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Note for Mr W. SCHÄLL, MEP

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPEAN POLITICAL COOPERATION

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## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPEAN POLITICAL COOPERATION

1. Fact Sheet No. II/A/1 (PE 56.000) gives the history of European Political Cooperation (EPC), and deals with the relations between the EEC institutions and EPC. The present note supplements the fact sheet by giving details of developments in EPC since June 1979, the date of direct elections to the European Parliament.

### Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)

2. Since June 1979, and indeed before, the Foreign Ministers of the Nine Member States of the Community meeting in political cooperation have concerted their preparations for the Madrid meeting of November 1980 to consider implementation of the Final Act of the CSCE. No announcement has been made of the results of these discussions, except that the Foreign Ministers are giving special consideration to respect for human rights, as set out in the Principles contained in Basket I of the Final Act. In addition, they are coordinating their work closely with that of the Commission, which is spokesman for the Community on Basket II (Economic cooperation).

3. The Nine have since 1973 acted in unison in all the negotiations prior to and since the signature of the Final Act, and have hitherto been accepted as the spokesman for the Western bloc of countries, which includes Canada and the USA. This has involved close and continuous prior consultation with these two countries, and also with those of the non-aligned group within the CSCE, which includes Austria, Switzerland and Yugoslavia. Thus the Foreign Ministers can claim considerable success in EPC as regards the CSCE.

Iran

4. The Nine Foreign Ministers have, since the seizure of the American hostages in November 1979 by the Iranian students, been particularly active in bringing pressure to bear upon the Iranian authorities to secure their release. This has involved close coordination of their position with that of the US Administration, and this has continued now for more than a year; for example, during November and December 1979 the Ambassadors in Teheran of the Nine made eight joint approaches to the Iranian authorities on the hostages issue.

5. Following the continued detention of the hostages and at the request of the US government, the Foreign Ministers in May 1980 agreed upon economic sanctions against Iran, which were implemented by the governments and parliaments of the Nine. In addition, the Nine have followed the issue of the hostages closely during debates in the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Afghanistan

6. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the Foreign Ministers in the following month issued a statement deploring this act of aggression and calling for a withdrawal of Soviet troops. In February 1980, the Foreign Ministers repeated this call and also proposed that Afghanistan should be treated as an independent and non-aligned country, free from foreign intervention of any sort. This proposal was however rejected by the USSR.

7. The Nine acted jointly in the debate on Afghanistan in the General Assembly of the United Nations, and in the vote on the subsequent resolution. The European Council, meeting in April and in June 1980, condemned the Soviet invasion and called for a withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan.

### Iran-Iraq Conflict

8. Following the outbreak of hostilities between Iran and Iraq, the Foreign Ministers in September 1980 called for restraint on all sides and offered their services in the search for a solution to the conflict. To date, however, the Ministers have not judged a specific "European initiative" to be appropriate, as this would at present not be acceptable either to Iran and Iraq, or to the neighbouring Arab countries, such as Jordan, the Lebanon and Syria.

### Arab-Israeli Conflict

9. At the meeting of the European Council in Venice in June 1980, the Heads of Government and the Foreign Ministers adopted a declaration on the Middle East which gave details of a "European initiative" to supplement the Camp David agreements and the Peace Treaty of March 1979 between Egypt and Israel. The European Council based itself on two principles: first, "the right to existence and to security of all the States in the region, including Israel", and second, "justice for all the peoples, which implies the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people". In addition, the Nine stated that "the PLO will have to be associated with the negotiations"; that they refused to accept any unilateral change in the status of Jerusalem; and that Israeli settlements in occupied territory "constitute a serious obstacle to the peace forces in the Middle East" and are "illegal under international law".

10. The Nine decided to make contact with the parties concerned in order to ascertain their position and subsequently to decide what form any "European initiative" might take. A round of visits to the countries concerned, undertaken in August and September 1980 by Mr Gaston Thorn, Chairman-in-Office of the Nine Foreign Ministers

resulted in general support for the European initiative by the countries concerned, with the exception of Syria and Israel. The Foreign Ministers are preparing at present a report for the European Council meeting on 1 and 2 December, which will recommend either the possibilities for an initiative or the options open to the European Council to undertake an initiative or not.

11. The declaration of Venice, the mission of Mr Thorn and the subsequent discussions between the Nine have all been preceded by consultations with the <sup>US</sup> government. Mr Thorn has emphasised that the Nine are seeking to supplement, and not to replace, the "peace process" launched at Camp David and carried forward in subsequent actions by Egypt, Israel and the US.

Conclusion

12. These are the main subjects dealt with by the Foreign Ministers (and by the European Council) within the realm of EPC since June 1979. In addition the Ministers have issued declarations on the Lebanon, the Euro-Arab Dialogue, Turkey and Southern Africa. The Nine have thus shown their increasing ability to act promptly and in unison in response to new threats to peace in various parts of the world, and also to offer solutions to continuing situations, such as in the Middle East and Southern Africa, where their interests are involved and where the achievement of a permanent, peaceful solution has become imperative.