



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2008)1816 final

Brussels, 6 February 2008

MINUTES

of the 1816th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 30 January 2008

(morning)

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Single sitting: Wednesday 30 January 2008 (morning)

The sitting opened at 09.09 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	Items 1 to 16 (in part)
Mr FRATTINI	Vice-President	
Ms REDING		
Mr DIMAS		
Mr ALMUNIA		
Ms HÜBNER		
Mr BORG		
Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ		
Mr POTOČNIK		
Mr FIGEL'		
Mr KYPRIANOU		
Mr REHN		
Ms KROES		
Ms FISCHER BOEL		
Ms FERRERO-WALDNER		
Mr ŠPIDLA		
Mr MANDELSON		
Mr PIEBALGS		
Ms KUNEVA		
Mr ORBAN		

Absent:

Mr MICHEL

Mr KOVÁCS

Mr McCREEVY

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The following sat in to represent absent Members of the Commission:

Mr STUCKENS	A member of Mr MICHEL's staff
Ms GAGO FILORI	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr KOVÁCS
Ms DE BASALDUA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr McCREEVY

The following also sat in:

Mr VALE DE ALMEIDA	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr SANTAOLALLA	Legal Service	
Mr CARVOUNIS	Deputy Director-General, Communication DG	
Mr LAITENBERGER	Commission Spokesman	
Mr GASPAR	Acting Director-General, Bureau of European Policy Advisers	
Mr CABRAL	Adviser hors classe in the PRESIDENT 's Office	Items 8 to 14 and 16
Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA	A member of the PRESIDENT's staff	Item 15
Ms ERLER	Chef de cabinet to Mr VERHEUGEN	Items 8 to 10
Mr BRUNET	A member of Mr KYPRIANOU's staff	Item 15
Ms PINHO	A member of Mr KYPRIANOU's staff	Item 15
Mr ITALIANER	Deputy Secretary-General	Items 8 to 10

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2008)1816/3; SEC(2008)78/2)

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(2008)1816)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 28 January.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND SPECIAL MINUTES OF 1815TH MEETING
(23 JANUARY 2008)**

(PV(2008)1815; PV(2008)1815, PART II)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 1815th meeting.

4. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF COMMUNITY LAW

STATE AID – INDIVIDUAL CASES – RECAPITULATIVE LIST

(SEC(2008)115 TO /3)

The Commission adopted the decisions in the recapitulative list (SEC(2008)115/3).

5. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2008)82/2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2008)7/2)

**5.1. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – TERMINATION OF THE INTERNAL
SELECTION PROCEDURE TO APPOINT AN AD14 CHIEF ADVISER
(PERS(2007)28 TO /4)**

The Commission took note of the procedure followed, as set out in point 1 of PERS(2008)7/2, and, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided to terminate the selection procedure COM/2007/10048 to fill the function of Chief Adviser responsible for protocol matters in the Secretariat-General, without making an appointment.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**5.2. DG FISHERIES AND MARITIME AFFAIRS – APPOINTMENT OF
AD14/15 DIRECTOR
(PERS(2007)113 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director, External Policy and Markets, in the Directorate-General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs (PERS(2007)113).

The Commission took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 19 November and 13 December 2007 (PERS(2007)113/2 and /3).

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

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PRESIDENT and Mr BORG, it then decided to appoint Mr Pierre AMILHAT to the vacant post.

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

**5.3. DG PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION – REOPENING OF INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF AD15/16 POST OF DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL
(PERS(2007)107/2)**

On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to authorise the republication, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2007)107/2 for the post of Deputy Director-General in the Directorate-General for Personnel and Administration.

This decision would take effect immediately.

5.4. DG PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION – EXTENSION OF THE SECONDMENT IN THE INTEREST OF THE SERVICE OF AN AD15 OFFICIAL

The Commission took note of the information in point 4 of PERS(2008)7/2 and, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided to extend to 2 February 2009 the secondment in the interest of the service of Mr Daniel BYK, an AD15 official, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

This decision would take effect immediately.

5.5. 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.

5.6. 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.

5.7. DG PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION – COMMISSION DECISION AMENDING DECISION C(2006)2033 OF 1 JUNE 2006 LAYING DOWN RULES ON THE SECONDMENT OF NATIONAL EXPERTS TO THE COMMISSION (SEC(2008)121)

The Commission, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, adopted the decision in SEC(2008)121.

This decision would take effect on 1 February 2008.

5.8. DG PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION – AMENDMENT OF COMMISSION DECISION CONCERNING THE EXERCISE OF THE POWERS CONFERRED BY THE STAFF REGULATIONS ON THE APPOINTING AUTHORITY AND BY THE CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OF OTHER SERVANTS ON THE AUTHORITY RESPONSIBLE FOR CONCLUDING CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT (C(2008)384; SEC(2008)122)

The Commission took note of the information in point 8 of PERS(2008)7/2 and, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, adopted the Decision in C(2008)384.

This decision would take effect immediately.

The Commission also took note of the communication in SEC(2008)122.

**5.9. DG PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION – STRENGTHENING
SOCIAL POLICY FOR FORMER OFFICIALS
(SEC(2008)123)**

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, distributed as SEC(2008)123.

**6. COMMISSION DECISION CONCERNING A PROCEEDING UNDER
ARTICLE 8(1) OF COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) 139/2004 ON THE
CONTROL OF CONCENTRATIONS BETWEEN UNDERTAKINGS AND
ARTICLE 57 OF THE EEA AGREEMENT (CASE COMP/M.4734 –
INEOS/KERLING)
(C(2008)379 TO /5)**

The Commission

- took note of the opinion of the Advisory Committee on Concentrations of 16 January in C(2008)379/3;
- took note of the final report of the Hearing Officer of 24 January in C(2008)379/4;
- adopted, in the authentic language (English), the decision in C(2008)379/5, declaring the notified operation to be compatible with the common market and the Agreement on the European Economic Area;
- decided to notify the decision set out in C(2008)379/5 to the firm concerned, together with the final report of the Hearing Officer and the opinion of the Advisory Committee;
- decided that the most important parts of the decision and the opinion of the Advisory Committee and the report of the Hearing Officer would be published

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in the official languages in the Official Journal of the European Union (with business secrets removed);

- decided to publish the decision (with business secrets removed) on the internet.

7. COMMISSION DECISION ON A PROCEEDING UNDER ARTICLE 23 OF COUNCIL REGULATION (EEC) No 1/2003 (CASE COMP/39.326 –E.ON ENERGIE AG)
(C(2008)377 TO /7; SEC(2008)130)

The Commission

- took note of the opinions of the Advisory Committee on Restrictive Practices and Dominant Positions of 18 and 25 January in C(2008)377/3 and /5;
- took note of the final report of the Hearing Officer of 29 January in C(2008)377/6;
- adopted, in the authentic language (German), the decision set out in C(2008)377/7, finding that the company to which it was addressed had infringed Article 23 of Regulation (EC) 1/2003, and imposing on it a fine of €38 000 000;
- decided that the decision in C(2008)377/7 would be notified to the company concerned, together with the final report of the Hearing Officer;
- decided that the most important parts of the decision, together with the opinions of the Advisory Committee and the final report of the Hearing Officer, would be published in the official languages in the Official Journal of the European Union (with business secrets removed);
- decided to publish the decision (with business secrets removed) on the internet.

- 8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS - SECOND STRATEGIC REVIEW OF BETTER REGULATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**
(COM(2008)32 TO /4; SEC(2008)120; SEC(2008)89)

- 9. COMMISSION WORKING DOCUMENT - SECOND PROGRESS REPORT ON THE STRATEGY FOR SIMPLIFYING THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT**
(COM(2008)33 TO /3; SEC(2008)89)

- 10. COMMISSION WORKING DOCUMENT - REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION - 2007 PROGRESS REPORT AND 2008 OUTLOOK**
(COM(2008)35 TO /3; SEC(2008)89)

Mr VERHEUGEN introduced the documents which he and the PRESIDENT were presenting to the Commission for approval, reminding the meeting of the priority attached by this Commission, and also by the other European institutions and the Member States, to improving the regulatory environment in the European Union and particularly to simplifying administration and reducing the burden on companies. The dossier being presented that day marked a further step in the Commission's efforts to produce concrete results for the public and businesses in the EU, and he thanked all of the Members for their cooperation and their contribution to its success.

He reported that the programme for reducing administrative burdens, introduced a year ago, was already yielding results, thus responding to the legitimate expectations of the general public. The first five fast-track actions adopted by the co-legislators had already produced savings of almost €500 million, and this figure

should rise to €1.3 billion once the next five fast-track actions had been adopted, hopefully in the first months of 2008.

He also mentioned the ground-breaking project to identify, measure and reduce administrative burdens, which had already made it possible to pinpoint the most onerous information requirements in thirteen priority areas, accounting for 80% of information costs, and the creation of a high-level group of experts on administrative burdens, chaired by Mr Edmund Stoiber. Finally, on this point, he referred to the on-line consultation which had been launched to enable companies themselves to suggest simplification measures.

Mr VERHEUGEN felt that 2008 would mark another important stage of the process, with the presentation of a second series of fast-track actions expected in March. The work of identifying burdens in the thirteen priority areas would also be completed so that it would be possible in the course of the year to start presenting more far-reaching proposals to reduce the administrative burden.

He reminded the meeting that the common objective of reducing administrative burdens by 25% by 2012 required close cooperation between the various Commission departments and that the credibility of this objective in the eyes of the general public would depend on the Commission's ability to achieve significant reductions as quickly as possible. It was therefore important that all the necessary proposals be presented before the end of this Commission's term of office.

He also mentioned the results of the simplification programme, which were now tangible and significant, noting with satisfaction that 80% of the objectives for 2007 had been achieved. He referred to several areas where initiatives had been taken that were of vital importance to the public and companies.

Looking ahead, Mr VERHEUGEN stressed the need to maintain momentum in order to implement the 45 simplification initiatives planned for 2008 and flesh out the programme for 2009. He reminded the meeting of the Commission's promise to review the entire *acquis* during its mandate in order to check its topical relevance and to reduce to a minimum the charges it entailed. Both his department and the

PRESIDENT's could provide help in fulfilling this promise. He concluded by stating that the efforts to reduce the administrative burden and simplify the regulatory environment were heading in the right direction and should produce the desired results.

The PRESIDENT also emphasised that the work on better regulation was one of the important areas on which the Commission would be judged and insisted on the need to fulfil the commitments that had been made in this regard.

He welcomed the progress made last year, particularly as regards simplification, reducing administrative burdens and the environmental impact assessments for proposals. It was important, however, to remain vigilant and constantly to improve the foundations and quality of legislative proposals.

As regards simplification, he too mentioned the importance of carrying out a more systematic and comprehensive review of the rules in force, by examining all the existing legislation in each area. This would ultimately enable the Commission to complete its review of the current *acquis*.

The PRESIDENT then discussed impact assessments, which had become a well-established and irreversible feature of the Commission's policy-making procedure. He emphasised the progress that had been made in improving the quality of the assessments, which he attributed to the fact that all Commission Members and their departments recognised that such assessments were now an integral part of the preparation of any new initiative. He praised their efforts and the work of the Impact Assessment Board which had been in operation for a year and was a convincing and credible response to the calls by certain Member States for the creation of an independent body responsible for assessing the impact of proposals. He felt that the Board could play an important role in further improving the quality of impact assessment, and hoped that all Members of the Commission would support this role.

He concluded by summarising the progress that had been made, both in terms of modernising, simplifying, codifying and rationalising existing legislation and in

terms of assessing the impact of new proposals. The general public needed to be made aware of this progress and assured that further improvements would follow.

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

- the convincing way this programme responded to the demand for simplification and improving the *acquis*, without, however, compromising the high standards the public expected of Community legislation, which increasingly served as a model for many other non-member countries, particularly in the environmental field;
- the question of over-regulation or "gold-plating" at national level and the problem caused by the fact that the practices of certain Member States undermined the considerable efforts made by the Commission to reduce the administrative burden; progress, therefore, remained to be made by certain national administrations.

The PRESIDENT concluded the exchange of views by noting the unanimous support for the "better regulation" programme and asking the Commission Members to make the point in their contacts with the press that the Commission was giving a high priority to dealing with these matters.

The Commission approved the communication and the reports in COM(2008)32/4, COM(2008)33/3 and COM(2008)35/3 respectively, for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and to the national parliaments, together with the report of the Impact Assessment Board for the year 2007, in the staff paper distributed as SEC(2007)120, the contents of which were noted.

**11. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL OPINION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE THIRD PARAGRAPH OF ARTICLE 5 OF COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) NO 1466/97 ON THE UPDATED STABILITY PROGRAMME OF FRANCE (2007-2012)
(SEC(2008)107 AND /2; SEC(2008)110; SEC(2008)109)**

Mr ALMUNIA gave a joint presentation of the Commission's recommendations on the updated stability programmes of France and Italy, and the updated convergence programmes of Romania and Slovakia. These recommendations were the subject of items 11, 12, 13 and 14 of these minutes. He reminded the meeting that these four recommendations, plus the seven already adopted at the 1815th meeting of the Commission on 23 January 2008, would be transmitted to the Council for discussion at the Economic and Financial Affairs Council on 12 February. The recommendations on the other Member States would be referred to the Commission shortly, in preparation for the Economic and Financial Affairs Council on 4 March. He had not yet received the updated programmes of Belgium and Poland.

He emphasised the importance of having an overall view of these dossiers at all times, reminding the meeting that the Member States had drawn up these programmes in November 2007, when the economic forecasts for 2008 had been more optimistic, particularly as regards growth.

Budgetary consolidation had improved in most of the Member States in 2007, so the automatic stabilisers should be able to work properly in a climate of lower than predicted growth. For certain Member States, however, this budgetary consolidation remained limited, particularly as regards the balance of public finances, which made them more vulnerable to the slowdown in the rate of growth.

Mr ALMUNIA reminded the meeting in this respect that although the stability and growth pact allowed a degree of flexibility in certain cases regarding variations in the economic cycle, this did not extend to accepting a situation of excessive deficit.

The Commission then held a brief discussion during which the following aspects were examined:

- the importance for the Commission of maintaining a clear, coherent and firm line as regards applying the criteria of the stability and growth pact, particularly in relation to budgetary consolidation and economic convergence;
- if necessary, the initiation of excessive deficit procedures against Member States which did not comply with the stability and growth pact criteria;
- at the same time, the need to take into account the changed world economic climate and the prospects of lower growth, as well as the resulting economic uncertainties, and thus to be able to fine tune the recommendations made to the Member States;
- the need for effective presentation of the Commission's policy on this matter.

The PRESIDENT wound up the discussion by noting unanimous agreement on the four proposed recommendations.

The Commission adopted the recommendation for a Council opinion on the updated stability programme of France, as set out in SEC(2008)107/2, for transmission to the Council.

**12. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL OPINION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE THIRD PARAGRAPH OF ARTICLE 5 OF COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) NO 1466/97 ON THE UPDATED STABILITY PROGRAMME OF ITALY (2007-2011)
(SEC(2008)105 TO /3; SEC(2008)110; SEC(2008)109)**

The Commission adopted the recommendation for a Council opinion on the updated stability programme of Italy, as set out in SEC(2008)105/3, for transmission to the Council.

**13. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL OPINION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE THIRD PARAGRAPH OF ARTICLE 9 OF COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) NO 1466/97 ON THE UPDATED CONVERGENCE PROGRAMME OF ROMANIA (2007-2010)
(SEC(2008)106 AND /2; SEC(2008)110; SEC(2008)109)**

The Commission adopted the recommendation for a Council opinion on the updated convergence programme of Romania, as set out in SEC(2008)106/2, for transmission to the Council.

**14. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL OPINION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE THIRD PARAGRAPH OF ARTICLE 9 OF COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) NO 1466/97 ON THE UPDATED CONVERGENCE PROGRAMME OF SLOVAKIA (2007-2010)
(SEC(2008)108 TO /3; SEC(2008)110; SEC(2008)109)**

The Commission adopted the recommendation for a Council opinion on the updated convergence programme of Slovakia, as set out in SEC(2008)108/3, for transmission to the Council.

**15. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON THE PROVISION OF FOOD INFORMATION TO CONSUMERS
(COM(2008)40 TO /4; SEC(2008)92; SEC(2008)93 AND /2; SEC(2008)97; SEC(2008)94; SEC(2008)95 AND /2; SEC(2008)96; SEC(2008)99)**

Mr KYPRIANOU presented the proposal for a Regulation on the provision of food information to consumers, which he was tabling for adoption.

He began by emphasising the importance of this proposal in two priority areas of Community legislation, namely consumer information and protection as regards food, and simplification and modernisation of Community legislation on consumer information. He explained that this initiative, which was part of the Commission's simplification programme (see items 8, 9 and 10 of these minutes), was intended to clarify, consolidate and rationalise existing legislation on food labelling, and was also a response to changes on the markets and in consumers' expectations.

He ran through the main objectives of the proposal, which were to ensure a high level of consumer protection, to provide consumers with relevant information in order to help them make sound choices, to guarantee wholesome food produced in a sustainable manner, and to develop the internal market in food products. He emphasised that it was also about creating conditions for fair competition, hence a competitive playing field that would promote innovation for the benefit of European consumers. He added that the approach chosen made for a high level of harmonisation between Member States' labelling schemes, while respecting the subsidiarity principle and retaining maximum flexibility.

He then turned to the key innovative aspects of the proposed legislation. Concerning the general labelling provisions, he stated that information on allergenic ingredients would also have to be provided for non-prepacked foods. He emphasised the importance of the indications of provenance, and drew attention to the provisions on the readability of labels.

As regards the nutrition declaration, Mr KYPRIANOU noted that five values would have to be given: the energy value and the amounts of fat, saturates, carbohydrates with specific reference to sugars, and salt, in terms of both total quantity and percentage of reference intakes.

He mentioned the solutions found for the labelling of alcoholic drinks, a highly sensitive subject that was also very important from the point of view consumer protection and public health. He set out the reasons that had prompted the Commission to postpone the adoption of specific rules for wine, spirits and beer. He made it clear that the Commission was not affording the alcoholic drinks in question

special treatment as regards important aspects of consumer information and in particular health protection, and that there would be other initiatives and a future Commission report on these categories of product.

Mr KYPRIANOU drew attention to the category of drinks made of mixtures of alcoholic and non-alcoholic products known as "alcopops". He referred to the dangers that consumption of these drinks presented for the health of young people, considerations that had led the Commission to keep them within the scope of the proposal.

Lastly, he thanked the Commission Members and departments involved for their very constructive cooperation in the preparation of the proposal, concluding that the result of the work was balanced and took account of all the arguments put forward.

After this presentation, the Commission held a brief discussion, during which the following points were raised:

- the broad support for the proposed Regulation, the excellent quality and the balance;
- the very close and fruitful collaboration within the Commission and between departments, which had been a feature of the preparatory work;
- the subsidiarity dimension of the proposal, leaving Member States the possibility of developing their own labelling schemes and indications of origin;
- the observation that the proposal took due account of the specific nature of the wine sector;
- the unanimous support for the way alcopops were treated, given the risks they represented for the health of young people;
- the hope that the balance of the proposal would be maintained during the subsequent stages of the legislative process.

The PRESIDENT closed the discussion by thanking Mr KYPRIANOU for the excellent work done and expressing his satisfaction with the very high quality of the outcome and the contribution it would make to the "Better regulation" objective, as the proposal would replace eight separate legislative instruments. He emphasised the importance, for the communication strategy, of highlighting the reasons why the Commission had presented an initiative at European level while still complying with the subsidiarity principle, namely better protection for public health and consumers, and also the positive effects for European citizens resulting from the simplification of legislation and the improvement of the operation of the internal market.

After this discussion, the Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2008)40/4 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and to the national parliaments, together with the impact assessments and summaries in the staff papers distributed as SEC(2008)92, SEC(2008)94, SEC(2008)93/2 and SEC(2008)95/2, the contents of which were noted;

The Commission also took note of the opinions of the Impact Assessment Board on the above proposal for a Regulation, as set out in SEC(2008)97 and SEC(2008)96.

16. OTHER BUSINESS

LONDON MEETING (29 JANUARY 2008)

The PRESIDENT reported on the proceedings and main results of the meeting in London the previous day of the European members of the G8 (the Heads of State or Government of the EU Member States belonging to the G8 and the President of the European Commission).

He emphasised the positive aspects of this meeting that had been devoted to the situation of the world and European economy and supervision of the financial

markets, referring in particular to the broad agreement of the participants on the following points:

- the uncertainties surrounding the world economy, which require the Commission and the Member States to step up their vigilance, and the Community to give a stronger commitment to an open world economy and the continuation of reforms;
- the healthy state of the European economy, with fundamentals that are still sound;
- the necessary transparency of the financial markets, their institutions and their instruments, and the measures to be taken, at world and European levels, in particular with respect to the improvement of the information issued by rating agencies, by auditors and by banks, as well as codes of conduct for operators;
- the prospects for strengthening the role of the International Monetary Fund;
- the importance of a Commission presence in the Financial Stability Forum;
- the crucial importance of a Community approach that is open, dynamic and positive on these questions, in the G8 too.

The PRESIDENT also drew attention to the importance of the talks in London with a view to the Council meeting (Economic and Financial Affairs) on 12 February and the meeting of the G7 Finance Ministers on 9 February in Tokyo.

A brief exchange of views followed this presentation, after which the PRESIDENT reported that the British Prime Minister had accepted his invitation to pay an official visit to the European Commission in Brussels on 21 February.

The Commission took note of this information.

17. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(SEC(2008)104)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group held on Friday 25 January (SEC(2008)104).

It paid particular attention to the following:

17.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) Preparations for the January II part-session of Parliament

(point 1.2 of the IRG 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 associated, to take a position on Parliament's amendments to its proposals.

It paid particular attention to the following:

Codecision – 2nd reading

- Completion of the internal market in Community postal services (Directive) – FERBER report – 2006/0196 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2008)428.

Empowerment

- Completion of the internal market in Community postal services (Directive) – FERBER report – 2006/0196 (COD)

The Commission empowered Mr McCREEVY, under Article 13 of its Rules of Procedure, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms WALLSTRÖM and any associated Members, to adopt and transmit to the Council its opinion on the amendments, in accordance with Article 251(2)(c) of the Treaty, once

(30 January 2008)

Parliament had expressed itself, and if necessary to attach to its opinion an amended proposal, on the basis of the line set out in SP(2008)428.

Codecision – 1st reading

- Submission by Member States of statistics on aquaculture (Regulation) – MORILLON report – 2006/0286 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2008)429.

17.2. RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL

ii) Programming of Council business

(SI(2008)33)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2008)33 on the Council meetings between 24 January and 6 February.

iii) Results of Council meeting (General Affairs and External Relations)

– External Relations session (Brussels, 10-11 January 2008)

(SI(2008)50)

Relations with Serbia

Mr REHN reported on the results of the Council (General Affairs and External Relations) meeting on 28 January, as regards the western Balkans and in particular relations with Serbia.

He referred to the situation in Serbia on the eve of the second round of the presidential elections on 3 February, emphasising the importance of the outcome for the future of Serbia and its relations with the EU.

He was convinced that strengthening cooperation with Serbia would support the Serbian politicians who were in favour of taking democracy further and opening up to the Union.

At the Council meeting, he had stressed that any agreement with the EU required Serbia's cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. He also explained the considerations that had prompted the Council to decide, at this stage, to invite Serbia to sign an interim political agreement on cooperation rather than the stabilisation and association agreement.

Mr REHN considered that an interim agreement would serve the package of EU measures for Serbia and would contribute to important steps forward in political dialogue, free trade, visa liberalisation and cooperation in the field of education. He noted too that the interim agreement provided for the creation of a task force to examine ways of rapidly achieving concrete and positive results.

In this connection, he referred to the support expressed by the Council for the Commission's initiative to seek closer dialogue with Serbia on visa liberalisation, a result that gave a very important signal, for which he particularly thanked Mr FRATTINI.

Lastly, he informed the Commission of his request for empowerment to sign the interim political agreement on cooperation between the EU and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Serbia, of the other (see item 18.4 of these minutes).

The Commission held a brief exchange of views, which highlighted the support for the Council conclusions, and the need for a circumspect approach by the EU, particularly with respect to Serbia's relations with Russia.

The PRESIDENT concluded the exchange of views by thanking Mr REHN for his report.

The Commission took note of this information.

17.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

iv) Action taken on Parliament's non-legislative resolutions

(point 3.5.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SP(2007)412 on the action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its November I 2007 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

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

(point 3.5.3 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SP(2007)411 on the action taken on Parliament's legislative opinions and non-legislative resolutions adopted at its December part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

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

(point 3.5.4 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved documents SP(2007)413 and /2 on the action taken on Parliament's non-legislative resolutions adopted at its November II 2007 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

vii) Action taken on Parliament's resolution on the Commission's legislative and work programme for 2008.

(point 3.5.5 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved SP(2008)473/2 on the action taken on Parliament's resolution adopted at its December 2007 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

**17.4. RELATIONS WITH THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE,
THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, THE EUROPEAN
OMBUDSMAN AND NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS**

**viii) Follow-up to Committee of the Regions opinions – Thirty-second
report (February and March 2007 plenary sessions)**
(point 4.3 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved the replies to the opinions adopted by the Committee of the Regions during the February and March 2007 plenary sessions, contained in the document distributed as SR(2008)2, for transmission to the Committee of the Regions.

**18. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF
POWERS**

18.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2008)79 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 21 and 25 January.

18.2. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2008)80 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 28 January and 1 February and of the "finalisation" written procedures initiated following the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet on 28 January.

(30 January 2008)

18.3. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2008)81 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 21 and 25 January.

**18.4. AD HOC EMPOWERMENT FOR THE SIGNING OF AN INTERIM
POLITICAL AGREEMENT ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU
AND ITS MEMBER STATES, AND THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
(SI(2008)50)**

The Commission took note of the information supplied by Mr REHN as recorded in item 17.2 (iii) of these minutes and empowered Mr REHN, Member of the Commission responsible for enlargement, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, to sign, on behalf of the Commission, the interim political agreement on cooperation between the EU and its Member States, and the Republic of Serbia, as presented in note SI(2008)50.

18.5. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation procedure between 21 and 25 January, as archived on "Grefte 2000" (Registry).

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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 10.32 hours.