which opened up new horizons. On the whole, Mr Simitis was confident about the future since the way citizens had taken up the euro showed that they were waiting for common solutions.

Questioned about Greece's refusal to accept the document drawn up by the United Kingdom, the United States and Turkey in order to break the EU/NATO deadlock about using NATO's capacities under the CFDP, Mr Simitis repeated his views whereby the document was unacceptable to Greece because it had been drawn up through a process of negotiation between a Member State and third countries, rather than in line with the EU's institutional rules, and therefore constituted an attempt to change organisational methods, which Athens cannot agree to. Greece believes that defence will work better in the absence of disagreements between EU and NATO Member States on how it is to be interpreted. He said that under the CFDP, one had purely and simply to be prepared to meet all the responsibilities that went with the application of the Treaties. He explained that Greece would soon be publishing new proposals to try and get the ball rolling in this area.

In the afternoon, Mr Simitis was scheduled to meet the Agriculture Commissioner, Franz Fischler, to examine Greece's cotton and tobacco industries after farmers in northern Greece started a widescale protest movement in terms of cotton prices and EU aid expected to help cope with the storms of the last few weeks.

On Thursday, Mr Simitis will be addressing the College of Europe in Bruges on the future of Europe.

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**(EU) EU/FUTURE OF EUROPE: Costas Simitis calls for political Union and decentralised federalism and stresses importance of social cohesion**

Bruges, 04/02/2002 (Agence Europe) - In an address to the College of Europe in Bruges on 31 January on the future of Europe and social cohesion, the Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis called for the enlarged European Union to "evolve into a full-fledged Political Union", adding, "However, we should continue to apply the Community model and method of integration, although the latter must be renewed and reinvigorated. Decentralised federalism based on the Community model constitutes for us the answer to the challenges facing the European Union as it forges ahead with enlargement." Mr Simitis called for a "clear, simple and understandable" Constitution "to strengthen the economic union" (dealing with taxation and fiscal policy), adding "we must progressively develop ESDP into a collective defence system, starting with the extension of the so-called "Petersburg tasks", without undermining, however, the role of NATO in any way". He feels "the European project requires the transformation of the Union's institutional system into

a democratically structures governmental system" where "the European Commission and the European Parliament must continue to occupy a central place".

Mr Simitis laid great emphasis on the Union constituting "a delicate system of solidarity and cohesion", and "economic and social cohesion must remain, therefore, one of the prime objectives of European integration". "A necessary condition to achieve real cohesion in the enlarged Union is to increase the budget for structural assistance, as was the case in the previous enlargements. "The EU's social and cohesion acquires are just as important as the economic and monetary acquires", asserted the Greek Prime Minister, adding that "cohesion must not lead to a "culture and spiral of dependency" but to a "culture of dynamic growth and convergence"".

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