

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES  
GENERAL SECRETARIAT

PRESS RELEASE

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Special Council meeting

- General Affairs -

Brussels, 8 November 1987

President: Mr Knud-Erik TYGESEN  
State Secretary,  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs  
of the Kingdom of Denmark

The Governments of the Member States and the Commission of the European Communities were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr Paul DE KEERSMAEKER                      State Secretary for European Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Knud-Erik TYGESEN                      State Secretary,  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Germany:

Mrs Irmgard ADAM-SCHWAETZER              Minister of State,  
Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Greece:

Mr Constantinos LYBEROPOULOS              Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Spain:

Mr Carlos WESTENDORP                      Ambassador, Permanent Representative

France:

Mr François SCHEER                      Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Ireland:

Mr Sean CALLEARY

Minister of State for Foreign  
Affairs

Italy:

Mr Pietro CALAMIA

Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Luxembourg:

Mr Robert GOEBBELS

State Secretary for Foreign  
Affairs

Netherlands:

Mr P.R.H.M. VAN DER LINDEN

State Secretary for Foreign  
Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Victor MARTINS

State Secretary for European  
Affairs

United Kingdom:

Sir David HANNAY

Ambassador, Permanent Representative

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Commission:

Mr Stanley CLINTON DAVIS

Member

MAXIMUM PERMITTED RADIOACTIVITY LEVELS FOR FOODSTUFFS

At its special meeting the Council held a full discussion of the problems raised by this issue, which are:

firstly

- the future permanent arrangements involving the fixing of maximum permitted radioactivity levels for foodstuffs, feedingstuffs and drinking water in the case of abnormal levels of radioactivity or of a nuclear accident,

secondly

- "post-Chernobyl" safeguards relating to the conditions under which agricultural products originating in third countries may be imported following the accident at the Chernobyl power station.

At the close of the proceedings, despite progress on certain specific questions, the Council was obliged to acknowledge that it was impossible for the time being to arrive at a joint position, particularly as the Opinion of the European Parliament on the central issue of maximum permitted levels of radioactivity was still awaited.

That being the case, the following statement was drawn up:

"The Presidency notes that further work is needed on the proposal of the Commission for a Council Regulation (Euratom) laying down maximum permitted radioactivity levels for foodstuffs, feedingstuffs and drinking water in the case of abnormal levels of radioactivity or of a nuclear accident.

The Council has therefore decided to resume its discussion at its meeting on 24 November 1987.

Eleven Member States (<sup>1</sup>) will in the meantime ensure that the maximum tolerances applied to agricultural and processed products for human consumption are not changed. In addition, the Member States recall their statement of 12 May 1986 in which they gave an undertaking not to apply maximum tolerances to such products originating in other Member States which were more stringent than those applied to domestic products."

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<sup>(1)</sup> The Greek delegation reserved its position.

9 November 1987

NOTE BIO (87) 302 AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX  
CC: AUX MEMBRES DU SERVICE PORTE-PAROLE

433

General Affairs Council - Contamination of Foodstuffs (Nov. 8)  
(M. Berendt)

Despite eight hours of continuous negotiation, the Council of Ministers once again failed to reach agreement on a permanent system to be triggered in case of nuclear accidents to set maximum permissible contamination limits for foodstuffs. Ministers were also unable to renew the post-Chernobyl controls on imports which had lapsed at the end of October. It was agreed to put the question on the agenda of the General Affairs Council of November 23/24. Until then, all Member States except Greece have committed themselves to ensure that the maximum tolerances applied to agricultural and processed products for human consumption will not be changed, nor will imports from other Community countries be subjected to stricter rules than those applied to domestic products.

The Commission telex to intervention agencies asking them to apply the post-Chernobyl limits when granting export refunds or buying into intervention remains valid.

The discussion reflected the two approaches, between those countries such as France, Spain, Greece and the United Kingdom which wanted to use the Article 31 committee scientific recommendations as the basis for the permanent system and those such as Germany, Portugal and Luxembourg which could see no justification for moving to less strict figures than those applied under the post-Chernobyl regulation 1707/86.

Early in the meeting the Council President made much of the uncertainty of the Commission's position following the last session of the European Parliament, when the Commission asked for time to consider amendments voted by the Parliament, but with the Commission's encouragement negotiations did continue and there was some evidence of movement. The British, French and Spanish accepted the figures proposed by the Commission and taken up in a presidency compromise, and also accepted a substantial tightening of the figures for strontium. A formula was found to deal with the Italian demand for special treatment for baby foods, but a Commission initiative to satisfy the Greek problem (contaminated durum wheat in store) was not sufficient to remove the Greek block. The German delegation pressed for a major change to the proposed permanent system, whereby the basic standards would be fixed at the strictest possible level, but the Commission would have scope to apply less strict figures in the event of an accident. This new approach had some appeal for Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Denmark, but none at all for the British/French/Spanish camp.

A Presidency proposal for a three-month rollover with further negotiations in January was unsuccessful and the issue will come to the General Affairs Council once again on November 24, the week following the European Parliament session.

Regards,

C.D. EHLERMANN