



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2002)1581 final

Brussels, 24 September 2002

MINUTES
of the 1581st meeting of the Commission
held in Brussels
(Breydel)
on Wednesday 18 September 2002
(morning)

These minutes were approved by the Commission at its 1582nd meeting, held in Strasbourg on 24th September 2002.

They contain 23 pages.

CONTENTS

Attendance list

5-6

1. AGENDAS (OJ(2002)1581/3; SEC(2002)950/2).....	7
2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET (SEC(2002)1581)	7
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND SPECIAL MINUTES OF 1580TH MEETING (11 SEPTEMBER) (PV(2002)1580; PV(2002)1580, PART II AND /2).....	7
4. PARLIAMENT	7
<i>PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS GROUP (SP(2002)2974)</i>	7
5. PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE (SI(2002)994)	10
6. WORK OF THE CONVENTION (SEC(2002)987)	10
7. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF COMMUNITY LAW: STATE AID AND INFRINGEMENTS (SEC(2002)934; SEC(2002)959)	11
7.1. <i>STATE AID (SEC(2002)934)</i>	11
7.2. <i>INFRINGEMENTS - URGENT OR DEFERRED CASES (SEC(2002)959)</i>	11
8. WRITTEN PROCEDURES AND EMPOWERMENT	11
8.1. <i>WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2002)951 to /4)</i>	11
8.2. <i>SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2002)953)</i>	11
8.3. <i>DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS</i>	13
9. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2002)955/2)	13
ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (PERS(2002)124)	13

9.1. DG INFSO - APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 50 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS (SECOND STAGE) WITH RESPECT TO AN A2 OFFICIAL.....	13
9.2. DG AIDCO - APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 50 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS (SECOND STAGE) WITH RESPECT TO AN A2 OFFICIAL.....	14
10. LETTER OF AMENDMENT NO 1 TO PRELIMINARY DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY AND AMENDING BUDGET NO 4/2002 - SECTION III - COMMISSION (SEC(2002)982 AND /2; SEC(2002)981/4)	14
11. LETTER OF AMENDMENT NO 2 TO THE PRELIMINARY DRAFT BUDGET 2003 - SECTION III - COMMISSION (SEC(2002)981 TO /4).....	15
12. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT: ASSISTING DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO BENEFIT FROM TRADE (COM(2002)513 TO /4; SEC(2002)984).....	15
13. OTHER BUSINESS.....	16
PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION AMENDING REGULATION (EC) NO 1268/1999 ON COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR PRE-ACCESSION MEASURES FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE APPLICANT COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN THE PRE-ACCESSION PERIOD (COM(2002)519).....	16
14. PARLIAMENT (CONTINUED FROM ITEM 4)	16
14.1. MEETING OF PARLIAMENT'S CONFERENCE OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN (BRUSSELS, 17 SEPTEMBER).....	16
14.2. OTHER MATTERS	16
15. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF COMMUNITY LAW: INFRINGEMENTS (CONTINUED FROM ITEM 7) (SEC(2002)952 TO /3; SEC(2002)965 AND /2)	17
FRANCE - OBSTACLES TO FREE MOVEMENT THROUGH THE CHANNEL TUNNEL (SEC(2002)952 to /3; SEC(2002)965 and /2).....	17

16. WRITTEN PROCEDURES AND EMPOWERMENT (CONTINUED FROM ITEM 8).....	18
<i>SUSPENDED WRITTEN PROCEDURE: PE E/2002/1674 - SECOND RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME FOR AFGHANISTAN (€70 MILLION) (C(2002)3337)</i>	
	18
17. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION ESTABLISHING THE EUROPEAN UNION SOLIDARITY FUND (COM(2002)514 TO /5; SEC(2002)983).....	18
18. TRANSIT OF PERSONS AND GOODS TO AND FROM KALININGRAD AFTER ENLARGEMENT (COM(2002)510 TO /4; SEC(2002)963).....	21
19. RELATIONS WITH NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES.....	23

Single sitting: Wednesday 18 September (morning)

The sitting opened at 0920 hours with Mr Prodi, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr PRODI	President
Mr KINNOCK	Vice-President
Ms de PALACIO	Vice-President
Mr MONTI	
Mr LIIKANEN	
Mr BOLKESTEIN	
Mr BUSQUIN	
Mr SOLBES	
Mr NIELSON	
Mr VERHEUGEN	
Mr PATTEN	Except items 1 to 17
Mr LAMY	Except part of item 18 and item 19
Mr BYRNE	Except part of item 17
Mr BARNIER	
Ms REDING	
Ms SCHREYER	
Ms WALLSTRÖM	
Mr VITORINO	Except items 17 to 19
Ms DIAMANTOPOULOU	

Absent:

Mr FISCHLER

The following sat in to represent absent Members of the Commission

Mr LOSCH	A member of Mr Fischler's staff	
Mr KORTE	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr Patten	Items 1 to 17
Mr THERY	Chef de cabinet to Mr Lamy	Part of item 18 and item 19
Mr POWER	Chef de cabinet to Mr Byrne	Part of item 17
Mr NUNES de ALMEIDA	A member of Mr Vitorino's staff	Items 17 to 19

The following also sat in

Mr PETITE	Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr MANSERVISI	Chef de cabinet to the President	
Mr FAULL	Commission Spokesman	
Mr MAMER	Spokesman	Item 9
Mr HENIN	Spokesman	Item 17
Mr KEMPPINEN	Spokesman	
Ms CORUGEDO STENEBOERG	Press and Communication DG	
Mr WIEGAND	Press and Communication DG	Item 18
Ms GROEBNER	Adviser in the President's Office	Item 17
Mr SANNINO	A member of the President's staff	Item 18
Mr SCHMIDT	A member of Mr Nielson's staff	
Ms ERLER	A member of Mr Verheugen's staff	Item 18
Mr CHILD	A member of Mr Patten's staff	Item 18
Mr MARTEAU	A member of Mr Barnier's staff	Item 17
Mr EMSCHERMANN	A member of the Ms Schreyer's staff	Item 13
Mr LEYGUES	Regional Policy DG	Item 17
Mr HENRIKSSON	Enlargement DG	Item 18

Secretary: Mr O'SULLIVAN, Secretary-General, assisted by Mr BISARRE, Director in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2002)1581/3; SEC(2002)950/2)

The Commission took note of the agenda for that day's meeting and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(SEC(2002)1581)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 16 September.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND SPECIAL MINUTES OF 1580th MEETING

(11 September)

(PV(2002)1580; PV(2002)1580, Part II and /2)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 1580th meeting.

4. PARLIAMENT

PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS GROUP

(SP(2002)2974)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Group held on 12 September (SP(2002)2974).

It paid particular attention to the following:

a) Preparations for September II to December part-sessions

(point 2 of the record)

The Commission, in accordance with the rules in force, authorised the Commission Members responsible, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, Ms de PALACIO and any other Members associated, to take a position on Parliament's amendments to its proposals.

It paid particular attention to the following:

2nd reading

- HAUTALA report, Quality of petrol and diesel fuels, COM(2001)241, 01/0107 (COD)

The Commission adopted the line set out in SP(2002)2948 involving the rejection of some amendments.

- CALLANAN report, Recreational craft, COM(2000)639, 00/0262 (COD)

The Commission adopted the line set out in SP(2002)2950 involving the rejection of some amendments.

Empowerment

Under Article 13 of its Rules of Procedure, the Commission empowered Mr SOLBES, Ms WALLSTRÖM, Mr LIIKANEN, Mr BOLKESTEIN and Ms de PALACIO, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Member responsible for relations with Parliament and any other Members associated, to adopt its opinion on the amendments, together with any amended proposals, on the basis of the line set out in SP(2002)2921, 2948, 2950, 2952, 2953, 2894 and 2897, once Parliament had given its opinion, and transmit

them to the Council in accordance with Article 251(2)(c) of the Treaty for the following:

- LULLING report, Structural business statistics,
COM(2001)38, 01/0023 (COD)
- HAUTALA report, Quality of petrol and diesel fuels,
COM(2001)241, 01/0107 (COD)
- CALLANAN report, Recreational craft,
COM(2000)639, 00/0262 (COD)
- INGLEWOOD report, Life assurance,
COM(2000)398, 00/0162 (COD)
- ZAPPALA report, Common procurement vocabulary (CPV),
COM(2001)449, 01/0179 (COD)
- BAKOPOULOS report, Pollution from ships,
COM(2000)489, 00/0236-0237 (COD)
- HATZIDAKIS report, Speed limitation devices for certain categories of
motor vehicles,
COM(2001)318, 01/0135 (COD)

b) Action taken on Parliament's opinions and resolutions

(point 5 of the record)

- The Commission adopted the replies to own-initiative resolutions adopted by Parliament to which the Commission had undertaken to reply (SP(2002)2882), for transmission to Parliament.
- The Commission adopted SP(2002)2821/2 on the action taken on Parliament's opinions and resolutions adopted at its July part-session.

c) Other matters (point 8 of the record)

Budget debate on 24 September: Commission's presence

The Commission took note of the arrangements made, particularly as regards the outcome of the Council meeting on 24 September, to enable Commission Members to participate in Parliament's budget debate the same day.

5. PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE
(SI(2002)994)

COUNCIL AFFAIRS GROUP (CAG)
(SI(2002)994)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Council Affairs Group held on Friday 13 September (SI(2002)994).

6. WORK OF THE CONVENTION
(SEC(2002)987)

The Commission took note of the information in SEC(2002)987.

**7. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF COMMUNITY LAW: STATE AID
AND INFRINGEMENTS**

(SEC(2002)934; SEC(2002)959)

7.1. STATE AID

(SEC(2002)934)

The Commission adopted the decisions in SEC(2002)934.

7.2. INFRINGEMENTS - URGENT OR DEFERRED CASES

(SEC(2002)959)

The Commission adopted the decisions in SEC(2002)959.

8. WRITTEN PROCEDURES AND EMPOWERMENT

8.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2002)951 to /4)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted by written procedure between 9 and 13 September.

8.2. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2002)953)

The Commission took note of the following written procedures initiated between 9 and 13 September for the adoption of decisions with political implications:

Time limit: 16.09.2002

E/2002/1734 - C(2002)3329 DG COMP

Commission Directive on competition in the markets for electronic communications networks and services

E/2002/1780 - C(2002)3410 DG TREN

URGENT PROCEDURE

Commission decision to open the formal examination procedure laid down in Article 88(2) of the EC Treaty concerning state aid N 584/2002 (aviation) - 585/2002 (maritime) and extension/addendum of state aid N 246/2001 - Denmark: *Working environment certificate*.

Time limit: 17.09.2002

E/2002/1772 - COM(2002)516 DG ENV

URGENT PROCEDURE

Proposal for a Council decision on the Community position to be adopted on certain proposals submitted at the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Time limit: 19.09.2002

E/2002/1765 DG FISH

Commission communication *A strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture*.

8.3. *DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS*

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation procedure between 9 and 13 September, as archived on the "Greffé 2000" (Registry) website.

9. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2002)955/2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2002)124)

9.1. *DG INFO - APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 50 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS (SECOND STAGE) WITH RESPECT TO AN A2 OFFICIAL*

The Commission continued its discussions on this matter, begun on 19 June (PV(2002)1572).

The Commission, on a proposal from Mr KINNOCK, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr LIIKANEN, adopted the decision in PERS(2002)134 to apply the second stage of the procedure laid down in Article 50 of the Staff Regulations with respect to Mr George METAKIDES, an A2 official and currently Director of Directorate E (Essential information society technologies and infrastructures) in the Information Society DG.

This decision would take effect on 1 December.

**9.2. DG AIDCO - APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 50 OF THE STAFF
REGULATIONS (SECOND STAGE) WITH RESPECT TO AN
A2 OFFICIAL**

The Commission continued its discussions on this matter, begun on 11 June (PV(2002)1571).

The Commission, on a proposal from Mr KINNOCK, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, Mr PATTEN and Mr NIELSON, adopted the decision in PERS(2002)135 to apply the second stage of the procedure laid down in Article 50 of the Staff Regulations with respect to Mr José SILVA DOMINGOS, an A2 official and currently Director of Directorate C (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific) in the EuropeAid Cooperation Office.

This decision would take effect on 1 January 2003.

**10. LETTER OF AMENDMENT NO 1 TO PRELIMINARY DRAFT
SUPPLEMENTARY AND AMENDING BUDGET No 4/2002 - SECTION III -
COMMISSION
(SEC(2002)982 and /2; SEC(2002)981/4)**

The Commission approved Letter of amendment No 1 to preliminary draft supplementary and amending budget No 4/2001 as set out in SEC(2002)982/2, for transmission to Parliament and the Council.

**11. LETTER OF AMENDMENT No 2 TO THE PRELIMINARY DRAFT
BUDGET 2003 - SECTION III - COMMISSION
(SEC(2002)981 to /4)**

The Commission referred to the provisions on the Infrastructure and Logistics Office in Luxembourg (item 2.5.2.2 of SEC(2002)981) and the definition of its powers, particularly as regards infrastructure and logistics for the Publications Office. It decided to amend that paragraph to clarify that no decision would be taken to this effect without prior consultation of the Management Board and staff of the Publications Office.

Subject to this amendment, the Commission approved Letter of amendment No 2 to the preliminary draft budget for 2003, as set out in SEC(2002)981, for transmission to Parliament and the Council.

**12. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT: ASSISTING DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
TO BENEFIT FROM TRADE
(COM(2002)513 to /4; SEC(2002)984)**

The Commission approved the communication in COM(2002)513/4 for transmission to Parliament and the Council.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

***PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION AMENDING REGULATION
(EC) NO 1268/1999 ON COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR PRE-ACCESSION
MEASURES FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE
APPLICANT COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN THE
PRE-ACCESSION PERIOD
(COM(2002)519)***

The Commission approved this proposal for transmission to the Council,
Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

14. PARLIAMENT (continued from item 4)

***14.1. MEETING OF PARLIAMENT'S CONFERENCE OF COMMITTEE
CHAIRMEN
(BRUSSELS, 17 SEPTEMBER)***

Ms de PALACIO reported on the meeting of Parliament's Conference of
Committee Chairmen, which she had attended, on the Commission's annual
policy strategy and legislative and work programme for 2003. She would be
transmitting to each Member concerned the specific comments made by
certain Committee Chairmen on the subject areas for which they were
responsible.

14.2. OTHER MATTERS

Ms de PALACIO referred to the discharge procedure on implementation of
the 2000 Budget.

The Commission took note of the arrangements made by Ms SCHREYER to provide Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control with rapid and complete information on the reform process under way in relation to the Commission's accounting system.

**15. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF COMMUNITY LAW:
INFRINGEMENTS (continued from item 7)
(SEC(2002)952 to /3; SEC(2002)965 and /2)**

***FRANCE - OBSTACLES TO FREE MOVEMENT THROUGH THE CHANNEL
TUNNEL***

(SEC(2002)952 to /3; SEC(2002)965 and /2)

Mr BOLKESTEIN reported on difficulties in the transport of goods by rail via the Channel tunnel (reduction in the level of railway traffic) because of the control measures introduced by the French authorities to combat illegal immigration into the United Kingdom from the Sangatte centre.

He reminded the meeting of the background of the contacts made and the exchanges of letters between the Commission and the French authorities under Article 3 (request for information) of Council Regulation (EC) No 2679/98 (the "strawberries Regulation"). He noted that railway traffic, though still not back to its normal level, had improved following the measures taken by the French authorities, who expected the situation to return to normal at the beginning of 2003.

He concluded that initiation of the procedure laid down in Article 5 of the Regulation could therefore be suspended at this stage.

The Commission took note of this information.

16. WRITTEN PROCEDURES AND EMPOWERMENT

(continued from item 8)

SUSPENDED WRITTEN PROCEDURE:

***PE E/2002/1674 - SECOND RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME FOR
AFGHANISTAN (€70 MILLION)
(C(2002)3337)***

Mr PATTEN referred to a written procedure relating to the second reconstruction programme for Afghanistan, the adoption of which had been suspended pending agreement between Commission Members on certain amendments proposed by a Member.

He reminded the meeting of the major political importance of maintaining the Commission's image as a speedy and effective provider of external aid in general and aid for reconstruction in Afghanistan in particular. He undertook to find agreement quickly on the amendments proposed concerning this project.

In conclusion, the PRESIDENT stated that this written procedure should be adopted soon as possible.

**17. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION ESTABLISHING THE
EUROPEAN UNION SOLIDARITY FUND**

(COM(2002)514 to /5; SEC(2002)983)

Mr BARNIER, in agreement with Ms SCHREYER, Ms WALLSTRÖM, Mr FISCHLER and Mr VERHEUGEN, presented a proposal for a Council Regulation establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund.

He drew attention to the speed of the Commission's response after the catastrophic floods in August: the Commission adopted the draft legal basis for the implementation of this fund on 18 September, i.e. exactly one month after the on-the-spot visit made by the PRESIDENT, himself and other Members to the affected regions (18 August). In the meantime, a communication had been adopted on the principle of establishing such a fund (28 August), as had a draft interinstitutional agreement on the creation of a new flexibility instrument to mobilise the necessary appropriations within the financial perspective 2000-06 (11 September).

The purpose of this new instrument would be different from that of the Structural Funds and other instruments: its aim was to give immediate financial assistance to the inhabitants, regions, and countries hit by a catastrophe, to restore living conditions to as normal a state as possible, and not to finance long-term reconstruction projects for infrastructure and the economic fabric.

The proposed instrument was intended to ensure that any such action would be balanced (criteria for triggering intervention), useful (scope - intervention for repair and prevention) and effective (speed of intervention).

As regards the criteria (quantitative: thresholds of €1 billion or 0.5% of GDP for damage; qualitative: "substantial part" of the population affected), he proposed specifying in Article 2(2) of the proposal for a Regulation that the qualitative criterion concerning population would come into play only in very exceptional circumstances.

Among the conclusions to be drawn from the experience of recent events was the need to approximate the practices of the Member States, which currently differed widely, as regards the mechanisms for insurance against these natural phenomena, and also the need to finance projects to prevent such risks under the future regional and cohesion policy.

The Commission discussed:

- the criteria to be used for the threshold for triggering intervention by the fund (Article 2);
- the advisability of concluding tripartite agreements to which the regional or local authorities would be party (Article 5);
- the maximum period during which the Community subsidy might be used (Article 8);
- the possibility of intervening also in the neighbouring areas of other states (Article 3);
- taking into consideration insurance reimbursements and compensation from third parties for the purpose of assistance from the fund (Article 8).

Following this discussion, and on a proposal from Mr BARNIER, the PRESIDENT concluded:

- the three criteria (two quantitative and one qualitative) for triggering intervention by the fund should be maintained, but the qualitative criterion would come into play only in very exceptional circumstances (to be clarified in a separate subparagraph of Article 2(2));
- the reference to tripartite agreements involving regional and local authorities (Article 5) should be maintained, on the understanding that these agreements would be concluded only on the initiative of the government of the Member State concerned, which would remain the Commission's direct interlocutor;
- the deadline for the use of Community subsidies should be reduced to two years instead of three (Article 8, first and second paragraphs);

- the form of words covering the ability to intervene in the neighbouring areas of other states affected by the catastrophe should be redrafted (Article 3(2)).

Subject to these amendments, the Commission adopted the proposal for a Council Regulation in COM(2002)514/5 for transmission to the Council, Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

The Commission congratulated and thanked the Commission Members, Members' Offices and departments concerned for their remarkable effectiveness in drawing up this high-quality proposal so quickly.

**18. TRANSIT OF PERSONS AND GOODS TO AND FROM KALININGRAD
AFTER ENLARGEMENT
(COM(2002)510 to /4; SEC(2002)963)**

Mr PATTEN, speaking also on behalf of Mr VERHEUGEN, Mr VITORINO and Mr BOLKESTEIN, presented a draft communication to the Council concerning the transit of persons and goods to and from Kaliningrad after enlargement.

This communication should be viewed in the general political context both of enlargement and of bilateral relations between the European Union and Russia. He reminded the meeting of the background to the positions taken previously on both sides and pointed out that finally the Seville European Council had invited the Commission *"to submit, in time for its Brussels meeting, an additional study on the possibilities for an effective and flexible solution of the transit of persons and goods to and from the Kaliningrad oblast, in compliance with the acquis and in agreement with the candidate countries concerned"*.

Any solution to this problem must meet three essential conditions:

- guarantee the ability of current and future Member States to control their borders and the movement of persons and goods on their territory;
- avoid any measure that could jeopardise the enlargement process, by safeguarding the integrity of the existing body of Community law and practice which the EU was requiring the applicant countries to adopt;
- meet Russia's concerns in a way that would be compatible with the enlargement process and with a view to the creation of a strategic partnership with Russia, not least on the issue of border control.

Mr PATTEN set out the key points of the proposal before the Commission:

- for the transit of persons: a package of measures with at its centre the delivery by the Russian authorities from 1 January 2003 of a specific document (the "facilitated transit document") to travellers making frequent direct journeys between Kaliningrad and Russia;
- for the transit of goods: the normal application of the existing provisions of the international convention on road transport (TIR Convention) and the simplified rules for railway transit already permitted by Community rules.

The Commission held an exchange of views on certain points of this communication, and particularly Russia's requests as to:

- the introduction of a visa-free transit system for journeys in non-stop trains between Kaliningrad and Russia;
- definition of the conditions under which such a visa-free system could in due course be introduced.

Subject to an amendment adopted during the meeting, aimed at preserving the position of Lithuania, the Commission approved the communication in

COM(2002)510/4 for transmission to the Council and, for information, to Parliament.

19. RELATIONS WITH NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

Mr PATTEN reported on the discussions of the "Quartet" (United States, United Nations, Russia, EU) at its meeting in New York on 17 September concerning the Middle East peace process. This meeting had been followed by bilateral meetings in turn with the Foreign Ministers of the Arab countries, the Israeli Foreign Minister (Mr PERES) and the representative of the Palestinian Authority (Mr SHAATH).

He commented on the prospects for securing agreement on the EU proposals for firming up the peace process and said it was important to maintain the momentum generated by the progress made in the recent period.

*

* *

The Commission's other discussions on certain agenda items are recorded in the special minutes.

*

* *

The meeting closed at 1150 hours.