EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

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Strasbourg, 13 February 2007

<u>MINUTES</u>

of the 1775th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 7 February 2007

(morning)

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Single sitting: Wednesday 7 February 2007 (morning)

The sitting opened at 0906 hours with Mr BARROSO, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr BARROSO	President	
Ms WALLSTRÖM	Vice-President	
Mr VERHEUGEN	Vice-President	Items 1 to 14
Mr BARROT	Vice-President	
Mr FRATTINI	Vice-President	
Ms REDING		
Mr DIMAS		
Mr ALMUNIA		Items 1 to 14
Ms GRYBAUSKAITÉ		
Mr FIGEL’		Items 1 to 12
Mr KYPRIANOU		Items 1 to 13/14 in part
Mr REHN		Items 1 to 13/14 in part
Mr MICHEL		Items 1 to 14
Mr KOVÁCS		
Ms KROES		
Ms FISCHER BOEL		
Mr McCREEVY		
Mr ŠPIDLA		
Mr MANDELSON		
Mr PIEBALGS		
Ms KUNEVA		
Mr ORBAN		

Absent:

Mr KALLAS	Vice-President
Mr ALMUNIA	
Mr BORG	
Mr POTOČNIK	
Ms FERRERO-WALDNER	

The following sat in to represent absent Members of the Commission

Mr SCHMIDT	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr KALLAS	
Mr KORTE	Chef de cabinet to Ms HÜBNER	
Mr TABONE	Chef de cabinet to Mr BORG	
Mr DRÖLL	Chef de cabinet to Mr POTOČNIK	Items 12 (in part) and 15
Mr CHILD	Chef de cabinet to Ms FERRERO-WALDNER	

The following also sat in

Mr VALE DE ALMEIDA	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Ms DURAND	Deputy Director-General of the Legal Service	
Ms CORUGEDO STENEBERG	DG Communication	
Mr LAITENBERGER	Commission Spokesman	
Mr GASPAR	Acting Director-General, Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA)	
Mr THEBAULT	Deputy Chef de Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr CABRAL	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's office	Items 1 to 14
Mrs MARTINHO	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's office	Item 15 (in part)
Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA	A member of the PRESIDENT's staff	
Ms ERLER	Chef de cabinet to Mr VERHEUGEN	Items 13 and 14
Ms KONTOU	Chef de cabinet to Mr DIMAS	Items 13 and 14
Mr ADAMIŠ	Chef de cabinet to Mr FIGEL’	Items 12 (in part) and 15
Mr BRUNET	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr KYPRIANOU	Items 13/14 (in part) and 15
Mr PESONEN	Chef de cabinet to Mr REHN	Items 13/14 (in part) and 15
Ms SCHREIBER	Chef de cabinet to Mr ŠPIDLA	Item 15
Mr PAQUE	DG Environment	Items 13 and 14

Secretary: Ms DAY, Secretary-General, assisted by Mr AYET PUIGARNAU, Director in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS
(OJ(2007) 1775/3; SEC(2007)130/2)

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

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET
(SEC(2007)1775)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 5 February.

3. MINUTES AND SPECIAL MINUTES OF 1774TH MEETING (31 JANUARY)
(PV(2007)1774; PV(2007)1774 AND /2)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 1774th meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
(SEC(2007)135)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group held on Friday 2 February (SEC(2007)135).

It paid particular attention to the following:

4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) Action to be taken on Parliament's opinions
(SP(2007) 487)

The Commission took note of SP(2007) 487, drawn up following Parliament’s January II 2007 part-session.

ii) Preparations for February part-session
(Item 1.2 of the record of the IRG)

In accordance with the rules in force, the Commission authorised the Commission Members responsible, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms WALLSTRÖM and any other Members concerned, to take a position on Parliament’s amendments to its proposals.

It paid particular attention to the following:

<u>Codecision – 1st reading</u>

– JACKSON Report – Revision of Framework Directive on Waste – COM(2005) 667 – 2005/0281 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2007)489 and /2.

– BÖSCH Report – Protection of the Community's financial interests – Hercule II Programme – COM(2006) 339 – 2006/0114 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2007) 490 and /2, and authorised MR KALLAS to pursue contacts with Parliament and the Council in order to reach agreement at first reading following the line set out in those documents.

Consultation

- GRÄSSLE / PAHOR Report – Arrangements on the implementation of Financial Regulation – SEC(2006) 866 – 2006/0900 (CNS)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2007)492 and /2.

- ANDERSSON Report – Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States – COM(2006) 815 – 2006/0271 (CNS)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2007)491.

4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL (SI(2007) 70)

The Commission took note of the information supplied in SI(2006)70 relating to Council meetings held on 1 and 14 February.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT (SP(2007) 517)

The Commission took note of the information on the outcome of Parliament's January II 2007 part-session in SP(2007) 517.

iii) Action taken on Parliament's non-legislative resolutions (Item 3.3.1 of the record of the IRG)

The Commission adopted SP(2007)329 and /3 on action taken on non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its November II 2006 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

iv) Action taken on Parliament's resolution concerning the Commission's legislative and work programme for 2007 (point 3.3.2 of the record of the IRG)

The Commission approved SP(2007) 498/3 on the action taken on Parliament's resolution on the Commission's legislative and work programme for 2007, adopted at its meeting of December 2006, for transmission to Parliament.

5. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF COMMUNITY LAW

STATE AID – INDIVIDUAL CASES – RECAPITULATIVE LIST (SEC(2007)149/2)

The Commission adopted the decisions in the recapitulative list SEC(2007)149/2.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2007)131 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 29 January and 2 February.

6.2. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2007)132)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 5 and 9 February.

6.3. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2007)133 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 29 January and 2 February.

6.4. *DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS*

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation procedure between 29 January and 2 February, as archived on the "Greffe 2000" (Registry) website.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2007)134/2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2007)19)

7.1. *DG RELEX – APPOINTMENT OF AD14/15 DIRECTOR (PERS(2007)2 A /5)*

The Commission had before it the list of applications for the post of Director of the Directorate for North America, East Asia, Australia, New Zealand, EEA, EFTA, San Marino, Andorra and Monaco in the Directorate-General for External Relations, published under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations (PERS(2007)2 to /3).

The Commission took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 21 December 2006 and 25 January 2007 (PERS(2007)2/4 and /5).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants’ qualifications for the post. It also considered the applicants' ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms FERRERO-WALDNER, it then decided to appoint Mr Alan SEATTER to the vacant post.

This decision would take effect on a date to be determined.

7.2. DG ADMIN – APPLICATION OF THE ARTICLE 50 PROCEDURE (SECOND STAGE) WITH RESPECT TO AN AD15 OFFICIAL (PERS(2007)18)

The Commission continued its discussions on this matter, begun on 20 December 2006 (PV(2006)1770).

The Commission, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr KOVACS, adopted the decision in PERS(2007)18 to apply the second stage of the procedure laid down in Article 50 of the Staff Regulations with respect to Mr Manuel ARNAL MONREAL, an AD15 official, currently Adviser hors classe in DG Tax and Customs.

This decision would take effect on 1 January 2008.

7.3. DG ADMIN – RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS (SEC(2007)152; C(2007)380 AND /2)

On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission:

– took note of the communication distributed as SEC(2007) 152;

– adopted the decision concerning the Rules of Procedure of the Consultative Committee on Appointments, set out in C(2007) 380 and /2.

This decision would take effect immediately.

8. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL OPINIONS, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 5(3) OF COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) 1466/97 CONCERNING UPDATED STABILITY PROGRAMMES FOR IRELAND (2006-2009), LUXEMBOURG (2006-2009) AND FINLAND (2006-2010) (SEC(2007)136 TO /3; SEC(2007)137 AND /2; SEC(2007)138; SEC(2007)143; SEC(2007)144)

The Commission adopted recommendations for Council opinions concerning updated stability programmes for Ireland, Luxembourg and Finland, as set out in SEC(2007) 136/3, SEC(2007) 137/2 and SEC(2007) 138, for transmission to the Council.

9. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL OPINIONS, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 9(3) OF COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) 1466/97 CONCERNING UPDATED CONVERGENCE PROGRAMMES FOR HUNGARY (2006-2010), MALTA (2006-2009) AND POLAND (2006-2009) (SEC(2007)139 AND /2; SEC(2007)140 TO /3; SEC(2007)141 AND /2; SEC(2007)143; SEC(2007)144)

The Commission adopted the recommendations for Council opinions concerning updated convergence programmes for Hungary, Malta and Poland, as set out in SEC(2007) 139/2, SEC(2007) 140/3 and SEC(2007) 141/2, for transmission to the Council.

10. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION WITH A VIEW TO BRINGING AN END TO THE SITUATION OF AN EXCESSIVE GOVERNMENT DEFICIT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM -- APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 104(7) OF THE EC TREATY
(SEC(2007)142 TO /3; SEC(2007)144)

The Commission adopted the recommendation for a Council recommendation, as set out in SEC(2007) 142/3, for transmission to the Council.

11. RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

MEETING OF* QUARTET *CONCERNING THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST (WASHINGTON, 2 FEBRUARY 2007)
(SEC(2007)180)

The Commission took note of the information note from Ms FERRERO-WALDNER in SEC(2007)180.

12. GREEN PAPER ON THE REVIEW OF THE CONSUMER ACQUIS
(COM(2006)744 TO /6; SEC(2007)150; SEC(2006)1544)

Ms KUNEVA presented the main points of Green Paper on the Review of the Consumer Acquis, which was up for Commission approval by finalisation written procedure on Thursday 8 February (E/169/2007).

Ms KUNEVA thanked Mr KYPRIANOU for having launched several of the activities the results of which underlay Green Paper, and all Members for the contributions made by their departments. She considered this Green Paper as the keystone of the consumer protection policy that she intended to operate throughout her term of office, and pointed to the linkage with the Commission’s major political priorities – growth and employment, the better regulation initiative and the wish to bring the EU closer to its citizens.

Ms KUNEVA pointed out that the review of the consumer acquis pursued two main objectives: first, to empower consumers, which was in the interests of the general public, and stimulate competition and efforts under way in certain specific sectors such as telecommunications, and second, to optimise their level of satisfaction in terms of prices, choice, quality, diversity and safety, which was essential for the smooth operation of the market. She reported that, as consumers were the main driving force in the economy, a higher level of safety and harmonisation was needed to build the confidence that would enable cross-border trade to develop and allow 27 mini-markets to be superseded by a single European retail market. She added that this development was a necessity in the globalised economy but that it was not feasible without the willingness and the contribution of the Member States.

In conclusion Ms KUNEVA reminded the meeting that the purpose of the Green Paper was to launch a debate the results of which would be presented after three months of public consultation.

The Commission then held an exchange of views, highlighting the following aspects:

- general support for the Green Paper, which addressed important issues reflecting genuine public concern;

- full continuity of work in the context of the reassignment of the consumer protection portfolio since 1 January 2007, and the quality of the work done by both Commission Members concerned;

- support for greater harmonisation, which would help boost consumer confidence;

- the importance of ensuring that this high level of harmonisation came with a high level of consumer protection, as the Treaty itself required;

- the challenge that harmonisation would represent in the current context of widely-varying levels of consumer protection in the 27 Member States;

- the need for this review with the development of markets and particularly e-commerce, which demanded greater consumer safety;

- the linkage with the better regulation initiative and the Commission’s concern for simplification, and with the development of the internal market;

- the contribution to the Commission's credibility and to the construction of a Union that was more responsive to its citizens’ concerns;

- the importance of this initiative, which demonstrated the value added by the EU in consumer protection matters, in terms of a “Europe of results”;

- the value of a Green Paper to underlie a wide-ranging public debate on these questions;

- the horizontal nature of the consumer interest, which was affected by all policies and should be taken into account in all forms of action taken;

- complementarity between consumer protection action and the competition rules.

Ms KUNEVA thanked all Commission Members, and in particular Mr KYPRIANOU, for their support for this initiative, which she felt should be seen in the broader context of a political vision for the future as regards contract law. She stated that it was her intention to conduct the widest possible consultations. She reaffirmed that the objective was to reach the highest possible level of consumer protection and that she would spare no efforts to that end.

The PRESIDENT welcomed this most timely Green Paper and thanked Ms KUNEVA and Mr KYPRIANOU for their management of the dossier. He felt that this was a balanced document that supplied a sound framework for the discussion and set its ambitions at the right level without being any more than a consultation paper. He asked all Commission Members to support Ms KUNEVA in all consumer protection initiatives, as this was at the heart of this Commission’s programme for the citizen.

The Commission took note of these observations and of the briefing note by Ms KUNEVA in SEC(2007)150.

**13. COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – A COMPETITIVE AUTOMOTIVE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE 21ST CENTURY – COMMISSION'S POSITION ON THE "CARS 21" HIGH-LEVEL GROUP FINAL REPORT
(COM(2007)22 TO /3; SEC(2007)79; SEC(2007)176)**

**14. COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – RESULTS OF THE REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY TO REDUCE CO_2 EMISSIONS FROM PASSENGER CARS AND LIGHT-COMMERCIAL VEHICLES
(COM(2007)19 TO /3; SEC(2007)80; SEC(2007)176)**

The Commission simultaneously considered the communications tabled respectively by Mr VERHEUGEN and Mr DIMAS.

First Mr VERHEUGEN presented the communication on the Commission's position on the final report of the "CARS 21" high-level group, focusing on the part relating to the reduction of CO_2 emissions in road transport. He had had contacts on this point with Mr DIMAS to ensure that the two communications submitted to the Commission for approval that day were perfectly consistent with one another. Since 1995 the specific target in this sector had been set at 120 g CO_2/km by 2012. The high-level group had recommended an integrated approach encompassing a variety of measures to achieve that target. For several months Mr VERHEUGEN and Mr DIMAS had been agreed on the need to move on to the legislative stage.

Mr VERHEUGEN felt that these twin communications offered an opportunity to demonstrate, on the one hand, that it was possible to combine job protection, action on CO_2 emissions and technological innovation and, on the other, that the EU was at the forefront of the search for a way of reconciling those three demands. Without denying the major technological challenges involved, Mr VERHEUGEN felt that such a solution was technically feasible. Moreover, the research and development work required to achieve that goal could only be beneficial for the automotive industry, which had always played a key role in innovation.

He stressed the vital importance of the automotive industry for jobs and the European economy, particularly as it accounted for a large share of exports. Major investment would be required to achieve the target set, but it was important to ensure that prices remained competitive in relation to quality, particularly for mid-range vehicles, in order to dissuade consumers from turning to non-Community manufacturers to the detriment of jobs in Europe. He mentioned in passing that, given the wide diversity of manufacturers and technologies applied, a reduction in CO_2 emissions in road transport would not be achieved by one single technical solution.

As regards more powerful vehicles, which weighed heavily in exports, Mr VERHEUGEN noted that their emissions depended on how they were used and that modern diesel engines could even perform favourably in this regard on long journeys.

Mr VERHEUGEN then stressed the importance of biofuels and their potential influence on the emissions of existing vehicles. The vehicle fleet was replaced only every twelve years, so, to achieve the reduction target, action would also have to be taken on vehicles already on the road, hence the need to include biofuels in the proposed strategy.

He then pointed out that the Member States would have to make a contribution to the reduction effort, which could take the form of a policy of tax incentives, traffic management and adjustments to infrastructure. It was also important to inform consumers and raise their awareness in order to bring about a gradual change in their behaviour and boost their understanding of the environmental benefits which offset the extra cost that might arise from buying a less polluting car.

Lastly, on the forthcoming legislative stage, Mr VERHEUGEN mentioned the importance of studying all the options open and having a detailed impact assessment prepared. In conclusion, he was pleased that, with this dual package, the EU was going further than the rest of the world in combating CO_2 emissions and hence tackling climate change, and thanked the PRESIDENT in particular for his help in managing this sensitive issue.

Mr DIMAS began by mentioning the ambitious series of measures on energy and climate change adopted on 10 January, which had reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to the Kyoto Protocol and shown its willingness to take further action in that field. He recalled the Kyoto target of reducing the greenhouse gas emissions of the industrialised countries by 30% by 2020 and the 20% target set for the EU.

Mr DIMAS therefore argued that the communication presented that day was a test of the Commission's credibility and its ability to follow through on its commitments. He felt that the 1995 objective of 120 g CO_2/km by 2012 was a vital contribution to achieving the EU's target under the Kyoto Protocol and warned that, without the additional efforts proposed under the strategy for CO_2 emissions from vehicles, there would be a shortfall of nearly 10% in the overall effort required by Kyoto. He also mentioned the importance of reducing the consumption of conventional fuels in connection with the Union's policy of promoting better energy efficiency.

Mr DIMAS then spelled out the content of the proposed approach for achieving the target of 120 g CO_2/km, involving a mandatory reduction in CO_2 emissions from cars under the following arrangements: an average threshold of 130 g CO_2/km for new vehicles, to be achieved by means of technological improvements in car engines, plus a further reduction of 10 g through technological progress in light commercial vehicles, tyres, air-conditioning systems, the use of gear-shift indicators and biofuels. The Commission would subsequently propose a mandatory legislative framework to implement these measures.

Mr DIMAS explained that this well-defined and integrated approach was based on contributions from measurable, monitorable and accountable sources and that it was important not to count twice the potential reductions offered by certain measures.

The threshold of 130 g CO_2/km was an average which concerned new vehicles only. The precise breakdown to achieve that average had not been decided at this stage but would be included in the legislative proposal, backed up by a thorough impact assessment taking all the relevant factors into account and in particular the specific characteristics of the various segments of the automotive industry. He would like this legislative proposal to be tabled, if possible, in 2007, once the assessment had been completed.

Mr DIMAS then outlined the accompanying measures proposed to encourage further reductions in CO_2 emissions: the Commission was asking Member States to play their part by promoting better vehicle efficiency through tax incentives or vehicle labelling systems. The communication also stressed the importance of raising consumer awareness and encouraging responsible driving behaviour and improvements in traffic management and infrastructure.

This strategy, which was designed to yield environmental benefits as early as 2012, would encourage innovation and the development of less polluting vehicles, which could put the European automotive industry at the forefront of technological development. He also referred to similar efforts being considered worldwide by the President of the United States and in China, India and Japan.

In conclusion Mr DIMAS reminded the meeting that the target of 120 g CO_2/km had been confirmed several times and that the task now was to demonstrate how it could be achieved by clear and well thought-out measures. He felt that this Commission would be judged on its determination and ability to ensure that the Member States met their Kyoto objectives and, in that light, stressed the importance of that day's decisions.

He thanked the PRESIDENT for his contribution and Mr VERHEUGEN for the constructive discussions on the two communications. He was pleased with the quality of the proposals, which reconciled the interests of consumers and manufacturers and sent out a strong signal in favour of innovation and compliance with the environmental targets set by the Kyoto Protocol.

The PRESIDENT stressed that the package of measures presented in perfect harmony by the Members responsible for industry and the environment were of the utmost importance. This was an extremely sensitive issue and discussions had been held in recent weeks with a view to reconciling the various interests. These discussions had in any event shown the unprecedented level of ambition in the proposals. He felt that, in the 21st century, industrial and environmental issues would have to be tackled in tandem in order to preserve growth and jobs without relaxing efforts to combat climate change.

The PRESIDENT felt that the proposals put forward were now perfectly balanced in this regard and conveyed a positive message. He acknowledged that they were behind the initial schedule, but was sure that this was insignificant given the scale of the issues involved and the time required to conduct talks on such a sensitive issue. He lent his unconditional support to the arrangements proposed by the two Members responsible, which he felt were compatible with the commitments of this Commission both on climate change and on growth and employment and which, moreover, would stimulate innovation in a vital industry. Joint adoption of the two communications served to show that the Commission was responsible and capable of following up its commitments with results. Moreover, this approach was compatible with the "better lawmaking" initiative.

In conclusion, the PRESIDENT referred to the strength of Europe's automotive industry and its importance in terms of jobs. He was pleased that the Commission was able to present proposals which would spur competition and innovation while highlighting the leading role played by the EU in combating climate change. He thanked the two Members responsible for the work they had carried out under great pressure because of the extremely sensitive nature of the issues involved. This package was strongly supported by the Council Presidency and the Commission could be proud of its job. He refuted the criticism expressed in some media by pointing to the level of ambition in this initiative and the need to reconcile as far as possible two equally legitimate interests. He therefore asked all the Commission Members to present the issue from that angle in their communication work.

Following these presentations, the Commission held an in-depth discussion on the two communications, during which the following general matters were discussed:

- the major task of promoting a form of mobility that was compatible with the principles of sustainable development;
- Europe's determination and the good example shown by its automotive industry, compared with its main partners, in efforts to reduce CO_2 emissions from vehicles;
- the Commission's ability, after careful consideration, to reconcile successfully two separate legitimate interests: on the one hand reducing CO_2 emissions and combating climate change and on the other promoting the European automotive industry, a major branch of Europe's economy which provided a great many jobs for its people;
- the value of including a reference to public procurement in the additional efforts by Member States to reduce CO_2 emissions;
- the importance of insisting vis-à-vis the media and the public that the Commission was genuinely united on the proposals presented by Mr VERHEUGEN and Mr DIMAS.

The Commission also considered the following specific questions:

Concerning the additional reduction of 10 g CO_2/km to be obtained through technological improvements unrelated to vehicle engines and through greater use of biofuels,

- the relevance of the integrated approach recommended by the Commission and the precise points to be spelled out in the list of measures;

- the wording to be used in the subparagraph concerning light commercial vehicles;

- the wording to be used in the subparagraph on the most effective biofuels.

Concerning the future legislative proposals,

- the justification and need for a regulatory approach, in view of the unsatisfactory results obtained since 1995 on a voluntary basis;

- the timetable for the planned legislative proposals, given the need to ensure maximum predictability for the automotive industry;

- the need to have legislative proposals based on extremely sound impact studies, ensuring neutrality in terms of competitiveness and jobs and socially equitable implications as regards the price of cars;

- the potential leverage of tax policy and more specifically the extension of the "polluter pays" principle to further reductions in CO_2 emissions from vehicles;

- the need to take into account Europe's energy dependence;

- the priority to be attached to technological innovation, particularly given the limited time horizon of combustion engines;

- the importance of considering the possibility of including the automotive industry in the greenhouse gas emissions trading system;

- the attention to be paid to sociological aspects and the cultural changes to be promoted concerning individuals' choice of cars, while ensuring that a sound competition policy is pursued, that the internal market operates smoothly and that individual freedom is respected;

Concerning measures within the Commission,

- the importance of ensuring that the Commission's determination to reduce CO_2 emissions and combat climate change is reflected more and more clearly in its internal operations, for example in the choice of official cars or heating and lighting systems;

- the need to take note, at one of the forthcoming meetings, of measures already taken internally to meet the concerns expressed above.

Winding up the debate, the PRESIDENT noted that the Commission Members were in agreement on the following amendments to be made to documents COM(2007) 22/3 and COM(2007) 19/3:

In COM(2007) 22/3, point 3.3.2 was amended to read as follows:

- the first paragraph was to read as follows:
  "*The Commission will pursue its integrated approach with a view to reaching the EU objective of 120 g/km CO_2 by 2012. This can be achieved through a combination of EU and Member States action. The Commission will propose a legislative framework, if possible in 2007 and at latest by mid 2008, to achieve the EU objective of 120 g/km CO_2, focusing on mandatory reductions of the emissions of CO_2 to reach the objective of 130 g/km for the average new car fleet by means of improvements in vehicle motor technology, and a further reduction of 10 g/km of CO_2, or equivalent if technically necessary, by other technological improvements and by an increased use of bio-fuels, specifically:*";

- point e) was to read as follows:
  "*fuel efficiency progress in light-commercial vehicles (vans) with the objective of reaching 175 g/km CO_2 by 2012 and 160 g/km CO_2 by 2015;*";

- point f) was to read as follows:
  "*increased use of bio fuels maximizing environmental performance.*";

- the third paragraph was to read as follows:
  "*The Commission agrees that the legislative framework implementing the average new car fleet target will be designed so as to ensure competitively neutral and socially equitable and sustainable reduction targets which are*

equitable to the diversity of the European automobile manufacturers and avoid any unjustified distortion of competition between automobile manufacturers."*;*

– the fifth paragraph was to read as follows:
"*Beyond the legislative framework, the Commission strategy to reduce CO_2 should encourage additional efforts by other means of road transport (heavy duty vehicles, etc.), by the Member States (CO_2 related taxation and other fiscal incentives, use of public procurement, traffic management, infrastructure, etc.) and by the consumers (informed choice as a buyer, responsible driving behaviour).* ".

In COM(2007) 19/3:

Points 3.2 and 3.3 were amended *mutatis mutandis* in line with point 3.3.2 of COM(2007) 22/3.

Subject to the amendments set out above, the Commission approved the communications in COM(2007) 22/3 and COM(2007) 19/3, for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and to the national parliaments.

15. OTHER BUSINESS

15.1. AVIAN INFLUENZA – CURRENT SITUATION (SEC(2007)184)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr KYPRIANOU in SEC(2007)184.

15.2. LAUNCH OF EUROPEAN YEAR OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL 2007 AND FIRST SUMMIT ON EQUALITY (BERLIN, 30 AND 31 JANUARY) (SEC(2007)177)

Mr ŠPIDLA reported briefly on the official launch of European Year of Equal Opportunities for All at a summit on equality in Berlin on 30 and 31 January, which had been very well attended by representatives of governments, parliaments and civil society. Considerable expectations had been expressed regarding both the full application of existing anti-discrimination legislation and further legislative initiatives.

Mr ŠPIDLA noted that a large number of follow-up events would be held over the year at national and regional level, which would help to highlight the importance of the EU's social dimension in the context of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. He encouraged Commission Members to play an active part in these events.

The Commission took note of these observations and of Mr ŠPIDLA's briefing note in SEC(2007)177.

15.3. 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE ROME TREATY – BERLIN DECLARATION

The PRESIDENT's Chef de cabinet reported briefly, at the President's request, on the main results of his meeting with the Council Presidency the previous week in Berlin on preparations for the celebrations on 25 March to mark the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome.

He noted in particular the convergence of views between the Commission and the Council Presidency regarding the structure, content and style of the forthcoming Berlin declaration.

The Commission took note of this information.

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

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The meeting closed at 11.51.