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SPEECH

by the President of the European Parliament

Dr Egon A. Klepsch

to the European Council

on Friday, 11 December 1992

in Edinburgh

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Mr President-in-Office of the Council,
Mr President,
Mr Chancellor,
Prime Ministers,
Mr President of the Commission
Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to the President-in-Office of the European Council for giving me this opportunity to outline to the participants in this Council meeting the European Parliament's position on current political issues and, for the first time, to hold an exchange of views on these issues. It reassures the European Parliament that it is being taken seriously.

This European Council is meeting at a critical, highly important moment. The future of the European Community is more than ever at stake, but we must not allow ourselves to be talked into a crisis. The objective over the two days here in Edinburgh must be to find solutions to the key problems. We must regain the trust of citizens inside and outside the European Community. They are looking to us for action.

Young people in Europe in particular are crying out for a clear, viable vision of the future. They want secure jobs and a healthy environment. They want to play an active role in shaping the new Europe. They want sustainable peace and prosperity. We owe it to our young people to make this vision a reality.

INTERNAL MARKET, EEA AND ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS

1 January 1993 is destined to become a fresh milestone in the history of the European Community. The programme to establish the internal market is on the verge of completion. The deadline of 1992/93 set by Mr Delors and the Commission in mid-1985 will be met. Business, consumers and tourists will enjoy the benefits of a uniform, open internal market, even though, primarily in the sphere of the movement of persons, certain obstacles have still to be overcome before a genuinely 'frontier-free' Europe can be established. The competent Council of Ministers should take the necessary decisions immediately. The European Parliament has given a clear lead, advocating the complete abolition of checks on individuals as from 1 January 1993. There is no longer any reason to carry out checks on either goods or persons at internal borders.

Unfortunately, the objective of establishing the even larger European Economic Area to coincide with the completion of the internal market will not be achieved following the no vote in the Swiss referendum.

Nevertheless, it is my conviction that the other EFTA countries and the EC Member States will stand by the EEA Agreement. Switzerland is running the risk of isolating itself in the long run.

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The European Community has lost none of its attraction to outsiders. I am looking to this Summit to set the agenda for the opening of negotiations with those countries which have applied for membership. In line with the declaration issued at the Lisbon Summit, the European Parliament has made this contingent on the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and adoption of the Delors II package. Accession negotiations can be opened early in 1993 if clear prospects emerge from this Summit for a completion of the ratification procedure and the implementation of the Treaty by mid-1993.

DENMARK

With regard to Denmark's position, the European Parliament categorically opposes changes to the Maastricht Treaty, the granting of special status to Denmark, special agreements which require ratification or the establishment of an 'à la carte' Europe. It is adamant that the ratification process must be completed by 30 June 1993 and is confident that an agreement can be hammered out which enables Denmark to sign up for Political Union. The European Parliament supports all calls for democracy, openness and a Community closer to its citizens.

TRANSPARENCY AND DEMOCRACY

Parliament takes seriously the public concerns voiced in connection with the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and is prepared to respond to them. We advocate the introduction of more democratic and open decision-making procedures, but without changes to the Treaty. Accordingly, in the Interinstitutional Conference, we opened negotiations between the three institutions with a view to establishing rules and procedures which make for a more open, comprehensible and democratic Community, closer to its citizens.

This must also entail closer cooperation between the European Parliament and the national parliaments. However, the latter must first be kept fully informed, and taken seriously, by their own governments.

We welcome the Council's proposals, or at least those which have been forwarded to us, for greater openness. They certainly represent a step in the right direction. However, in Parliament's view, they will not in themselves ensure that the Community moves closer to its citizens. The Community must also be made more democratic.

At the Interinstitutional Conference we put forward corresponding proposals for a solemn declaration by the three institutions. We would like to see the months leading up to the final ratification of the Maastricht Treaty used to build on and apply the embryonic procedures incorporated in it. The Treaty must serve as a vital step forward towards greater democracy, not as a step backwards towards allegedly safer national procedures.

SUBSIDIARITY

It is intended that this Summit should lay down guidelines on the application of the subsidiarity principle. I feel that the interinstitutional dialogue which Parliament has helped to instigate, a move generously taken up by the British Presidency, should make it easier to secure a joint agreement between all three institutions.

Parliament has submitted a draft interinstitutional agreement on subsidiarity. You are familiar with it.

It is the European Parliament's unshakeable belief that an agreement on the application of the subsidiarity principle cannot be separated from the Maastricht Treaty, and indeed must come into force at the same time.

Subsidiarity must not be invoked as a pretext for the renationalization of Community policies. Parliament is flatly opposed to any unilateral move by the Council or the Commission to examine retroactively, for conformity with the subsidiarity principle, the existing body of Community legislation on which Parliament has already been consulted. The circulation of lists of laws to be repealed does not make for trust between the institutions or between the Community and its citizens.

In Parliament's view, checks for conformity with the subsidiarity principle must not be a preliminary stage in the legislative procedure; instead, the three institutions must regularly make such checks throughout the discussions on a legislative proposal, and these checks cannot be divorced from the substance of that proposal.

The uniformity of the decision-making process must be guaranteed in accordance with the voting procedures laid down in the Treaty, along with the 'acquis communautaire', the institutional balance and the right of initiative of the institutions.

Growth strategy and the GATT negotiations

The European Parliament supports the measures announced by the Commission to boost economic growth and create jobs, as reflected in the discussions held by the Economics and Finance Ministers. It advocates a 'coordinated European strategy' which must embrace employers, trade unions and governments.

A prompt conclusion to the GATT negotiations, for which Parliament is continuing to press, would no doubt give the international economy and world trade a lasting shot in the arm. The key to an agreement remains equal concessions by the USA in all areas.

DELORS II PACKAGE

As early as June, Parliament made clear its political standpoint with regard to the future financing of the Community, taking into account the objectives laid down in the Maastricht Treaty. Our maxim is as follows: new tasks call for new resources.

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The Community must have the financial resources to meet these objectives. In particular, it must be provided with the own resources it needs to secure its financial autonomy. As the European Council itself acknowledged in Lisbon, economic and social cohesion, the cornerstones of the Maastricht Treaty, makes the establishment of the Cohesion Fund in 1993 essential. The resources of the Structural Funds, which are likewise instruments for cohesion, must be increased in line with the priorities already laid down.

The new foreign policy challenges - including the follow-up to the Rio Environment Summit - must be reflected in the financial and budgetary arrangements which our institutions are currently negotiating and on which they must give their views today and tomorrow. The same applies to the so-called internal policies, which embrace such important areas as research, industrial competitiveness and trans-European networks, i.e. tasks which the Community must tackle, because its responsibility and political credibility are at stake.

For this reason, I must, as I did in July at the conciliation meeting prior to the first reading of the budget in the Council, insist on a political approach. By that I mean an approach which is in keeping with the future objectives, tasks and obligations of the Community and which takes into account the economic and budgetary constraints acting on the Member States, constraints with which Parliament is familiar.

However, these constraints must not be allowed to shape a purely restrictive approach which distorts the Delors II package and tacitly endorses the shelving of the Community's future financing arrangements until 1996. We cannot accept that an own-resources ceiling of 1.2% of GNP should remain in force until 1996.

For my part, I advocate an overall approach consistent with our expectations which would represent an acceptable compromise between the overly minimalist position of the British Presidency and the Commission's revised position.

Parliament and the Council should then be able, after the Summit, to reach agreement next week in Strasbourg on a 1993 budget which implements the Delors II package as far as possible, starting in 1993, and takes into account Parliament's budgetary powers.

We are facing a major challenge. In my view, the Council and Parliament would be irresponsible to compound the current political crisis in the Community by provoking a budgetary and financial crisis which public opinion would regard as incomprehensible and unjustifiable.

NUMBER AND REDISTRIBUTION OF MEPs - THE SEAT

The Community's democratic credibility, the planned enlargement and the forthcoming direct elections in June 1994 require a review of the number and distribution of the Members of the European Parliament. Here, too, Parliament has fulfilled the task set by the Maastricht European Council of December 1991; we feel that the solution we put forward on the basis of the De Gucht report is the best. The new allocation scheme will reflect population changes and be commensurate with Parliament's institutional development. The proposal's thrust is threefold:

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1. an increase in the number of Members for the Community of the Twelve from 318 to 567, the breakdown reflecting more accurately the respective populations of the Member States;
2. a plan to incorporate a further 85 seats to cover applicants for membership;
3. a final upper limit of 700 Members to ensure that Parliament can function in the long term; should this figure be exceeded as a result of future enlargements, proportional cuts would be made in the national quotas.

The European Parliament is just as determined to ensure that the Member State governments find a solution to the problem of the seat of the institutions. In so far as its own interests are involved, the European Parliament categorically reserves the right to give final approval.

FOREIGN POLICY

Finally, I should like to refer to three - out of many - foreign policy issues which the European Community must help to resolve. We must at long last eliminate the danger of a spread of the Balkan conflict. We condemn the cruel oppression of the civilian population and the raping of women. This war must be terminated, now. The European Parliament has repeatedly stressed that it resolutely condemns any policy of ethnic cleansing, of laying siege to and bombarding defenceless towns and cities. The Member States of the European Community must make appropriate joint efforts to help solve the refugee problem that has arisen as a result of the Balkan conflict, sharing the burden fairly among them.

We must shape the European Community in such a way that it can continue to act as a democratic role model for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and for the Commonwealth of Independent States. Our solidarity is not by itself enough. The other industrialized nations must also make an appropriate contribution.

This also applies unreservedly to support for the Third World countries, which must remain a priority.

RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

Finally, I would appeal to the authorities of all the Member States to take a decisive stand against the spread of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, extremism and radicalism, whether right-wing or left-wing. Appropriate measures must be taken without delay and the origins and roots of this evil phenomenon must be resolutely attacked. We must invoke the full power of the law. The Community's internal peace must not be endangered. The EC institutions and the Member State governments must do their utmost to create a common immigration and refugee policy and introduce common rules to govern the granting of asylum.

