

Address given by José Sócrates to the European Parliament on the Treaty of Lisbon (Strasbourg, 23 October 2007)

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Honorable Members,

When I stood before this House three months ago to present the programme of the Portuguese Presidency, I stated clearly what would be the main challenge, the top priority of the Portuguese Presidency: to draw up, and reach agreement on, a new Treaty, thereby bringing to an end six years of deadlock in the European Union's institutional debate.

It is, therefore, with great satisfaction that I stand today before the European Parliament and present to you the agreement reached by the Intergovernmental Conference on 18 October. The agreement gave birth to the new Lisbon Treaty, the Treaty that will be signed on 13^o December in the city whose name it will bear.

The Portuguese Presidency began with the task of transforming the mandate that we were given by the German Presidency — and let me stress the clarity and precision of that mandate — into a new Treaty. That was our task.

The agreement that we have reached is confirmation of the wisdom of the method and of the calendar laid down at the beginning of our Presidency. It was necessary — as I said to you here at the beginning of the Presidency — to take advantage of the June Council and to try and conclude the Treaty not in December, as many advocated, but in October at the informal European Council.

And we were right. In fact, we made the Intergovernmental Conference for the revision of the treaties the fastest in the history of the European Union. We began on 23 July, and we finished on 18 October.

When we look at the background to this Treaty, it is easier to appreciate the importance of this political decision not to leave until the end of the year a task that we could complete sooner. Europe needed a rapid agreement, and that is what it got. Europe needed a sign of confidence, and that is what it got. Europe needed to turn towards the future, and that is what it has done.

We quickly got down to work with all the Member States who, without exception, constructively and resolutely sought to overcome the difficulties that still remained, and we were able to present a complete text of the Treaty on 3 October. That brought us closer to our goal.

The questions that remained for the Lisbon Summit were few, but they were politically difficult. In this connection, our strategy was to try for an agreement on the very first day of the Summit. Not only did this seem possible to us, but we would be sending Europe a very important signal: a signal that the European Union is capable of taking rapid decisions, even when decisions that we all know are difficult are at stake. And it was very important for us, at the informal Council meeting, to be able to resolve the institutional issues on the first day so that, on the second day, having just resolved them, we would discuss globalisation and how Europe might tackle global issues.

In Lisbon, agreement was reached on the following questions which allowed the final agreement on the Treaty to be sealed: On the Ioannina clause, the solution involved two levels: a declaration on the decision-making process in the Council by qualified majority that spells out the actual Ioannina safeguard mechanism; on a Protocol that makes any attempt to modify or revoke this mechanism conditional on consensus in the European Council.

As I always said, the Ioannina issue, as it was settled in the agreement reached at the second Council meeting, required that clause to be made legally binding, but it was not to be included in the Treaty. The solution that we adopted — a Declaration, together with a Protocol which guaranteed that the decision on Ioannina might be amended only by consensus — seemed to us to be the one which would remain most faithful to the spirit of the most recent agreement. In so doing, we provided guarantees on the Ioannina compromise without adversely affecting the integrity of the process of decision-making by qualified

majority.

A solution also had to be found to the political question on the number of Advocates General at the Court of Justice. Agreement was reached on a declaration stating that the Council would give its approval to any request from the Court of Justice for the number of Advocates General to be increased from eight to eleven. In this case, Poland would have a permanent Advocate General and would no longer participate in the rotation system, while the current rotation system would cover five Advocates General instead of three.

As for the appointment of the Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the agreed declaration provides for the European Parliament to participate in the appointment process even in the very first phase in January 2009, using the appropriate channels.

The Conference also approved a declaration clarifying the demarcation of competences between the Union and the Member States, as provided for in the Treaties.

And, lastly, the issue of the composition of the European Parliament. An amendment was made to Article 9a of the Treaty on European Union to the effect that the number of Members may not exceed seven hundred and fifty (750), plus the President, with the proportional degressivity of its composition being maintained.

Two declarations are added to this amendment: one laying down that the additional seat in the European Parliament will be allocated to Italy, the other guaranteeing that the European Council will give its political agreement to the composition of the European Parliament, on the basis of the proposal from Parliament itself.

The Council therefore accepted the criteria put forward by Parliament and went ahead with what it considered an acceptable adjustment, with a view to adapting the current structure during the 2009–2014 parliamentary term.

In addition to the questions to which I have referred, the Portuguese Presidency also took care to include the opt-out rules and clauses in the Treaty that were part of the mandate, obviously respecting the positions of the Member States that wanted them, whilst taking constant care not to detract from the essence of the Community decision-making process and the overall coherence of the Treaty.

Accordingly, we have a new Treaty. A new Treaty and a good Treaty. A Treaty that resolves the crisis of the past and puts Europe in a position to look towards the future. A Treaty with significant advances of which I shall highlight just a few. This Treaty adopts, unamended, the extension of the European Parliament's participation in the legislative process as well as the innovations in the budgetary process, thereby enhancing the Union's democratic legitimacy.

This Treaty improves the decision-making process, namely by the extension of qualified majority voting to the area of freedom, security and justice. And, still on the area of freedom, security and justice, this Treaty includes the legal bases required for the development of more effective immigration and asylum policies, as well as for police and judicial coordination against terrorism and organised crime, thereby strengthening the security of our citizens.

This Treaty clearly lists the areas in which the Member States are transferring powers to the Union. This Treaty strengthens the supervisory role of the national parliaments.

But, in the series of advances that this Treaty brings, there is one that I find it particularly gratifying to underline: the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which will be proclaimed by the European Union's three institutions on 12 December, is explicitly made legally binding by the Treaty.

To this, I must add the Union's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights and the fact that a solution has been found to the question of the judicial framework for European citizenship, as requested by the representatives of this Parliament.

On the external front, the new institutional framework that the Treaty creates — in particular, combining the position of High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for foreign affairs — reflects the extent of our ambition: to give Europe a more significant role on the international stage and the means for effective cooperation with our partners.