

Conclusions of the Birmingham European Council (16 October 1992)

Caption: On 16 October 1992, the European Council adopts the 'Birmingham Declaration' with a view to bringing the European Community closer to its citizens (see Annex I). The Heads of State or Government call on the Foreign Ministers to suggest ways of opening up the work of the Community's institutions, including the possibility of some open Council discussion. The aim is to bring the European Community closer to its citizens, especially following the difficulties that certain countries have encountered in referenda on the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty.

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Birmingham European Council (16 October 1992)

Conclusions of the Presidency

The European Council heard a statement by Mr Klepsch, President of the European Parliament, on the main questions under discussion by the European Council.

The Maastricht Treaty

The European Council reviewed progress on ratification of the Treaty on European Union signed on 7 February and reaffirmed the importance of concluding the process as soon as possible, without reopening the present text, on the timing foreseen in Article R of the Treaty. It agreed that the Community must develop together as Twelve, on the basis of the Maastricht Treaty, while respecting, as the Treaty does, the identity and diversity of Member States.

After a full discussion on bringing the Community closer to its citizens, the European Council agreed the attached Declaration (Annex I). It noted the Danish White Paper and welcomed the Danish Government's intention to present within the next few weeks ideas on the way forward. It asked Foreign Ministers to examine these ideas and to report on them to the Edinburgh European Council, with a view to agreement there on the framework for a solution. The European Council heard a presentation from the President of the Commission and asked him to elaborate the proposals he had made, and to present a report thereon to the Edinburgh European Council.

Economic and Monetary Cooperation

Heads of State or Government agreed that Member States face common economic challenges, and were concerned at lower growth and increasing unemployment. Strong coordination at the Community level will help to ensure that the economy of each Member State is strengthened by the success of other Member States. It is important for Member States to continue policies to reduce inflation; to carry through programmes for controlling budget deficits; and to improve the efficiency of their economies through open market policies. Firm and sustained implementation of these policies establishes the basis for recovery, for social and economic cohesion, and for the creation of the new and lasting jobs that are needed.

The European Council underlined the importance in this context of reinforcing the convergence process among the Member States' economies, which is crucial for maintaining monetary stability and for creating the framework for sustainable growth and rising employment. Strict adherence to the principles of sound economic management, as set out in convergence programmes, formulated by Member States so as to fulfil the criteria set out in the Maastricht Treaty in order to realize the movement towards economic and monetary union, would enable the Community to meet its objective of proceeding together in its development. The European Council reiterated too its commitment to the European Monetary System as a key factor of economic stability and prosperity in Europe.

The European Council endorsed the view of the Economic and Finance Ministers that the recent financial turbulence calls for reflection and analysis in the light of developments in capital markets and in the European and world monetary systems. It invited the Economic and Finance Ministers, assisted by the Monetary Committee and with the involvement of the Commission, to carry this work forward with the Central Bank Governors. It should cover recent economic and financial developments within Europe and in the major industrialized countries as well as the implications of changes in the general economic and financial environment in recent years, notably the impact of the increasing size and sophistication of financial markets and greater capital liberalization.

GATT-Uruguay Round (GATT)

The European Council reaffirms the importance of a fair and successful GATT agreement for strengthening the multilateral trading systems and increasing trade flows. This would give a non-inflationary boost to the world economy and would benefit industrialized and developing countries.

The European Council heard a report by Vice-President Andriessen on current EC/US talks, indicating that, while gaps remained, real progress had been made. It invited the Commission to work within its existing mandate for an early, comprehensive and balanced GATT agreement by the end of the year, in the interests of the Community and of the world economy, as well as for an early settlement on oilseeds.

Yugoslavia and Somalia

The European Council adopted the declarations in Annexes II and III of this document.

Annex I – Birmingham Declaration - A Community close to its citizens

1. We reaffirm our commitment to the Maastricht Treaty: we need to ratify it to make progress towards European Union if the Community is to remain an anchor of stability and prosperity in a rapidly changing continent, building on its success over the last quarter of a century.

2. As a community of democracies, we can only move forward with the support of our citizens. We are determined to respond to the concerns raised in the recent public debate. We must:

- demonstrate to our citizens the benefits of the Community and the Maastricht Treaty;
- make the Community more open, to ensure a better informed public debate on its activities;
- respect the history, culture and traditions of individual nations, with a clearer understanding of what Member States should do and what needs to be done by the Community;
- make clear that citizenship of the Union brings our citizens additional rights and protection without in any way taking the place of their national citizenship.

3. Foreign Ministers will suggest ways, before the Edinburgh European Council, of opening up the work of the Community's institutions, including the possibility of some open Council discussion — for example on future work programmes. We welcome the Commission's offer to consult more widely before proposing legislation, which could include consultation with all the Member States and a more systematic use of consultation documents (Green Papers). We ask the Commission to complete by early next year its work on improving public access to the information available to it and to other Community institutions. We want Community legislation to become simpler and clearer.

4. We stress, the European Parliament's important role in the democratic life of the Community and we welcome the growing contacts between national parliaments and the European Parliament. We reaffirm that national parliaments should be more closely involved in the Community's activities. We shall discuss this with our parliaments. We welcome the Commission's readiness to respond positively to requests from national parliaments for explanations of its proposals. We underline the importance we attach to the Conference of Parliaments and to the Committee of the Regions.

5. We reaffirm that decisions must be taken as closely as possible to the citizen. Greater unity can be achieved without excessive centralization. It is for each Member State to decide how its powers should be exercised domestically. The Community can only act where Member States have given it the power to do so in the treaties. Action at the Community level should happen only when proper and necessary: the Maastricht Treaty provides the right framework and objectives for this. Bringing to life this principle — "subsidiarity", or "nearness" — is essential if the Community is to develop with the support of its citizens. We look forward to decisions at Edinburgh on the basis of reports on:

- adapting the Council's procedures and practices – as the Commission for its part has already done – so that the principle becomes an integral part of the Community's decision-making, as the Maastricht Treaty requires;

- guidelines for applying the principle in practice, for instance by using the lightest possible form of legislation, with maximum freedom for Member States on how best to achieve the objective in question. Community legislation must be implemented and enforced effectively, and without interfering unnecessarily in the daily life of our citizens;

We shall also have a look at the first fruits of the Commission's review of past Community legislation with examples.

6. Making the principle of subsidiarity work should be a priority for all the Community institutions, without affecting the balance between them. We will seek an agreement about this with the European Parliament.

7. The Maastricht Treaty will bring direct benefits to individual citizens. All of us – Council, Commission and Parliament – must do more to make this clear.

8. The European Council, in conformity with the responsibilities given to it by the Treaty, will ensure that the fundamental principles of the European Union will be fully observed.

Annex II – Declaration on former Yugoslavia

The European Council agreed that immediate and decisive action was needed in the face of the impending major human tragedy in former Yugoslavia as winter approached. It underlined the importance of providing winter shelter and zones of safety for refugees, and of ensuring the delivery of relief supplies, as highlighted in the Commission's action plan. It decided that:

- the Community will speed up EC assistance, for which ECU 213 million is ready for immediate disbursement, including on 120 000 tons of foodstuffs, and on medicines, shelter and 40 trucks;

- Member States will immediately provide further staff and resources, practical and financial, to strengthen UNHCR's capacity;

- the Community and its Member States will immediately establish a task force to support the efforts of the UNHCR to deliver humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslav republics;

- in order to increase the effectiveness of such humanitarian assistance, the European Council called on the UNHCR to set up:

– next week, a meeting of technical experts on emergency aid to ensure the practical provision of immediate assistance;

– next month, a stocktaking conference, to assess the effectiveness of the operation, and recommend further measures.

Each member of the European Council will appoint a personal representative to supervise this work.

The European Council called on other international donors to make a commensurate effort to support the UNHCR appeal and to speed up the delivery of assistance under existing pledges.

The European Council condemned the continuing widespread violence and cruelty and the savage breaches of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia which have caused this human suffering and are now the main constraint on the delivery of essential aid. It noted the unacceptable fact that commitments made at the London Conference had not been put into effect. The European Council expressed its full support for the unremitting efforts of Lord Owen and Mr Vance to bring about an end to hostilities and a

peaceful settlement and to secure the implementation of the agreements already reached.

The European Council strongly endorsed the recent UN Security Council resolutions on the Prevlaka Peninsula, war crimes and a no-fly zone. It underlined the importance of the rapid deployment of forces now under way under Unprofor II, to which a number of Member States were contributing, for humanitarian convoy protection and the escort of detainees from camps. It reaffirmed that sanctions measures and the arms embargo should be maintained.

The European Council discussed the dangerous situation in Kosovo and urged all parties concerned to exercise restraint and negotiate constructively in the current discussions. It endorsed the work of the International Conference and the long-term CSCE mission of Ambassador Boegh.

In the light of the deteriorating economic situation in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, the European Council stressed the need for appropriate measures to prevent this republic from bearing the unintended consequences of UN sanctions.

The European Council noted the recent undertaking by the Bosnian Serbs to remove their military aircraft into Serbia and agreed that in case of violations of UN Security Council Resolution 781 the Security Council should be asked to consider urgently the further measures necessary to enforce the ban on military flights.

Annex III – Declaration on Somalia

The European Council expressed its deep concern over the appalling situation in Somalia and the continuing deaths and starvation. It condemned the renewed fighting and called on the parties involved to observe an immediate ceasefire to allow the rapid distribution of aid to the people in desperate need.

It expressed its full support for the efforts of Ambassador Sahnoun on behalf of the United Nations to achieve a national reconciliation as the basis for a peaceful solution, and for the Belgian contribution to the UN force. It welcomed the outcome of the UN Conference in Geneva on 12 and 13 October, and the creation of a 100-day programme to deliver aid to the worst affected areas. The European Council notes the contribution being provided by the Community and its Member States to relieve the crisis: in addition to other aid, over 100 000 tonnes of food aid has already been delivered and a similar quantity is being sent. Member States are also contributing some ECU 100 million bilaterally.

The European Council called for the rapid deployment of UN troops to the areas where they are needed. It asked the Presidency to consult the UN Secretary-General on ways and means to expedite these deployments.