

Interview with Norbert Schwaiger: the High Representative for the CFSP (Brussels, 22 November 2006)

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[Raquel Valls] Was it with the office of High Representative that the role played by the Secretary-General became more political and the General Secretariat developed from playing a counsellor's role of to that of an initiator?

[Norbert Schwaiger] If, for the moment, we confine ourselves to the field of foreign policy, security and future defence, where there are the first drafts for defence, this was clearly the purpose, yet we must mention that the development provided for in the Constitution was that the post of High Representative should become a sort of future Minister for Foreign Affairs who would exercise a dual function in the Commission and in the Council. For the moment, we are still at the current stage so we cannot speculate on that.

But there is no doubt that Mr Solana has played a role that is important, very active and also, I believe, highly appreciated regarding what we have described so far as his function — the preparation, the advice given while drafting policies in this area and also while implementing them. I also think that where all these exercises were concerned, the Balkans was the first real test of what this new Community aspiration was able to come up with, and it was also on the ground there that the Secretary-General/High Representative had the most difficult, but also the most significant duties to perform. In the Middle East and in other crisis zones where he has personal representatives, he makes visits in person, always bearing clear mandates from the Council, but ones which he contributed to formulating within the Council.

I think that the role of the Deputy Secretary-General should remain just as described in the past — for the Community, clearly; as for the JHA, this remains to be seen. Will there be new structures? In particular, will there be agencies to manage some of these areas? Or will certain other competencies be transferred to the Commission? This also depends, to some extent, on the fate of elements contained in the Constitution, or that of alternative elements, if there are any one day.