



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2007)1792 final

Brussels, 19 June 2007

MINUTES
of the 1792nd meeting of the Commission
held in Brussels
(Berlaymont)
on Wednesday 13 June 2007
(morning)

PV(2007)1792 final

CONTENTS

Attendance list	5-7
1. AGENDAS (OJ(2007)1792/3; SEC(2007)785/2; SEC(2007)797; SEC(2007)798).....	8
2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET (SEC(2007) 1792)	8
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 1791ST MEETING (6 JUNE 2007) (PV(2007) 1791)	8
4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (SEC(2007) 790).....	8
4.1. <i>LEGISLATIVE MATTERS</i>	9
4.2. <i>RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL</i>	11
4.3. <i>RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT</i>	11
5. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF COMMUNITY LAW	12
5.1. <i>STATE AID – HORIZONTAL DOSSIER (C(2007) 2527 TO /3)</i>	12
5.2. <i>STATE AID – INDIVIDUAL CASES – RECAPITULATIVE LIST (SEC(2007)806 TO /3)</i>	12
6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS.....	12
6.1. <i>WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2007)786 et seq.)</i>	12
6.2. <i>SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2007)787)</i>	12
6.3. <i>EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2007)788 et seq.)</i>	13
6.4. <i>DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS</i>	13
7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2007) 789)	13

7.1. INITIAL COMMUNICATION UNDER ARTICLE 50 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS.....	13
7.2. INITIAL COMMUNICATION UNDER ARTICLE 50 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS.....	13
7.3. DG SANCO – EXTENSION OF LEAVE ON PERSONAL GROUNDS FOR A DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL	14
7.4. ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE MEDIATION SERVICE FOR 2006 (SEC(2007)759).....	14
8. COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK – PUBLIC FINANCES IN EMU 2007 - ENSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PREVENTIVE ARM OF THE STABILITY AND GROWTH PACT (COM(2007) 316 TO /3; SEC(2007) 776 TO /3; SEC(2007) 793)	14
9. COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO THE COUNCIL CONCERNING THE ASSESSMENT OF THE MEASURES TAKEN BY HUNGARY IN RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION OF 10 OCTOBER 2006 UNDER ARTICLE 104(7) OF THE EC TREATY (SEC(2007) 775 TO /3; SEC(2007) 793)	15
10. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION SETTING UP THE "CLEAN SKY" JOINT UNDERTAKING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF A JOINT TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE IN THE AVIATION AND AIR TRANSPORT SECTOR (COM(2007) 315 TO /6; SEC(2007) 773; SEC(2007) 774; SEC(2007) 778)	15
11. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS - POSTING OF WORKERS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROVISION OF	

SERVICES - MAXIMISING ITS BENEFITS AND POTENTIAL WHILE GUARANTEEING THE PROTECTION OF WORKERS (COM(2007) 304 TO /4; SEC(2007) 747 AND /2; SEC(2007) 762)	16
12. RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES	16
12.1. VISIT TO CROATIA (ZAGREB, 4-5 JUNE 2007) (SEC(2007) 831)	16
12.2. VISIT TO JAPAN AND HONG KONG (31 MAY – 4 JUNE 2007) (SEC(2007) 824)	16
13. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT - TOWARDS A EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON HUMANITARIAN AID (COM(2007) 317 TO /4; SEC(2007) 782 AND /2; SEC(2007) 781; SEC(2007) 779 AND /2; SEC(2007) 795)	17
14. TRENDS IN THE MEMBER STATES (SEC(2007) 794)	20
15. OTHER MATTERS	22
15.1. VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND (BELFAST, 8 JUNE) (SEC(2007) 830)	22

Single sitting: Wednesday 13 June 2007 (morning)

The sitting opened at 10.20 hours with Mr BARROSO, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr BARROSO	President
Ms WALLSTRÖM	Vice-President
Mr VERHEUGEN	Vice-President
Mr BARROT	Vice-President
Mr KALLAS	Vice-President
Ms REDING	
Mr ALMUNIA	
Ms HÜBNER	
Mr BORG	
Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ	
Mr POTOČNIK	
Mr FIGEL'	
Mr KYPRIANOU	
Mr REHN	
Mr MICHEL	
Mr KOVÁCS	
Ms KROES	
Ms FERRERO-WALDNER	
Mr ŠPIDLA	
Mr MANDELSON	
Ms KUNEVA	
Mr ORBAN	

Items 13 to 15

Absent:

Mr FRATTINI

Vice-President

Mr DIMAS

Ms FISCHER BOEL

Mr McCREEVY

Mr PIEBALGS

The following sat in to represent absent Members of the Commission

Ms SCHMITT	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr FRATTINI	
Ms KONTOU	Chef de cabinet de Mr DIMAS	
Mr CHRISTOFFERSEN	Chef de cabinet to Ms FISCHER-BOEL	
Ms BURY	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr MCCREEVY	
Mr KESTERIS	Chef de cabinet to Mr PIEBALGS	Items 13 to 15

The following also sat in

Mr VALE DE ALMEIDA	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr KUIJPER	Legal Service	
Ms CORUGEDO STENEGER	Communication DG	
Mr LAITENBERGER	Commission Spokesman	
Mr GASPAR	Acting Director-General, Bureau of European Policy Advisers	
Mr THEBAULT	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr BRUNET	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr KYPRIANOU	Item 15 (in part)

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2007)1792/3; SEC(2007)785/2; SEC(2007)797; SEC(2007)798)

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)1792)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 11 June.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 1791st MEETING (6 JUNE 2007)

(PV(2007)1791)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 1791st meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(SEC(2007)790)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group held on Friday 8 June (SEC(2007)790).

It paid particular attention to the following:

4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) Action to be taken on Parliament's legislative opinions

(SP(2007)2898)

The Commission decided to empower the Commission Members responsible for the sectors in question, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms WALLSTRÖM and, if necessary, with the other Members concerned, to adopt the amended proposals for transmission to Parliament and the Council, as set out in SP(2007)2898, drawn up following the June I 2007 part-session of Parliament, the contents of which were noted.

ii) Preparation for the June II 2007 part-session of Parliament

(point 1.2 of the record)

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:

Codecision 2nd reading

- Restriction on the placing on the market of certain measuring devices containing mercury (Directive) – SORNOSA MARTÍNEZ report – 2006/0018 (COD)

The Commission adopted the line set out in SP(2007)2632 and noted that at this stage no amendments had been tabled to the common position.

Empowerment

- Restriction on the placing on the market of certain measuring devices containing mercury (Directive) – SORNOSA MARTÍNEZ report – 2006/0018 (COD)

The Commission empowered Mr VERHEUGEN, under Article 13 of its Rules of Procedure, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms WALLSTRÖM and any other Members associated, to adopt and transmit to the Council its opinion on the amendments, in accordance with Article 251(2)(c) of the Treaty, once Parliament had acted, together with an amended proposal if necessary, on the basis of the line set out in SP(2007)2632.

Codecision – 1st reading

- Definition, description, presentation and labelling of spirit drinks (Regulation) – SCHNELHARDT report – 2005/0028 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2007)2986 and /2.

- Banning the placing on the market and the import to or export from the Community of cat and dog fur and products containing such fur (Regulation) – SVENSSON report – 2006/0236 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2007)2987 and /3.

- Improving the effectiveness of review procedures concerning the award of public contracts (Directive) – FRUTEAU report – 2006/0066 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2007)2304 /2 and /3.

- Banning of exports and the safe storage of metallic mercury (Regulation) – PAPADIMOULIS report – 2006/0206 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2007)2988.

- Improving the portability of supplementary pension rights (Directive) – OOMEN-RUIJTEN report – 2005/0214 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2007)2989 and /2.

4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL

iii) Programming of Council business

(SI(2007)612)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2007)612 on the Council meetings between 7 and 20 June 2007.

iv) EU Strategy for Central Asia

(point 2.3 of the record)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2007)617.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

v) Results of Parliament's June I part-session

(SP(2007)3049)

The Commission took note of the information in SP(2007)3049 on Parliament's part-session held on 6 and 7 June 2007 in Brussels.

vi) Action taken on Parliament's legislative opinions and non-legislative resolutions

(point 3.3.2 of the record)

The Commission approved document SP(2007)2625/2 on the action taken on the legislative opinions and non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its April 2007 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

5. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF COMMUNITY LAW

5.1. STATE AID – HORIZONTAL DOSSIER

(C(2007)2527 TO /3)

Extension of the validity of the "cinema" communication of 26 September 2001

The Commission decided to extend the validity of the "cinema" communication of 26 September 2001 until the entry into force of new rules on state aid applicable to cinematographic and other audiovisual works or, at the latest, until 31 December 2009, as set out in C(2007)2527/3.

5.2. STATE AID – INDIVIDUAL CASES – RECAPITULATIVE LIST

(SEC(2007)806 TO /3)

The Commission adopted the decisions in the recapitulative list SEC(2007)806/3.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2007)786 et seq.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 4 and 8 June 2007.

6.2. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2007)787)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 11 and 14 June 2007.

6.3. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2007)788 et seq.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 4 and 8 June 2007.

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 4 and 8 June 2007, as archived in Greffe 2000.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2007)789)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2007)63/2)

7.1. INITIAL COMMUNICATION UNDER ARTICLE 50 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

The Commission decided to initiate the procedure laid down in Article 50 of the Staff Regulations with respect to an AD15 official.

7.2. INITIAL COMMUNICATION UNDER ARTICLE 50 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

The Commission decided to initiate the procedure laid down in Article 50 of the Staff Regulations with respect to an AD15 official.

7.3. *DG SANCO – EXTENSION OF LEAVE ON PERSONAL GROUNDS FOR A DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL*

Having taken note of the information in point 3 of PERS(2007)63/2, the Commission, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, Mr KYPRIANOU and Ms KUNEVA, decided to approve the request for extension of leave on personal grounds, under Article 40 of the Staff Regulations, made by Ms Jaana HUSU-KALLIO, an AD16 official and currently Deputy Director-General in the Health and Consumer Protection Directorate-General, for the period from 1 August 2007 to 31 July 2008.

This Decision would enter into force on 1 August 2007.

OTHER MATTERS

**7.4. *ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE MEDIATION SERVICE FOR 2006*
*(SEC(2007)759)***

The Commission took note of annual activity report of the mediation service distributed as SEC(2007)759.

**8. COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK – PUBLIC FINANCES IN EMU 2007 - ENSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PREVENTIVE ARM OF THE STABILITY AND GROWTH PACT
(COM(2007)316 TO /3; SEC(2007)776 TO /3; SEC(2007)793)**

The Commission approved the communication in COM(2007) 316/3, for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Central Bank, and to the national

parliaments, together with the 2007 Report in the staff paper distributed as SEC(2007)776 and /3, the contents of which were noted.

9. COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO THE COUNCIL CONCERNING THE ASSESSMENT OF THE MEASURES TAKEN BY HUNGARY IN RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION OF 10 OCTOBER 2006 UNDER ARTICLE 104(7) OF THE EC TREATY (SEC(2007)775 TO /3; SEC(2007)793)

The Commission adopted the communication in SEC(2007)775/3 for transmission to the Council.

10. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION SETTING UP THE "CLEAN SKY" JOINT UNDERTAKING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF A JOINT TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE IN THE AVIATION AND AIR TRANSPORT SECTOR (COM(2007)315 TO /6; SEC(2007)773; SEC(2007)774; SEC(2007)778)

The Commission

- adopted the proposal for a Council Regulation in COM(2007)315/5 and /6, for transmission to the Council, Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee, and to the national parliaments, accompanied by the impact study and its summary in the staff papers distributed as SEC(2007)773 and SEC(2007)774, the contents of which were noted;
- took note of the opinion of the Impact Assessment Board on this dossier, as set out in SEC(2007)778.

**11. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS - POSTING OF WORKERS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROVISION OF SERVICES - MAXIMISING ITS BENEFITS AND POTENTIAL WHILE GUARANTEEING THE PROTECTION OF WORKERS
(COM(2007)304 TO /4; SEC(2007)747 AND /2; SEC(2007)762)**

The Commission approved the communication in COM(2007)304/4, for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and to national parliaments, together with the staff paper distributed as SEC(2007)747/2, the contents of which were noted.

12. RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

12.1. VISIT TO CROATIA (ZAGREB, 4-5 JUNE 2007)
(SEC(2007)831)

The Commission took note of the information note from Ms HÜBNER in SEC(2007)831.

12.2. VISIT TO JAPAN AND HONG KONG (31 MAY – 4 JUNE 2007)
(SEC(2007)824)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr BORG distributed as SEC(2007)824.

13. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT - TOWARDS A EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON HUMANITARIAN AID

(COM(2007)317 TO /4; SEC(2007)782 AND /2; SEC(2007)781; SEC(2007)779 AND /2; SEC(2007)795)

Before starting his presentation, Mr MICHEL warmly thanked Mr REHN for the excellent work he had done in replacing him during his leave of absence to take part in the election campaign in Belgium.

Mr MICHEL began by stressing the importance of the communication on humanitarian aid, which came at a politically opportune moment. He referred to the situation in Darfur, the Middle East and Somalia, as well as in the countries affected by the tsunami. On the basis of these experiences, he set out the major challenges currently facing humanitarian workers in the field:

- the increase in the number of conflicts and natural disasters, and of the deadly consequences;
- the inadequate emergency response capacities, in particular as regards transport in remote areas;
- the increasingly systematic violation of international humanitarian law;
- the risk of confusion between the political and humanitarian spheres, with humanitarian aid being used for political or even military purposes;
- the increasingly frequent attacks on humanitarian workers.

Mr MICHEL noted that these challenges had triggered awareness of the need to reform the international system of humanitarian aid, in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of aid. He felt that the EU should take an active part in the debate on the reform of the system initiated under the auspices of the United Nations, if only because it represented 40% of total humanitarian aid supplied throughout the world. He reminded the meeting of the proposals he had recently made in various

UN bodies, such as the high-level group on the coherence of the United Nations system, and to the heads of the humanitarian agencies in Geneva. He felt that the debate and reflection should now move to the EU level.

As regards the consultation of the Member States and humanitarian organisations that had been launched, Mr MICHEL noted with satisfaction that the results had highlighted a large convergence of views on what the European humanitarian consensus should cover. This should include compliance with humanitarian principles such as impartiality, neutrality and independence, strengthening of compliance with international humanitarian law, and improvement of donors' practices and methods and of the quality of partnership with humanitarian organisations so as to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of aid.

He said that this communication accurately reflected the broad consensus reached in the consultation, and that it would constitute the working basis for drawing-up a joint declaration of Parliament, the Council and the Commission, which he could see being adopted before the end of 2007. He emphasised the unique and innovative nature of this declaration, which would be the first political document on EU humanitarian action, and which would also include for the first time a firm commitment on the part of the Member States to strengthen complementarity and coordination, collective acceptance of the principles guiding EU humanitarian aid, and establishment of a general framework making clear the links between humanitarian aid and external policy.

In conclusion, Mr MICHEL considered that the declaration would strengthen the coherence and effectiveness of EU humanitarian action, and would contribute to the reform of the international system.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr MICHEL for his presentation. He welcomed this initiative which would undoubtedly be a very positive contribution to the consolidation of the general principles of European humanitarian action. He agreed with Mr MICHEL on the need for a better coordinated approach to deal with disasters and crises such as Darfur, emphasising the importance of maximising the

effectiveness of aid. He also drew the Commissioners' attention to the provisions in SEC(2007)779.

The Commission then held a brief exchange of views, covering the following points:

- the excellent cooperation in the preparation of this communication;
- the relevance and the need for a European consensus on humanitarian aid in the context of the EU's external policy;
- the great esteem and good reputation enjoyed by European humanitarian aid in the eyes of the public both in Europe and in third countries, and the need to ensure continuity;
- the importance of promoting a consensus on humanitarian aid between the Member States, and so of strengthening coherence towards third countries;
- the vital importance of the link between emergency aid, rehabilitation and development.

Following this exchange of views, the Commission:

- approved the communication in COM(2007)317/4, for transmission to the Council and Parliament, and to the national parliaments, together with the reports in the staff papers distributed as SEC(2007)781 and SEC(2007)782, the contents of which were noted;
- authorised the Commission Member responsible for development and humanitarian aid to conclude a joint declaration with Parliament and the Council concerning a European consensus on humanitarian aid;
- also took note of the information note from the PRESIDENT distributed as SEC(2007)779.

14. TRENDS IN THE MEMBER STATES (SEC(2007)794)

Ms WALLSTRÖM reminded the meeting briefly of the main events which had attracted the interest of the European press during the period from 3 May to 5 June.

She referred to the very good general atmosphere in Europe, and the extremely satisfactory economic situation. She reported that this situation was reflected in the Eurobarometer poll to be published on 20 June on the way in which citizens see the future for their country, which had not produced such a positive score since 1995. In this connection she noted the growing optimism as regards the employment market and individuals' future prospects, particularly on financial matters, and the increase in the confidence expressed by citizens in the European institutions.

Ms WALLSTRÖM then turned to something she saw as less positive during this period, namely the turnout at the election of the members of the European Parliament in Bulgaria on 20 May, which was slightly less than 29%. She repeated the explanations provided by the media – campaign marked by corruption scandals, bad weather – and like them considered that the low figure was disappointing and even worrying.

She informed the Commission that in the preparations for the next European Parliament election campaign, Parliament had explicitly requested strong commitment and support from the Commission in order to mobilise voters, with a view to achieving over 50% turnout. She added that Parliament intended to produce a strategy document that would call on the other institutions to collaborate in this. She said that she would keep the Commission Members duly informed of the progress of this work.

The Commission then held a brief exchange of views, covering the following points:

- the importance of emphasising, in terms of communication, the Commission's contribution to the economic recovery, and in particular the benefits of its strategy in favour of growth and employment;
- the relative importance of the turnout at the European elections in Bulgaria, given that it was close to the average for all EU countries;
- the explanation effort that was needed to make the role of the European Parliament better known in Bulgaria, since at present it seemed to be more remote to the public than the Commission;
- the relationship between economic results and public perception of the European institutions, and the link to be established between the efforts made by the Commission and the improvements observed on the ground, a link that was clear as regards the employment market, the reforms of employment and pensions having produced positive results, but with efforts still being needed as regards productivity and competitiveness, even though certain reforms had already borne fruit;
- the role of enlargement, which had helped regenerate a certain economic momentum;
- the arrangements for the help that the Commission could offer Parliament with a view to the forthcoming elections.

Ms WALLSTRÖM concluded by listing the challenges faced in terms of communication. She considered that the object should be to establish closer collaboration with the Member States and the other institutions, and aim for more effective use of media resources and the representations. She confirmed the importance of supporting Parliament in its efforts to achieve a high turnout at the forthcoming elections, by intensifying the debate at European level in order to arouse public interest. She also mentioned the work in hand that would shortly lead to the presentation of a proposal on the regulations governing political parties at

European level and the rules regarding their funding, which should lead to improvements for the action of the parties.

The Commission took note of this information and of Ms WALLSTRÖM's note SEC(2007)794.

15. OTHER MATTERS

15.1. VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND (BELFAST, 8 JUNE) (SEC(2007)830)

Ms HÜBNER reported on her visit to Belfast on 8 June. The principal objective of the visit had been to associate the Northern Ireland Executive with the work of the Commission Task Force that the PRESIDENT had proposed setting up in May. The immediate aim was to enable the Northern Ireland Executive to express its ideas and needs at an early stage of the Task Force's work.

Ms HÜBNER said that her hosts, Mr Ian Paisley, First Minister, and Mr Peter Robinson, Minister for Finance, welcomed the attention the Commission was giving to Northern Ireland. They had appreciated the visit paid by the PRESIDENT to Northern Ireland on 1 May.

She drew attention to the expectations generated in Northern Ireland by the Commission's steps and its open approach, in terms of participation in policies and in Community programmes and the visibility of Northern Ireland in the European context. She also mentioned the willingness of the Northern Ireland authorities to make available their experience as regards reconciliation between communities.

Ms HÜBNER had also met the three members of the European Parliament representing Northern Ireland. She considered that meeting very useful, given

their representativeness, their wide experience and their positive assessment of the Commission's intentions.

On the Task Force set up within the Commission, Ms HÜBNER had agreed with the Northern Ireland authorities that the Commission would conduct a stock-taking and produce a number of recommendations before the end of the current year. She added that that the contacts in Belfast would also make it possible to finalise the terms of reference of the Task Force, which would now comprise Mr VERHEUGEN, Mr BARROT, Mr BORG, Mr POTOČNIK, Mr FIGEL', Ms FISCHER BOEL and Mr ŠPIDLA, as well as the departments under their responsibility and the Secretariat-General.

She mentioned the importance attached by the Northern Ireland authorities to access to the Community Structural Funds to finance the ambitious infrastructure projects needed for development of the province.

Ms HÜBNER finished by pointing out that she had encouraged the Northern Ireland authorities to strengthen their presence in Brussels in order to facilitate dialogue and cooperation with the European institutions and the other players in the world of European politics.

The Commission held a brief exchange of views during which the following matters were discussed:

- the visit that the Northern Ireland Minister for Employment and Education would be paying to Mr ŠPIDLA that same day, Wednesday 13 June;
- certain aspects relating to the interaction between agricultural policy and public health policy;
- the need to consolidate the private sector in the Northern Ireland economy.

The PRESIDENT concluded by emphasising the political importance of closer links between the Commission and the Northern Ireland authorities. He

(13 June 2007)

gave Ms HÜBNER his backing, calling on all the Commission Members to lend their enthusiastic support to the ongoing process in Northern Ireland, in particular by ensuring that the active collaboration of their departments in performing the mission of the Task Force.

The Commission took note of these observations and of the briefing note distributed as SEC(2007)830.

*

* *

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

*

* *

The meeting closed at 11.02 hours.