

NEW EUROPEAN UNION TREATY IS SIGNED IN MAASTRICHT

The Treaty on European Union, agreed at the European Community's landmark summit in Maastricht (Netherlands) in December 1991, will be signed in the same historic town today by EC Foreign Affairs and Finance Ministers.

Three Heads of State or Government will attend the signing, representing the current Portuguese Presidency of the EC Council (Prime Minister Anibal Cavaco Silva), and the Presidencies of Luxembourg (Prime Minister Jacques Santer) and the Netherlands (Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers) which were in charge of the Intergovernmental Conferences that drafted the new Treaty for the Maastricht summit in the course of 1991. EC Commission President Jacques Delors (accompanied by Frans Andriessen, EC Commission Vice President for External Affairs) and Egon Klepsch, President of the European Parliament, will also attend the ceremony, together with the Presidents of other EC institutions, including the European Court of Justice, and the European Investment Bank.

The Treaty on European Union is the most far-reaching event in European Community history since the signing of the founding Treaties of Rome in 1957. Once ratified by EC member states, it will enable the Community to play a more coherent political and economic role in the world, commensurate with its international responsibilities.

The Treaty, which is wider in scope than any previous EC treaties, consists of three pillars.

Amendments to the EC Founding Treaties (First Pillar)

The first pillar amends the Treaties to include provisions for:

- **Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)**, with a Central European Bank and a single currency, the ECU (European Currency Unit), by 1999 at the latest;
- **Citizenship of the European Union**, with specific rights for its citizens;
- **A significant increase in the legislative powers of the European Parliament (EP)**. Under a new procedure strengthening the co-decision process between the Parliament and the Council of Ministers, the Parliament may reject a proposal before the Council for adoption (by qualified majority) if a majority of EP members oppose it and agreement has not been reached through a Joint Conciliation Committee made up of members of both institutions.

../..

The Treaty also gives the Parliament **new powers of control**, including:

- the power to approve the appointment of the Commission and its President (which from 1995 will hold five-year terms corresponding to those of the Parliament);
 - the right to ask the Commission to formulate new legislation if an overall Parliament majority requests it;
 - the power to conduct an enquiry into implementation of EC laws with approval of one-quarter of its members;
 - the right to appoint an ombudsman to conduct enquiries and take complaints from Community citizens regarding maladministration of any EC institution, except the Court of Justice.
- **Extension of EC competence in 11 areas:** education, training, health, consumer protection, trans-European networks, development cooperation, the environment and social policy, research and development, industrial competition, and culture;
 - **Social policy articles** in the amended Treaty are unchanged since the Single European Act, which went into force in 1987. However, only eleven member states agreed to implement the principles of the 1989 Social Charter on the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers. Except for the United Kingdom, the eleven agreed that implementing legislation in the following areas can be decided by them by a qualified majority vote:
 - health and safety
 - working conditions
 - information and consultation of workers
 - equality at work between men and women
 - integration of persons excluded from the labor market.

Unanimity among the eleven will be required for the following:

- social security
- unemployment protection
- employment of non-EC nationals
- representation of workers and employers.

New Areas

Common Foreign and Security Policy (Second Pillar)

The second pillar of the Maastricht Treaty is devoted to a Common Foreign and Security Policy, which remains outside the traditional mechanisms of the EC Treaty. The policy will be implemented through intergovernmental procedures in the Council of Ministers, in association with the Commission, and in consultation with the Parliament.

The new provisions allow for joint actions which will be binding on EC member states and will notably cover:

- the CSCE process (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe)
- disarmament and control of armaments in Europe
- non-proliferation of economic aspects of security.

The formal procedure will be for the European Council to give general guidelines for joint action; the Council of Ministers to take decisions unanimously, but defining matters where a qualified majority vote could be used. Joint actions would be binding on the positions and actions of member states.

The provisions also foresee the formulation in the longer term of a **Common Defense Policy**. The Western European Union (WEU), of which nine member states are already members, will be the defense component of the Union, undertaking:

- to form in stages a true European identity in security and defense;
- to increase European responsibilities in this domain;
- to reinforce the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance.

EC countries not currently in the WEU are invited to join. Other European states could become associate members.

Judicial and Internal Affairs (Third Pillar)

The third pillar of the Treaty on European Union covers a substantial range of issues in the area of judicial and internal affairs which remain subject to intergovernmental cooperation within the Council of Ministers, in association with the Commission and in consultation with the Parliament. The new Treaty provisions identify in particular the following areas of common interest:

- asylum policy
- immigration policy
- combatting drug trafficking and organized crime
- creation of a Union-wide police information exchange system, Europol
- combatting fraud.

Press Contacts: Peter Doyle
(202) 862-9530

Ella Krucoff
(202) 862-9540

