

Speaking Points for PM. C. Simitis

(For the PES meeting – 16.10.2003)

Topic: Intergovernmental Conference/Constitution

- The Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), which officially started its work a few days ago, constitutes a unique event in the history of the European Union. For it is the first time that an IGC is called upon to adopt in essence not a simple treaty but a Constitution for the enlarged European Union. This is a great challenge and a historic opportunity –the opportunity to endow the Union with a Constitutional text, simple, flexible, understandable by the ordinary European citizen, a text that would strengthen the democratic character of the European Union.
- We must therefore work to make the IGC a success. The draft Constitution drawn by the European Convention reflects in many respects our values, objectives, philosophy and aspirations, the values of the socialist family. Our party –the PES- has played a crucial role in the Convention. A number of our colleagues occupied key positions in the Convention and contributed substantially to giving birth to the Draft Constitution. The Constitution is thus the product of a more

democratic process –the process of the Convention, the launching of which has been our goal for years.

- The Constitution is not of course perfect. No Constitution is actually perfect. It is the political will and action that turns a Constitution into a living reality. Nonetheless the Draft Constitution contains a number of provisions for which we must be thoroughly satisfied; namely:

First, a set of values and objectives of social-democratic origin including the values of quality, democracy, solidarity, human dignity and the objectives of social progress, sustainable development and full employment. It is the first time that the Union recognizes explicitly that its task is to promote “full employment”.

Secondly, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which was proclaimed three years ago as “political text”, is incorporated into the Constitution and acquires legal force, thus highlighting the democratic nature of the Union.

Thirdly, the Union acquires the means, instruments and capabilities to become a major international player as a force of stability, peace, cooperation and democratic global governance, thereby correcting the present “asymmetries” in the global distribution of power. The objectives of our foreign and security policy are broadly defined to encompass the eradication of

poverty, sustainable development, respect of human rights, rigorous compliance with the basic principles of international law and the UN Charter.

Fourthly, a number of institutional innovations reflect also our philosophy for a more democratic Union based on the principle of equality among all member states. Included in these are the strengthening of the role of the European Parliament, the election of the Commission's president by the European Parliament, the extension of qualified majority, the introduction of the principles of participatory and representative democracy, et. al..

- Needless to say, that there are provisions in the Constitution, which are not of our liking. There are also serious "deficits". But, under the prevailing political conditions, the overall balance must be satisfactory for our socialist family. For that reason, I strongly argue that the Constitution must be adopted with only certain improvements, clarifications and corrections that they would render it more democratic and operational. In view of the enlargement, the Constitution would make the Union more democratic and more effective.