

FOURTH SITTING

Wednesday, 15 June 2005

The sitting was opened at 10.00 with Mr Goris, President of the Assembly, in the Chair.

The PRESIDENT – The sitting is open.

1. Attendance register

The PRESIDENT – The names of those substitutes present at this sitting which have been notified to the President will be published with the list of representatives appended to the minutes of proceedings.

2. Adoption of the minutes

The PRESIDENT – In accordance with Rule 23 of the Rules of Procedure, the minutes of proceedings of the previous sitting have been distributed.

Are there any comments on the minutes? ...

The minutes are adopted.

3. ESDP developments and the Headline Goal 2010 – reply to the annual report of the Council

The PRESIDENT – The next order of the day is the presentation of and debate on the report of the Defence Committee on ESDP developments and the Headline Goal 2010 – reply to the annual report of the Council, Document [1898](#). We will then proceed to vote on the draft recommendation.

I call the Rapporteur, Mr Konstantinos Vrettos, to present the report.

Mr VRETTOS (*Greece*) – Thank you, Mr President. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Since the Nice Summit of December 2000, the European Union has done an enormous amount of work to establish its European Security and Defence Policy, which is usually referred to as the ESDP.

Up until that time, a system of crisis management existed in Western European Union, which had a Council of Ministers, a Military Committee and a Military Staff. As it was not possible to transfer all these structures to the European Union, they were recreated within the EU in the course of 2001.

Where do we stand today? What has been achieved more recently and what are the prospects? What do we still need to improve? To answer these questions, we first need to remind ourselves of the EU's strategic objectives. It was at the Helsinki Summit in 1999 that the EU heads of state and government, meeting as the European Council, first expressed their determination “to develop an autonomous capacity to take decisions and, where NATO as a whole is not engaged, to launch and conduct EU-led military operations in response to international crises”.

Through this declaration, which formed the basis for the ESDP, the EU member states defined their common strategic objective in the area of military capabilities: autonomy and responsiveness. In 2003, the EU adopted a European Security Strategy document with the subsidiary title “A secure Europe in a better world”. The European Union has set itself three strategic objectives in order to guarantee its security and promote its values. The first is entitled “Addressing the threats”, which calls for a committed effort to combat terrorism, and the financing of terrorism in particular, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the failure of states. The second is entitled “Building security in our neighbourhood”, which expresses Europe's commitment to good governance in the European Union's neighbours to the east and on the borders of the Mediterranean. The third is entitled “An international order based on effective multilateralism”, the aim of which is to develop a stronger international society, well-functioning international organisations – the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, and so on – international financial institutions and regional institutions such as the OECD, and a rule-based international order.

We should also ask ourselves the following question: what are the main steps forward in the area of the ESDP that have been proposed in the text of the Constitutional Treaty, which is of course now under threat, as we know? First of all, there is the plan to create the post of an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs and an EU external action, or diplomatic, service. The idea is for Europe to be able to make a common

assessment in the event of a crisis. In my view, this would be a major improvement as it would prevent differences over situation assessment.

In the area covered by the ESDP, the first sign of progress concerns the definition of what have been called “extended Petersberg tasks”. In order to deal with the new emerging threats, a decision has been taken to broaden the range of the Petersberg tasks to include new missions and to make it possible to have recourse to military means in such cases as conflict prevention, joint actions for disarmament, military advice and assistance, post-conflict stabilisation and support at the request of the authorities of a third country in the fight against terrorism.

The second important area in which the Constitutional Treaty makes progress concerns mutual defence. Article I-41, paragraph 7, of the final version of the text reads as follows: “If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other member states shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain member states. Commitments and cooperation in this area shall be consistent with commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which, for those States which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation”.

The changes of that appeal in the final version as compared with the initial proposal are significant. In the eyes of a number of member states the Union is not and must not be a military alliance. Given that the clause is applicable to all member states, it must no longer contain a binding element. Thus the “mutual defence” clause now becomes more like an exhortation in principle and can no longer be regarded as a replacement for WEU’s mutual defence clause. As Rapporteur, I share that view and maintain that the modified Brussels Treaty and Article V should not be abolished at least until discussions on the new Constitution have concluded.

The third improvement proposed in the text of the Constitutional Treaty is designed to improve flexibility and responsiveness in the event of a crisis through what is called “permanent structured cooperation”. Article I-41, paragraph 6 of the Constitutional Treaty stipulates that “those member states whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions shall establish permanent structured cooperation within the Union framework”.

Permanent structured cooperation should bring together certain member states seeking to develop effective crisis-management capabilities to be made available to the EU, which implies having the necessary capacity for that purpose and hence the readiness to enter into commitments with a view to improving the key factors of autonomy and responsiveness.

However, the texts remain deliberately silent on the precise definition of the criteria that need to be complied with in order to be eligible for permanent structured cooperation and the body authorised to approve that definition, and also on the levels to be achieved for each of those criteria to ensure that the resulting permanent structured cooperation has the desired effectiveness, particularly in operational terms, while not excluding too many of the member countries that wish to become involved.

I dare to hope that these important measures concerning the ESDP will be adopted as quickly as possible despite the difficulties that have been encountered in the process of ratification of the Constitutional Treaty.

What is the position today as far as the EU’s crisis management capabilities are concerned? The EU’s objectives regarding its military capabilities have been set out in what have been called “Headline Goals”. The first of these, the Headline Goal 2003 – much discussed in this forum – was defined by the Helsinki European Council in 1999; a 60 000-strong force was to be deployable within two months and sustainable for one year. This has been supplemented by the Headline Goal 2010, whose purpose is to improve the EU’s responsiveness in the event of a crisis. The objective is for it to be able to deploy, at short notice and in response to a crisis, battalion-sized battlegroups – 1 500 troops – with tactical support elements including transport and logistics. In practice this will mean that a decision must be taken within five days of the Council giving approval for an operation and the necessary forces must be deployed within ten days.

As far as the EU’s crisis management structures are concerned, the bodies that were set up in 2001 in the wake of the Nice Treaty were the Political and Security Committee, the EU Military Committee and

the EU Military Staff. The concepts of Operation Headquarters and Force Headquarters were implemented for the EU's first military operations, namely, Artemis in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But there is also a new structure called the Civilian/Military Cell.

In practice, the organisation of an autonomous chain of command is not always satisfactory because it relies on a "framework nation" to supply the operation headquarters. This is not compatible with the requirement of deploying a force in less than 10 days that is laid down in the Headline Goal 2010. The European Council, which was aware of this problem, therefore decided to create a Civilian/Military Cell in the EUMS whose task is defined as follows: "The Civilian/Military Cell will enhance the EU's capacity for crisis management planning. It will reinforce the national HQ designated to conduct an EU autonomous operation, assist in coordinating civilian operations and have the responsibility for generating the capacity to plan and run an autonomous EU military operation, once a decision on such an operation has been taken."

In the field of military capabilities, the European Union has also recently developed the concept of battlegroups in the framework of the Headline Goal 2010. A battlegroup is defined as the minimum militarily effective, credible, rapidly deployable, coherent force package capable of stand-alone operations, or for the initial phase of larger operations. The battlegroup is based on a combined arms, battalion-sized force and reinforced with Combat Support and Combat Service Support elements – 1 500 troops. A battlegroup could be formed by a framework nation or by a coalition of member states. In all cases, interoperability and military effectiveness will be key criteria. A battlegroup must be associated with a force headquarters and pre-identified operational and strategic enablers, such as strategic lift and logistics.

Full operational capability – the ability to conduct two simultaneous operations involving battlegroups – will be reached in 2007. Some 20 EU member states have announced their intention to participate in the battlegroups. The EU should therefore have 13 battlegroups at its disposal as of 2007. The EU has also decided to increase its police and gendarme capabilities so that it can maintain law and order in crisis zones. This is the civil capability aspect of crisis management.

The Feira and Gothenburg European Councils, held in June 2000 and June 2002 respectively, set objectives for policing, and the EU's first police mission was launched on 1 January 2003. In this mission, 500 police officers took over from the United Nations' police mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At the December 2004 Brussels Council meeting, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain announced an initiative to create a European gendarmerie force, which will contribute to the ESDP. This force, with military status, is to have its headquarters in Vicenza in Italy. It will have to be able to muster a force of 800 officers within 30 days and will be made available to the EU to guarantee security and public order in a crisis zone.

Air and sea strategic transport capabilities are essential if the EU's battlegroups are to be genuinely operational. It is therefore essential for the EU to have strategic transport capabilities.

The role of the newly created European Defence Agency is essential. Its establishment was agreed in principle by the Thessaloniki European Council and formally decided by a Joint Action in July 2004. The tasks of the EDA are to: develop defence capabilities in the field of crisis management; promote and enhance European cooperation on armaments; work to strengthen the defence technological and industrial base (DTIB) and for the creation of an internationally competitive European defence equipment market; and enhance the effectiveness of European defence research and technology.

The EDA is divided into four Directorates – Capability Development, Research and Technology, Armaments, Defence Industry and Market – and has 77 staff members. Its steering board is chaired by the EU Council Secretary-General/CFSP High Representative and it meets twice a year at the level of the Defence Ministers. It is stipulated that "the Agency should develop close working relations with existing arrangements" – such as OCCAR and WEAG – "with a view to [their] assimilation". Those organisations are closely connected and inter-related with the EU.

In 2001 the EU member states launched a process known as the European Capability Action Plan in order to remedy European capability shortfalls. This involves panels of military experts from the member states which have proposed plans and programmes for the procurement of new equipment or for measures to optimise existing capabilities, in particular through cooperation at European level.

The main task of the project groups is to tackle the following issues: headquarters, interoperability, ISTAR – intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance – strategic air and sealift, space, unmanned aerial vehicles, and theatre missile defence.

The latest progress report in November 2004 announced that considerable efforts still needed to be made in order to meet the Headline Goal 2010. To that end, the EU Presidency has called for a strengthening of the ECAP process and underlines the need for the Defence Ministers to become actively involved, in particular as members of the European Defence Agency Steering Board. The Military Committee, EUMC, remains responsible for drawing up the progress report as well as the requirements, forces and progress catalogues. Hence, the EUMC and EDA must work in close cooperation in order to meet the EU capability improvement targets.

This leads to the important question of whether there is a need for a European armaments policy and, if so, of what kind. The European Defence Agency must be a tool that serves the Union's industrial policy. What is at stake here is the credibility of European defence, as well as the capacity of our industry to remain competitive in a perpetually unfavourable transatlantic context. For the moment, we are far from having achieved that. Such an industrial policy and the creation of a European industrial base are therefore absolutely necessary if we wish to create or maintain autonomous European defence capabilities. To quote from our report, "Only in that way will the European groups be able not only to compete with their American rivals, but also enter into alliances with them on an equal footing".

In conclusion, the Defence Committee recommends that the member states persevere with their efforts to give ESDP the necessary structures and resources, in particular by incorporating a proper intelligence policy in ESDP; introducing a minimum procedure for qualified majority voting in ESDP decision-making processes; developing the civilian-military cell and putting in place a genuine multinational operations headquarters; and supporting processes that are already under way such as the European Defence Agency, the EU's battlegroups and the European capability action plan. Thank you for your attention.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you Mr Vrettos for presenting the report.

The debate is open.

I call Ms Damanaki.

Ms DAMANAKI (*Greece*) – I congratulate Mr Vrettos on his systematic and comprehensive work on recent developments in European Security and Defence Policy. What is of main importance for the EU is to achieve a security and defence strategy, which must be clear enough to unite the different approaches. If we want to be successful in addressing the threats, we must be careful when defining them. Terrorism, for example, is a very difficult enemy because it is hard to combat it without limiting or threatening human rights. I am glad that Mr Vrettos has taken that into account.

The coexistence with NATO operations is another critical point but if Europe has its own strategy and capabilities, the decisions will become easier. The steps that were taken and the developments that took place last year were impressive. They include the development of the civil-military cell, the creation of the European Defence Agency and the battlegroups. However, their effectiveness will largely depend on the future political integration of Europe and the future of the European Constitution.

However, I support the proposals in the report for mutual assistance between member states, for decision-making capability and for permanent structured cooperation in intelligence, research and education fields. Those are the main proposals to achieve a better future.

The PRESIDENT – The next speaker is Mr Cosidó Gutiérrez.

Mr COSIDÓ GUTIÉRREZ (*Spain*) (summary) congratulated the Rapporteur on an excellent report, and said that he fully supported its recommendations and conclusions. All political support on the issues covered in the report were enshrined in the EU Constitutional Treaty. The uncertainty surrounding the Constitutional Treaty caused a dilemma on how to continue in the area of defence during the period in which the Treaty would lie in limbo. The Headline Goal 2010 was a step in the right direction, although it fell slightly short of what was required. A major problem was that Europe had limited resources in terms of troops and finance. The question arose as to how to deal with the various technological programmes when their cost was so great. There were many challenges to face, but the contribution and deliberations of the WEU Assembly were important in helping to develop alternatives.

The PRESIDENT – There are two more speakers on the list, but before I call them, allow me first to welcome to the Assembly Mr Onyszkiewicz, who is the Vice-President of the European Parliament. Welcome, sir. Mr Onyszkiewicz was formerly a member of our Assembly – we always like to welcome former members of the Assembly – and also the former Minister for Defence of Poland.

Colleagues, I have two more requests to speak from two Greek colleagues.

I call Mr Dendias.

Mr DENDIAS (*Greece*) – I will be very brief. I would like to ask Mr Vrettos a question that I consider very important. I would like to know how he feels about the Headline Goal 2010 after the rejection by France and the Netherlands of the draft European Constitution. Does he believe that that will affect the process of achieving the goal?

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr Varvitsiotis.

Mr VARVITSIOTIS (*Greece*) – I congratulate Mr Vrettos on his excellent report. I would also like to stress the issue that Mr Dendias pointed out before: the rejection of the draft European Constitution by France and the Netherlands and the debate that started in Europe regarding where we are going. What future are we facing? How are we going to proceed? Will that be a great obstacle to the Headline Goal 2010?

The debate that has now started in Europe will show that there has been a lot of neglect of the goals we set three or five years ago. We have other priorities than following our security and cooperation and endorsing our defence mechanism. Therefore, I support Mr Vrettos's idea that we need extra force on our side to fulfil the Headline Goal 2010 and produce a European defence mechanism.

The PRESIDENT – I agree with both the previous speakers from Greece that it would be interesting to hear the opinion of the Rapporteur on this issue, but I remind colleagues that we must also debate the next item on the agenda – Lord Russell-Johnston's report, which relates to the same issue. Of course, we are dealing with such questions at the moment, but it would be interesting to hear the Rapporteur's opinion on this point.

Does the Rapporteur wish to speak?

Mr VRETTOS (*Greece*) – First, I must express my thanks to my colleagues for their kind remarks about my report.

In response to Ms Damanaki, I fully agree that we are now in a new reality. We have achieved a lot in this field, and I think that this is a new era for the European Union in this respect. That is the reality. Of course, given the way that we are projecting our goals, we can more easily achieve the decisions if something happens in our area, the Balkans or elsewhere. That is the first point.

In response to Mr Cosidó Gutiérrez, let me say that I agree with his three remarks and I also agree that European are not ambitious enough when it comes to trying to establish a new world order, to be more effective and have a stronger presence there and achieve a better political balance across the globe. But of course, looking back over the last 10 years, we could not imagine that such progress would be made.

We are now talking about a European Union Military Committee, a Political Committee and about a European Defence Agency and other organisations, and about battlegroups. We thought that those things were fantasies before St Malo. In that respect, I must say that we have made great progress, and I must agree again with Ms Damanaki.

Mr Dendias asked me a crucial question, which in a way has been answered by Mr Varvitsiotis. I think that it is, of course, a major setback that the Constitutional Treaty has not been ratified by France and the Netherlands. I am not totally pessimistic; I am fairly optimistic, especially about meeting the Headline Goal 2010. I do not fear the worst just because some nations have decided against ratifying the treaty. In that respect, I agree with Mr Varvitsiotis. I remain hopeful that all will be well as regards the Headline Goal.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Vrettos. We have quite a few Greek speakers today, and I should like to welcome another one: the Vice-President of the Greek Parliament, Mr Hatzigakis.

Does the Chairman of the Defence Committee wish to speak?

Mr WILKINSON (*United Kingdom*) – On behalf of the Defence Committee I most warmly thank our excellent Rapporteur for an outstanding piece of work. The fact that we have had relatively few speakers is due to the fact that everybody endorses the content of the report and its recommendations. It is closely argued and it carries a great deal of weight.

I am sure that Ms Damanaki was right to say that the EU must have its own strategy, which must be pursued with single mindedness – especially so at this time of difficulty in the European Union. I also noted her remarks about the importance of coexistence, by which I mean fruitful, positive, constructive coexistence with NATO, especially in anti-terrorist operations.

Mr Cosidó Gutiérrez was correct to warn us about the growing divergence in capability between the United States and Europe, the more so since there is a distinction between the doctrines of the American and European components of the Alliance. The United States is simply more prepared than we are to conduct pre-emptive operations against possible terrorism.

He was also right to say that it is important that the Europeans should not lack strategic vision. As we were reminded by Mr Dendias, and also in a way by Mr Varvitsiotis, the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by the voters of the Netherlands and France makes it all the more important that we maintain our commitment to the Headline Goals and carry forward the practical work of cooperation in security and defence. That is our task; the chances of its being carried through successfully have been enhanced by this report, which underlines the great significance of the Headline Goals to our security in Europe.

The report was passed unanimously by the Committee and I can only reiterate our thanks to our excellent secretariat, including Mr Brito and Admiral Combarieu.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Wilkinson.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft recommendation contained in Document [1898](#), to which no amendments have been tabled.

Under Rule 35 of the Rules of Procedure, if five or more representatives or substitutes present in the Chamber so desire, the Assembly shall vote by roll call on a draft recommendation.

Does any member wish to propose a vote by roll call?...

That is not the case. We will vote by show of hands.

(A vote was taken by show of hands)

The draft recommendation is adopted unanimously.

4. Parliamentary debates and trends in public opinion on ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe

The PRESIDENT – The next order of the day is the presentation of and debate on the report of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations on Parliamentary debates and trends in public opinion on ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, and vote on the draft resolution, Document [1893](#).

I must inform you that we will interrupt the debate at around 11.30 to hear the address of the Right Honourable Jack Straw, United Kingdom Foreign Secretary, which will be delivered by the British Ambassador to Paris, His Excellency Sir John Holmes.

I call the Rapporteur, Lord Russell-Johnston, and the co-Rapporteur, Mrs Aleknaite, to present the report.

Lord RUSSELL-JOHNSTON (*United Kingdom*) – I must confess that I am not at my best in the morning. As my friend Garfield the cat, the famous cartoon character, once said, “I would like mornings better if they started later”. That sums up my view.

The report, for which I was the co-Rapporteur first with our Polish friend and then with our Lithuanian friend, was undertaken because it was felt that we should monitor the progress of discussions on the European Constitution. We also established co-Rapporteurs because we felt that the new member states should have an input and would also be more knowledgeable and penetrating in their evaluation of what was happening in countries that were once under Soviet rule. It was never the intention to produce a

controversial report. It was to be a record of how parliaments in several countries dealt with the proposed Constitution. The draft recommendations are not exactly exciting. They encourage parliaments to give the public as much information as possible, irrespective of how the decision is eventually arrived at – whether in parliament or by referendum.

What has happened in France and the Netherlands has changed all this and will assuredly change the debate. It has also given me some licence to be opinionated, just for once.

I will say first what I think should happen today, which has already been the subject of some discussion. What I propose may not be what is wanted, but it is a proposal that the Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee unanimously supported at its meeting yesterday morning. First we should have our debate, which I suspect will be wide ranging, and that is all to the good: it is what parliaments are for. Some of the amendments tabled by the Committee are contingency amendments. We were concerned about what would happen if certain other amendments fell – one needs to look ahead, and that is something that the Assembly is generally quite good at. I shall therefore propose that we do not debate the amendments, and that we refer the report back to the Committee, where the amendments can be carefully considered in conjunction with the consideration of the referendums in the Netherlands and France and perhaps also in Luxembourg, and of the contributions that are made in this debate.

Perhaps a Brit like me – given the United Kingdom's record of hesitation, awkwardness and partial acceptance over the years since Messina – is not the best person to deliver a lecture on European integration to the France of Jean Monnet or the Netherlands of Mansholt. I remember Mansholt very vividly; he was a very powerful figure. We are short of powerful figures in Europe just now. However, we national representatives in this loose but cooperative Assembly understand that government positions do not necessarily reflect individual or indeed party attitudes within a country. In my own case, one of the reasons why I joined the Liberal Party – in 1954, that was certainly not the act of a politically ambitious person – was that the Conservative Government of the day and the Labour opposition were both opposed to involvement in the negotiations that led to the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

As detailed analyses of the French referendum begin to emerge, it is interesting to observe the reasons why people voted as they did. It was not that everybody hated Chirac, even though a substantial number might do so. However, 11% have been identified as having voted “no” because they were against French nationalism and against a Franco-German domination of the European Union. That is very interesting. However, our responsibility is defence, and while I, from my own federal position, can understand the potency of certain arguments against economic, social or taxation integration in a wider Europe, the arguments against defence integration have no intellectual credibility.

I remember talking to an Austrian general some years ago on the subject of neutrality. It was very good for a second lieutenant, retired, to be talking on equal terms to a general, and I was pulling his tail on the subject of neutrality. I said, “Come on, general, all this neutrality stuff is nonsense.” He stood up stiffly, in an Austrian fashion, and said, “Absolutely not. Austria is a completely neutral country.” However, he then added, “If a conflict breaks out, our guns will point in only one direction.” It is the same for us. The idea that there should be different German, French, British, Spanish or Italian defence policies is crazy. Of course there has to be a national parliamentary input in each country, as there already is, and this Assembly facilitates that at European level. But should we have different policies? No.

A great deal of progress has been made, but I confess that I find it a bit wearisome to tramp over the same ground that we have tramped over so often before, sometimes giving new initiatives new titles in order to suggest that they represent momentum. However, we have made progress, as you, Mr President, illustrated yesterday. Nevertheless, outdated attitudes persist, perhaps most notably in the British Foreign Office in Whitehall and at the Quai d'Orsay. In a way, declaring difference is their justification for existence.

In the days when I used to address endless meetings in Britain on European defence integration – not always terribly well attended, despite an emphasis on public participation, but that might have been on account of me rather than the issue – I used to use the example of the Brighton “bathing beauty” competition, which I now commend to the Assembly. This was a competition established in Brighton by a rather foolish man. He set up a jury of six people to make the final judgment – he had obviously never heard of qualified majority voting. Inevitably, when the contest had been narrowed down to the final two girls the jury would vote three against three. This led to consternation; the crowd and the ladies grew

impatient. The organiser became frantic and, looking around, saw a Chinaman in the audience. He thought, “That is my solution. He will be objective. Nobody will criticise his decision.” The organiser made no allowance for the possibility that oriental concepts of beauty might not tie in with occidental concepts of beauty; that would have been too sophisticated. Anyway, the Chinaman came up and looked at the two ladies in their bikinis. He examined them closely and, after a little while turned to the organiser and said, “Each is worse.” That is often my view of the European policies adopted in Paris and London.

Let me end by saying something that is unfunny but very positive. Incidentally, while I am on my feet, may I say that we do not acknowledge often enough how much we owe to the quality, intelligence, innovative capacity and dedication of our staff. Our Secretary, Marisa Nudda, is super in that regard. In January 2004, at her instigation, we had a presentation by those responsible for the 2004 Eurobarometer, and they asked questions about defence which were very interesting, particularly in the light of the two referendums that we have just had. They showed that a common defence policy was considered desirable by 82% of the population of the European Union. Its greatest supporters were the Germans with 90% and the French with 83%. I do not believe that the referendums in any way represent an argument against defence integration. There was 73% support for a common procurement and development policy, and 80% for a European defence agency. These figures have not changed and I do not think that the referendum has changed them. They represent a recognition of reality. They are dynamic and conclusive results and, whatever the referendum said, it did not say that Europe should cease in its movement towards integrated defence. We have known that for a long time and made our contribution towards it. Thank you, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Lord Russell-Johnston. We are happy to see that you have not lost your sense of humour in these difficult days of non-ratification. The next speaker is Mrs Aleknaite.

Mrs ALEKNAITE (*Lithuania*) – First, as a new member of the Lithuanian delegation in the WEU Assembly, I would like to express my gratitude to my Committee colleagues for the honourable opportunity to fulfil the role of co-Rapporteur and to cooperate with such a prominent politician as Lord Russell-Johnston.

At the same time, I must acknowledge that it is one of the most complicated duties in my political life – the duty to speak about the process of ratification of the Treaty here and now. As responsible European politicians, we have no right to pretend that nothing has happened. The ambitious project of rapid and extensive enlargement and the establishment of an institutionally strong and more efficient EU has been rejected and by whom? By two founders of the EU.

Some commentators have drawn the conclusion that the Constitution has been killed and that there is no reason to continue. I am one of those who believe in the fundamental importance of the European idea and not only from the perspective of Lithuania, one of the 10 “nasty new classmates” as we have been referred to during the session. A strong, effective, flexible, competitive and influential Europe is vital globally.

It is time to give answers to the question as to what is happening within our European commonwealth and our national homes. The answer will be complex and can be given only by all of us together. I only dare to add one simple detail to the picture – my answer comes from my motivation as a Lithuanian woman who was born and bred behind the iron curtain.

My explanation is simple. The citizens of two free democratic European states have expressed their feelings, their fears, their worries and some disappointment at the lack of a clear vision of the future. Political elites had this vision but it was not transferred to the population.

Despite the disappointing outcome of the two referendums, we Europeans should not forget how valuable it is to have a casual opportunity in a democratic society sometimes to say “no” even if we are wrong and even if we are sending some leaders and governments to hell. It is valuable because those democratic tools are not given to all the citizens of the world.

The peninsula of western democracy – an expression of one of the founding fathers of the EU, Robert Schuman – is not as large as we would wish. And to what continent is this peninsula attached? It is attached to some mysterious “heartland” to use the old geopolitical term whose main feature through the ages was a totalitarian system of government. As a participant in Lithuania’s “singing revolution”, I still remember the feeling of a big bear breathing down your back. If the EU were to disintegrate, several big bears would appear, some of a very impressive size, and would grow in the east. Not one western

European state could be big and strong enough to avoid the hot and sometimes bloody breath of the growing Eurasian bears.

Looking from this perspective, the idea of enlargement of the western democratic peninsula has a reason. To what extent and in which form must the process be realised? These and other questions have to be debated among the 25 in discussions involving national governments and our own societies. The move towards consensus must be renewed. We need to have the courage to oppose fear and to diagnose what has happened. We must be more sensitive to the needs of our citizens and more accountable and transparent to the electors on European matters.

We need the political will to recognise that social and economic reforms are very necessary if we want to play the global game in the near future. What should the reforms be? That is the next question. Should the EU be more French or more British, more social or more competitive? My grandmother always told me that the truth usually lay somewhere between two extremes.

Thus, I believe that a compromise can and must be found. Let us “stop the bleeding” as one Finnish parliamentarian has said. Let us take a short pause – not for resignation but for reflection and for doing a better job and for making an effort for a better result.

I am an enthusiastic supporter of José Manuel Barroso when he says that there is no plan B but that there could be a plan D, meaning democracy and dialogue. I absolutely agree that we must not allow the EU to become the first casualty of globalisation. The EU must become the first winner.

In the words of Georges Berthoin in his open letter to Europe’s leaders, what would be the future relations between our different nations and the social, religious and ethnic communities within our borders if suspicion and fear were to prevail over a sense of a shared destiny? As a Lithuanian conservative and traditional Catholic, I put my own destiny and that of all of Europe in the hands of Christ. I am not sure how many of you would do the same. We are advocating openness, dialogue and transparency in our institutions and I say God bless Europe, and thank you for your attention.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mrs Aleknaite for that excellent presentation. The debate is open.

I call Mr Falzon.

Mr FALZON (*Malta*) – I thank the Rapporteur and co-Rapporteur for their contribution to the report. Although we regret that France and the Netherlands voted against the Constitution, we still recognise them as among the founding members of the EU and we feel that the votes in no way call into question their role and importance in the EU.

Although Malta is a small country, we will give France and the Netherlands our full support for their valuable contribution to a unified Europe. Those two countries have a lot to contribute and everyone recognises that they have given their full support to a unified Europe. We always welcome the process of unifying Europe going forward.

Malta will ratify the Constitutional Treaty in July with a vote in Parliament. Prior to the referendum, our country was divided. My party, the Nationalist Government, proposed Malta’s accession to the EU while the Labour Party proposed a special partnership agreement. However, everyone in Malta and the rest of Europe recognises that the Labour Party is now in favour of the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty. There may be some small factions in the Labour Party that disagree with it, but I assure you that the general public in Malta are in favour of the Constitutional Treaty, on which there will soon be a vote in Parliament.

All Maltese say that our destiny is now Europe. Being a Member of the Nationalist Government that promoted Malta to the EU, I am very optimistic that that will increase Malta’s prosperity.

The PRESIDENT – The next speaker is Mr Mota Amaral.

Mr MOTA AMARAL (*Portugal*) (summary) congratulated the Rapporteurs and the Committee on an excellent report. He said that he hoped that, at the end of the debate, Lord Russell-Johnston would enlighten the Assembly as to his final position. It remained to be seen whether the report and amendments would be referred back to the Committee. In the event of such a referral, it was to be hoped that the Assembly would have an opportunity to present its views at the plenary in December.

Events had overtaken the report, which had been prepared at a time when the priority had been to draw attention to the nature and content of the Treaty. Since then, some member states had ratified the Treaty through their parliaments and there had been “no” votes in France and the Netherlands. Further “no” votes were anticipated. European leaders had to reflect on the new situation.

If the public were to understand the Treaty, parliamentarians had to start providing explanations at grass roots level. In this respect, the report made the fundamental point that efforts must be made to involve the public in the debate. Laws in many European countries dictated that no treaty could be subject to a referendum. However, even in those countries, leaders had to be cognisant of trends in society in relation to direct involvement of the public in democracy.

International treaties enshrined long-term goals but referendums were decided on the basis of everyday issues. Often, the answer given in a referendum was to a different question from that which had been asked.

The future of the Treaty in the light of the “no” votes was a matter for the European Council to decide, in consultation with national parliaments. Public opinion must be borne in mind and European leaders might wish to pause for reflection.

In Portugal, an amendment to the constitution was required before the process of ratification could be initiated. It was hoped that this could take place in October, at the same time as local elections in Portugal.

The decisions taken in France and the Netherlands could not be allowed to stop the process of integration, which had guaranteed peace in Europe for half a century. Decisive progress on European construction had been made.

Enlargement was fundamental to integration. It was necessary to extend peace, human rights and the rule of law to the whole continent and not just to the founding countries. Europe should have an open door and embrace all the peoples of the continent.

The treaty needed further thought. What was needed was to incorporate the modified Brussels Treaty into the Constitutional Treaty. Among EU institutions, there would then continue to be an assembly that could benefit from WEU. It should not be forgotten that defence was a subject of great national interest. He would only believe in a EU foreign policy when Germany had a permanent seat on the Security Council and when the United Kingdom and France accepted this and ceded to a European representative. It was possible to intervene in European defence policy but this ability suffered from the limits previously discussed in the Assembly. A pause for reflection was desirable and this would lead to improvements.

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr Gubert.

Mr GUBERT (*Italy*) (summary) said that he had voted in favour of the ratification of the EU Constitutional Treaty in the Italian Parliament. A positive aspect of the Treaty was the ability to impose unanimity, for without this ability, there was a danger of paralysis, as was seen in the problems with Iraq. The EU had many common policies, although it did not have effective provision for a Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Enthusiasm for the EU was on the way out in some countries. For some there were too many rules, and in others there was too great an acceptance of liberal principles. Entry into the EU of low-wage countries had caused fears of “offshoring” and competition. This was a time when representatives had to take responsibility and weigh up the pros and cons. The danger of placing international treaties before the public for approval could be seen in the recent referendums in the Netherlands and France. There was a need to tackle the political dimensions so that Europe could mean something to everyone.

The PRESIDENT – The next speaker is Mr Arlovic.

Mr ARLOVIC (*Croatia*) (summary) congratulated the Rapporteur and said that the alarm had been sounded when two founding members of the EU Constitutional Treaty had decided to reject it. This should not be seen as a rejection of the European Constitution as such. The referendums in those countries had allowed Europe to probe various issues at national level. The EU Constitution had transformed into an instrument of political struggle. Defenders of the idea of the EU had understood that it was necessary, but had perhaps neglected the fact that this idea was not taken up entirely by the citizens of Europe. As

political representatives, it was necessary for members of parliaments to take the time to explain what a united Europe meant so that citizens could appreciate the values cited in the Constitution. There had been a lack of understanding that citizens did not want to give up the rights and freedoms they had acquired. The concept of subsidiarity had to be properly explained. Croatia was not a member of the EU, but had a constitution which allowed it to express its views on this. The EU Constitution had great value and should be respected by all peoples. The most important thing was the peaceful unification of Europe.

The PRESIDENT – I must now interrupt the list of speakers for our next item of business.

5. Address by the Right Honourable Jack Straw, MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Chairman-Designate of the WEU Council, representing the incoming United Kingdom WEU/EU Presidency

The PRESIDENT – The next order of the day is the address by the Right Honourable Jack Straw, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Chairman-Designate of the WEU Council, representing the incoming UK WEU/EU Presidency.

Unfortunately, given the very full European diary this week, the Secretary of State cannot be with us this morning. He has asked the British Ambassador in Paris, Sir John Holmes, to deliver the address, which marks the start, on 1 July, of the United Kingdom's six-month EU Presidency and year-long WEU Presidency.

I am pleased to say that thanks to the assiduity of the British Delegation – I take this opportunity publicly to thank those members of the Delegation who are now retiring for all their support and enthusiasm for the Assembly over many years – planning is already well advanced for a series of meetings and briefings not only for this autumn but for spring next year.

At the end of the address the Ambassador has kindly offered to answer any technical questions that colleagues may have about the UK Presidency.

Sir John, you have the floor.

Sir JOHN HOLMES (*Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador, Paris*) – Mr President, distinguished members of the Assembly, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, I am delighted to accept this invitation to address the 51st session of the WEU Assembly. I should first say that the Foreign Secretary very much regrets that he is unable to attend your session himself or be represented by one of his Ministers. As you are all aware, this week is a particularly busy one in the European ministerial calendar, with both the General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting in Luxembourg on Monday and a key European Council meeting starting tomorrow in Brussels, with some difficult issues on the table, including the one that the Assembly has been discussing this morning. I shall now read Jack Straw's speech on his behalf.

Mr President, with the UK Presidency of the European Union just 16 days away, we welcome this opportunity to give you, in this interparliamentary forum that brings together national parliamentarians from across Europe, an overview of our plans for the European Security and Defence Policy over the next six months. At the same time, we are very much looking forward to our one-year Presidency of WEU itself from July 2005 to July 2006.

The European Security and Defence Policy has come a long way since its birth at St Malo in 1998. It grew out of a desire to see the European Union make a serious contribution to resolving international crises. Our experience in the Balkans in the 1990s showed that, to help resolve conflicts, the European Union needed not only to coordinate its response internally but to ensure that it had its own defence capability compatible with, and complementary to, that of NATO. Seven years on, the European Union has developed a unique tool-box of military and civilian crisis management capabilities to support its Common Foreign and Security Policy objectives.

We know that operations are the real test of the ESDP. The EU has never been more operationally active than it is today. There are no less than six ESDP missions ongoing, from the Black Sea to Africa. During the UK Presidency of the EU, we will ensure the continuation of effective day-to-day management of all these operations. On the military side, Operation Althea in Bosnia is going well. It is the largest ESDP mission to date, with about 6 500 troops drawn from 33 countries, and a British force commander,

General David Leakey. This operation shows that the ESDP can make a real contribution to the wider political aims of the European Union, in this case a stable and peaceful Bosnia.

Secretary-General and High Representative Javier Solana commented in his recent review of the operation: “The energy and imagination of the EUFOR commander and his staff and their determination to act as part of the EU family in theatre have been instrumental in adding to the overall effect of the European Union in Bosnia.” Althea also provides a vivid demonstration of the strategic partnership between the EU and NATO made real on the ground, and is testament to the fact that the “Berlin plus” arrangements work in practice.

Lord Ashdown, in his double-hatted role as both the EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the High Representative under the Dayton Accords, has been able to ensure coordination between the force’s activities and those of other EU players. As the Assembly will be aware, mid-November 2005 will be a key point – ten years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreements – when the EU will review the tasks and mandate of the EU force.

On the civilian side, the EU’s three policing missions are also progressing well. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the focus is on promoting European standards of policing. The EU’s first civilian mission in Africa was launched in the Democratic Republic of Congo in April this year. Its aim is to help the setting up of an integrated police unit in Kinshasa that will be tasked with providing protection for the institutions and main transitional government authorities and to assist with public security in the capital before the elections that are due to take place in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The EU’s rule of law capability also continues to develop, and as one mission draws to a successful close, another is about to begin. The EU will support the Georgian authorities in continuing the good work on judicial reform started by EUJUST THEMIS. EUJUST LEX will focus on supporting police and rule-of-law training in Iraq by conducting Europe-based courses for officials. The EU is also supporting the police in the Palestinian Authority through the office of the EU Special Representative there. We will continue carefully to monitor and review all these missions during our presidency.

The United Kingdom also plans to put supporting Africa at the heart of our twin presidencies of the EU and G8 this year. Getting ESDP to be more active in Africa will be a key element of this. We therefore welcome the launch last week of the EUSEC Operation, also in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Its aim is to support security sector reform in that country, with a special focus on the reintegration of former armed forces, and it is the first EU mission of its kind. The EU has also been active in supporting the African Union mission – AMIS – in Darfur, including providing about €90 million euros through the EU African Peace Facility. Moreover, the EU is also considering a package of assistance in response to African Union requirements, which would include the airlift of troops into Darfur, logistical support, equipment and assets, and police training. The EU is coordinating its assistance carefully with that of NATO. The United Kingdom looks forward to the Assembly’s proposed seminar in September on peacekeeping in Africa. With its high-level African participation, it will make a valuable contribution to strengthening dialogue and driving the issue forward.

As the ESDP becomes more and more active across the world, it is also vital that the EU continues to build its capabilities, and making ESDP more capable is the second key theme of the UK Presidency. Of course, capabilities are already a major area of concern for this Assembly, and I know that there is a huge amount of expertise and interest. I note, for example, that the Assembly has already had discussions on issues of technology acquisition and on the Headline Goal 2010. The latter is one of the areas of work that we shall be taking forward.

Headline Goal 2010 will focus on ensuring that EU forces are equipped and ready for sustained joint deployment and operation. The capability development mechanism will continue to allow the EU and NATO to work together to ensure that their capabilities are indeed complementary. We aim to complete the work started under the Luxembourg Presidency by carrying out operational analysis of the assets needed to enable the EU to undertake the full range of potential military missions. The EU has contracted NATO’s Command, Control and Consultancy Agency to carry out this work, and is adapting NATO software to compile the questionnaire that member states will use to register their commitments. This is another excellent practical example of the two organisations working together. Once that process is complete, member states can start to offer their contributions.

One of the key tools that the EU has created for improving capabilities is the European Defence Agency. During the UK Presidency, we hope to agree a three-year financial framework for the agency so that it can start to plan its work for 2006. One of the first issues that the agency will be looking at is improving competition in Europe with the development of a European defence equipment market. We are confident that with European Defence Ministers sitting on the steering board, the agency will be able to deliver real improvements in European capability.

As part of the process of streamlining work on capability, the agency has been taking on the responsibility of WEAG, a process that will be completed soon. We will aim to ensure that the administrative arrangements are put in place with the non-EU WEAG members, Turkey and Norway, so that they can continue their close involvement in these activities.

The UK Presidency will continue to work on the battlegroups initiative. The British and French battlegroups have been on standby since January and Italy will take over from us soon. In May, the battlegroup coordination conference succeeded in gaining a commitment by member states to all but one of the available standby slots up to 2007. We will try during our Presidency to fill that remaining slot. We will also continue working to ensure that battlegroups remain compatible with the NATO Response Force.

With this work on military capabilities well under way, the EU now needs to concentrate on building a similar process for improving civilian capabilities. The Civilian Capabilities Commitment Conference held in November 2004 noted the additional capabilities that new member states have brought to the civilian ESDP and reconfirmed the commitments of others. However the conference also highlighted key challenges that the EU must address in the near future. These include rapid deployability and procurement, and the UK Presidency will focus on those two elements in its broader work to finalise a requirements list and agree a capability improvement plan.

The third theme of the UK Presidency will be to ensure that the ESDP is more coherent. With the wide range of instruments at its disposal, from military to diplomatic, the EU should be able to provide a uniquely comprehensive response to any crisis. But close coordination between all the institutions and instruments at the EU's disposal is vital.

Within the ESDP, this coordination will be one of the core functions of the new civ-mil cell, which started work last month. Under our Presidency, we hope the cell will start to develop a framework to support the comprehensive plan of operations with both civil and military elements. We will focus in particular on two types of joint civ-mil operation: disaster response and security sector reform.

On disaster response, we will take forward the work outlined in the action plan agreed by the EU in January. This plan came out of the lessons learned from the EU's response to the Asian tsunami and a key part of it is the development of rapidly deployable civilian response teams. On security sector reform, we aim to develop a concept for EU security sector reform operations. This will of course draw upon lessons learned from the current EUSEC operation.

Underpinning all this work to make the ESDP more active, capable and coherent will be the principle of effective multilateralism, a reinforcement of the EU's relationship with other international organisations. We will maintain a close dialogue with the United Nations and will ensure that the EU contributes to the United Nations long-term objectives on peace and security wherever possible.

Operation Artemis in 2003 proved that the EU could respond quickly to a request for help from the United Nations. The evolution of battlegroups means that we will be even better prepared to respond in future. There are already several areas where we are cooperating with NATO, and that will continue. The strategic relationship will be further cemented on a practical level by the establishment of an EU cell at SHAPE and a NATO liaison team at the EU Military Staff.

Meanwhile, continuing our commitment to Africa, we will strive to build and maintain a relationship with the African Union and other sub-regional organisations. This kind of dialogue with such organisations will be crucial as we continue to implement the action plan for ESDP support for peace and security in Africa. While the EU is ready to carry out crisis-management operations in Africa when needed, it is also vital that we help to build African capacity to carry out operations. We will aim to do this by offering technical advice and planning assistance wherever needed.

We will continue to work at developing practical cooperation with third countries, including the Mediterranean partners and Russia. I note that Prime Minister Tymoshenko addressed the Assembly yesterday and we will be looking to further our relationship with Ukraine. On Monday, the EU and Ukraine signed a Framework Agreement that will smooth the way for Ukrainian participation in ESDP operations. The EU has already signed similar agreements with Bulgaria, Romania, Iceland and Norway and negotiations continue with Canada, Turkey, Russia and Switzerland.

It is clear that the ESDP is becoming more and more of a success story for the European Union. The bigger picture of course, as you are aware, is the overarching debate on the future of the EU Constitutional Treaty. Let me say a word about that. I note your close interest in the issue, and the timely decision to debate it this morning. We are all keenly awaiting the outcome of the European Council, which starts tomorrow in Brussels and you would not expect me to pre-empt the outcome of discussions among EU Heads of State and Government.

I would stress at this point that there is a wide range of work to take forward on the ESDP that does not rely on ratification of the Constitutional Treaty. The Nice Treaty and agreements from subsequent European Councils provide a framework for the ESDP. The solidarity clause in the Treaty commits member states to help each other in the event of a terrorist attack but recognises that member states would themselves decide how best to respond. The collective defence of Europe remains, with or without the Constitutional Treaty, a matter for NATO.

In terms of parliamentary oversight on matters relating to European Security and Defence Policy, we continue to believe that it is for national parliaments and governments to make decisions about committing troops. The WEU Assembly, born of the modified Brussels Treaty, has in recent years taken an increasing interest in the everyday business of the ESDP. To that extent and recognising the range of participation and expertise drawn from across national parliaments, we believe that this Assembly continues to play a useful role in stimulating debate and discussion about European and security-related issues. For our part, we will continue to engage in the ongoing discussions on involving national parliaments in these vital areas of policy.

Let me conclude by expressing appreciation for the opportunity, as the incoming WEU Presidency, to brief you as national parliamentarians from across Europe, on our aspirations for the continued development of the ESDP during our EU Presidency.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Sir John, for those comforting words, especially at the end of your address about the role we can play in the ESDP. They were warmly welcomed by all colleagues present.

I ask you to send our best regards and appreciation to Mr Straw. I thank you again for being with us today. It was not only an informative address but a very ambitious one. As Britain has the WEU Presidency for one year, of course we welcome that ambition. Although today the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty is under some pressure, as we all know, it is important to stress, as Sir John said, that the ESDP is mostly a matter of operations. Operations are still going on and will continue to go on. As Sir John said, there is even more to do.

Sir John, you mentioned that Althea is an important operation. That is also the Assembly's opinion. It demonstrates how "Berlin plus" can be a successful example of good cooperation between NATO and the EU. You mentioned the great importance of policing missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We warmly welcome the United Kingdom's support for Africa. I understand that the government even appointed a minister with responsibility for African affairs in the United Kingdom, stressing the importance you place on Africa not only at the G8 meeting but after it. We were happy that you referred to the WEU colloquy in September in Brussels on peacekeeping in sub-Saharan Africa. Thank you for addressing all that.

On the European Defence Agency, I hear that the United Kingdom has ambitions for the 2006 budget plan and wishes to go on developing the agency. We welcome the fact that the battlegroups will be ready in January 2006. That is much appreciated.

We now come to questions. We thank you again that you are taking questions. I call Mr McNamara.

Mr McNAMARA (*United Kingdom*) – I thank the Ambassador warmly for the address he has given on behalf of the British Foreign Secretary. I thank him not only for the manner of its delivery but,

more important, for its content. It is particularly important at this time when there are black clouds perhaps over the whole concept of the European Constitution and the future of Europe that we have a silver lining in the real work that is being done by the EU in its relationships, dealing with police and armed interventions. There are positive examples of cooperation between all member states of the European Union and with those outside the Union. That is an important message that needs to be sent out. There are an awful lot of important things outside the Constitution where Europe is playing a positive and constructive role. I thank the Foreign Secretary for that important part of his speech.

May I ask the Ambassador two technical questions? The Constitutional Treaty dealt with the question of the Union drawing up with the WEU arrangements for enhanced cooperation between those two bodies. I assume that that will not die with the results of the referendums in the Netherlands and France. Can the Ambassador give some indication on a technical level of how he sees that area of cooperation being expanded? What part will it play?

Secondly, I took heart from the Foreign Secretary's comments about the importance of this Assembly and its role. In view of the fact that there was to be an enhanced role for the European Parliament under the Constitution and indeed there were provisions made for regular reports to it by the European Foreign Secretary, ideas on institutions that fell to the ground – people regarded them as creeping federalism, within member states, although I was quite happy about creeping federalism but I must pay attention to the referendums in the Netherlands and France and the decision of Her Majesty's Government not to go ahead with the referendum – how does the Ambassador see the enhanced role perhaps of this Parliamentary Assembly in maintaining its scrutiny and its expanding its work in relation to European defence, bearing in mind that many of our members and associates are not members of the Union? Some are aspirants, some will never be members but they all have a common interest in the peace and stability of Europe and indeed of the world.

The PRESIDENT – I call Sir John to reply.

Sir JOHN HOLMES (*Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador, Paris*) – Thank you for that question. It is not our assumption that the Constitutional Treaty as a whole is by any stretch of the imagination dead or will not come into force at some stage. As you will be aware, we have postponed the next stage of our own parliamentary process because of the uncertainty created by the “no” votes in France and the Netherlands. The British Prime Minister made it clear again in Paris yesterday that we continue to believe that the Constitutional Treaty is a sensible new set of rules for the EU of 25 which we strongly support and hope can come into practice at some stage because those revised rules are necessary for the good function of the EU of 25. Therefore, it is not our assumption that none of the parts of the Constitutional Treaty will come into force. On the contrary, we hope that, at some stage, despite all the difficulties, we will be able to get there.

On the defence area and enhanced cooperation with WEU, I am not sure that I can give a very clear technical reply to that question in the sense that we need to be very careful from a democratic point of view about going ahead with introducing bits of the Constitutional Treaty that we like or think we like when the whole Treaty has been put into question by the “no” votes. That is to say that it is not easy for national governments to cherry-pick those bits of the Treaty they would like to introduce and to go ahead as if the popular will expressed in the referendums do not count. Therefore, there will be a good deal of care about that process.

On the other hand, there are things that are clearly sensible and technical that we should go ahead with – we are going ahead with the European Defence Agency, which is a major issue mentioned in the Treaty, although not totally dependent on it. I hope that, where there are technical areas where we can go ahead that would not call into question whether we are trying to apply the Constitutional Treaty by the back door. We can go ahead, but it will take time to look at the particular aspects that you talked about.

On scrutiny, as I say, we should not assume that the Constitutional Treaty has fallen away but while it is in suspension as it were – the British Prime Minister has called for a pause for collective reflection before we proceed with the ratification process – it is clear that the scrutiny role that this Assembly plays with regard to security and defence issues remains extremely important, together with the role of national parliaments. There is no substitute to that in sight. To that extent, the Assembly continues to play a vital role.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you.

I call Mr Cosidó Gutiérrez.

Mr COSIDÓ GUTIÉRREZ (*Spain*) (summary) thanked the President and said that he felt reassured that in such a complex situation it was the United Kingdom which was taking over the presidency. What degree of confidence did the United Kingdom Government have that Iran would honour its commitments on disarmament? Had debate on the arms embargo on China been postponed, or had it disappeared from the agenda altogether?

The Ambassador and the Foreign Secretary had undertaken an exercise of typical British pragmatism in continuing to insist that the “no” votes on the Constitution would not hinder progress on the European project. However, there were risks inherent in this position. Until there was clear consensus on Europe’s role in the world, any progress made would be on a shaky footing. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom was perhaps the country best placed to raise these issues and to engineer a solution.

The PRESIDENT – Sir John, you have the floor.

Sir John HOLMES (*Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador, Paris*) – Thank you very much for your initial remarks about the importance of the United Kingdom taking over the Presidency at this stage.

I shall take three questions in turn, if I may. On the question of Iran and its nuclear programme, obviously the fact that the “EU three” have been negotiating with Iran about the nature of that programme and how it should be taken forward, with our view that enrichment is not a necessary or appropriate part of the Iranian nuclear programme, reflects the fact that we have not had confidence hitherto in the peaceful nature of the Iranian programme. That arises from certain gaps in the information that Iran has provided to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and other indications that perhaps that programme is not all that it seems.

I think that one of the fundamental reasons for those negotiations is that lack of confidence, and that is precisely the problem that we are trying to address. We hope that those negotiations can be taken forward successfully. They are still continuing despite the obvious difficulties that we have. In that respect, it is absolutely essential as far as we are concerned that Iran respects the commitment that it made to suspend its fuel enrichment process and the additional protocol of the IAEA. If those commitments were broken, we would take a very, very serious view of that indeed and would have to draw the necessary consequences from that – for example, perhaps taking the issue to the United Nations Security Council. I think that we have made no secret of that, but I think that we should be optimistic if we can, rather than pessimistic about this and assume that Iran will fulfil the commitments that it has duly made.

On the arms embargo on China, my understanding is clearly that the European Union Ministers have decided that the lifting of the embargo requires more consideration, more internal preparation and more dialogue with some of our strategic partners. The actual intention to lift the embargo at some stage has not been called into question. It is not something that we as the British Government are calling into question. What we are saying is that it is clear from the anxieties that have been expressed in various parts of the world, not least in the United States and Japan, about what this means, that we need to engage in more dialogue around the world to explain why we intend to do what we intend to do. There is also internal work to be completed inside the European Union on the alternative arrangements for arms exports to China, to ensure that the lifting of the embargo can go ahead in the right circumstances. In short, the principle of lifting the embargo is not in question, but the modalities and the timings still need to be discussed further.

On the future of the ESDP and the question of whether by going ahead with it as though nothing had happened we are ignoring the democratically expressed will of people, I think that, as I was trying to suggest in my response to the earlier question, we are very conscious of the need not to do that. It is certainly the case that we take the two “no” votes in the two referendums very seriously indeed. What they reveal, as the British Prime Minister has said on several occasions, is a gulf between peoples and governments as far as Europe is concerned that needs to be addressed and discussed very seriously indeed in the forthcoming months. No doubt, the European Council will be looking at those questions in the next few days.

On the other hand, the ESDP has existing treaties and agreements, as I was mentioning in the speech, and it does not seem to us that it would be right to stop all European activity on the basis of previous treaties just because of those two particular votes. I might add that many aspects of Europe were called into question in different ways during the referendum campaigns in France and the Netherlands. It

is not my impression that European defence policy as such was particularly one of those. I think that we need to take account of that as well.

I agree that part of the consideration of the EU's future does indeed need to concern the EU's future role in the world, which includes that of the ESDP, but in the meanwhile it seems to me at least reasonable that we should proceed with the ESDP on the current basis on the grounds that it is a successful policy that appears to have a degree of popular support.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Sir John.

I call Mr Atkinson.

Mr ATKINSON (*United Kingdom*) – Sir John, I have three questions to put to you. First, regardless of the EU Constitution, has or will the EU accede to the European Convention on Human Rights? Secondly, we appreciate the priorities that Mr Straw faces at the present time, which prevented him from coming before us today – thank you for doing so on his behalf – but will he make up for this by coming before us during the forthcoming December part-session?

Finally, I put a question last December to the Luxembourg Minister at the commencement of his country's Presidency of the EU and WEU to ask whether he would do his best to ensure that the WEU Secretary-General, Mr Solana, should come before our Assembly during his Presidency, just as his predecessors did every year.

When he addressed us on Monday of this week, he admitted that he had failed to deliver Mr Solana to us. Will the UK Presidency do better and ensure that Mr Solana comes before us during the December part-session?

Sir John HOLMES (*Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador, Paris*) – The first point falls into the category of issues that arise from the current state of the Constitutional Treaty, to which I cannot give a clear answer. I think that the will will exist for the EU to accede to the ECHR at some stage, but that runs into the same difficulties as I mentioned earlier – appearing to cherry-pick bits of the Treaty while not applying others. That leads to the danger of appearing to disregard the democratic will of the people. The pause for reflection for which the British side is calling needs to cover all these issues.

I know that the Foreign Secretary genuinely regretted not being able to come today, and I know that he has every intention of coming in December. One can give no absolute guarantees in this world; emergencies arise, especially for Foreign Secretaries – but that is his firm intention.

As for the appearance of High Representative Solana, I can give no promises on his behalf. I fear all that I can do is to undertake, as the future Presidency, to draw his attention to what has been said and to the desire – I would guess that it is widely shared here – that he should appear in December.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Ambassador.

The last questioner is Mrs Veenendaal, from the Netherlands.

Mrs VEENENDAAL (*Netherlands*) – I congratulate you, Ambassador, on an excellent speech. As a Member of the Dutch Parliament I should like to make it clear that the referendum showed only that the Dutch people were not very amused by the Constitution. That is not to say that they are not in favour of Europe or of joint defence. That is the disadvantage of a referendum: it does not really tell us anything.

Can you tell us what has happened to the staff of the Western European Armaments Group, WEAG, after the absorption of that body into the European Defence Agency?

Sir John HOLMES (*Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador, Paris*) – I agree that it is difficult to draw clear lessons from referendum results. I followed the one in France rather more closely than the one in the Netherlands, but I am well aware that all kinds of different views are being expressed in a referendum, so it is hard to make sense of the result. It is also clear that in neither case was the vote against Europe as such; it was against all sorts of other things, and it is those issues from which we need to draw the requisite conclusions.

I am afraid that I cannot answer your question about the WEAG staff. Perhaps we can write to you, but I do not know the answer off hand.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Ambassador. That concludes the question and answer session. Once more I warmly thank Sir John Holmes for being with us today and for giving us clear and informative answers. I should like to hand over to you, Sir John, this tie, which commemorates the 50th anniversary of our Assembly. Perhaps it will be useful during the coming months of the UK Presidency.

6. Parliamentary debates and trends in public opinion on ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (resumed debate)

The PRESIDENT – The next order of the day is the resumed debate on the report of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations on parliamentary debates and trends in public opinion on ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Document [1893](#).

I call Mr Manzella.

Mr MANZELLA (*Italy*) (summary) said that the Ambassador had injected a breath of fresh air into the debate. The Constitutional Treaty did not deal with the key issue for the WEU Assembly, that of the ESDP. There was no umbilical cord between the EU Constitutional Treaty and the ESDP, and it was possible to have continuity in the ESDP without it. The Treaty envisaged a European Defence Agency, but this already existed. The Ambassador had confirmed that there would be battlegroups. A strategic planning cell also already existed. Therefore, it should have been emphasised in the resolution before the Assembly that continuity in the ESDP could be ensured.

The question arose as to how these needs could be met: it would be necessary for the WEU Assembly to be creative, and to consider what structural and functional modifications could be made.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Manzella. That is indeed a crucial question, and we look forward to hearing the response of the Rapporteurs.

I call Mr Mercan.

Mr MERCAN (*Turkey*) – Mr President, I should like to start by thanking the Rapporteurs for their valuable and timely report. Politicians must learn many lessons from the behaviour of their electorates, and it is true that the Constitutional Treaty has been rejected by the voters of France and the Netherlands, but I wonder whether the French voters would have voted in this way if there had been a different item on the agenda. I also wonder whether many of us have read the Constitution completely. We must evaluate the reaction of the voters calmly and with peace of mind.

The major concerns of our constituents must be addressed by politicians all over Europe, but it is also true that the big project of the European Union is not the subject of those major concerns. Some European countries have unemployment or social security problems, among many others, but I wonder whether those problems would be solved if we did not have a European Union. Would we have lost jobs to China if we did not have a European Union? We need to find the root causes of these problems, because otherwise we might fall into the trap of not addressing the problems or satisfying the needs of the people.

It is incumbent on us as politicians not only to reflect on the views of the voters but to direct and lead the people. In that way, Europe will eventually become a more peaceful, more prosperous and more competitive continent. Politicians in Europe need to understand the root causes of the “no” vote, irrespective of the Constitution. In my opinion, the “no” vote was a reflection not of the European project but of the dissatisfaction of the people with the politicians.

We all need to consider whether the European Union should be a global power or an arena in which we discuss only democracy and human rights. If we choose the former as the main mission of the European Union, two issues must be taken into consideration. The first is that the European Union must have a common security and defence policy. The second is that it needs a common foreign policy. We have seen many occasions recently on which the EU failed to accomplish those two objectives.

Turkey can make a contribution to the main objectives of the European Union within such a framework, especially vis-à-vis the increasing defence power of the EU and in regard to handling the broader Middle East projects and the problem of global terrorism. We should not fall into the trap of overlooking or delaying the visionary goal of enlarging and deepening the European Union just because the Constitution has been rejected in some countries. In summary, we need to look at the root causes of

the problems, and we should not view the Constitution as a scapegoat or stop making progress with the main objectives of the European Union.

The PRESIDENT – I call Sir Teddy Taylor.

Sir Teddy TAYLOR (*United Kingdom*) – The Assembly will know that I do not often delay it by making speeches but the issue we are discussing today is of enormous importance. The people of France and the Netherlands have given us a clear and unusual message. It is important to recognise the significance of the decision. It was not a case of people voting in a referendum because they were not happy with a government. The people went against all political parties as well as against the whole establishment. Almost all the newspapers were pushing for a “yes” vote, as were almost all industrialists and leaders in commerce. But the people voted “no”. Frankly if we do not take this seriously, we will be letting down the people and letting down democracy.

I have read through Lord Russell-Johnston’s report which, as is usual for him, is interesting, and he has tabled various amendments that he thinks should be referred back to the Committee, including the suggestion that we should try to explain things more clearly to the voters. Frankly, when the European organisations have already spent €24 million of our money trying to put across the issue, I wonder whether we want to spend any more.

We hear that we should engage in debate but unfortunately some countries that were desperate for a referendum had their request refused by their governments. My view is that the people of Europe wanted to protest about a situation in which their basic democratic rights were being undermined by the EU. As our Croatian colleague said, if we do not face up to this, we will be running away from the issue.

What can we do? If you live in France, Germany or Italy and take the view that the single currency is destroying jobs, how could you vote? Which party could you vote for? How could you express your opinion? If, like people in Britain, you are angry about money going to Europe – our net contribution is about €10 million a day – when the accounts of the EU have not been approved by the auditors in each of the last ten years, what could you do? I challenge any member here to name any other organisation anywhere in the world where the accounts have not been approved for ten years. In Britain, what could you do about it? Who would you vote for?

If you care about the third world, as many of us do, and if you think that European agriculture policies are doing enormous damage by dumping food at artificially low prices, as has happened for example with sugar, what can you do? Who can you vote for? Where can you go?

You can vote for Members of the European Parliament, but we are kidding ourselves if we say that, because we all know that if the European Parliament were to disappear tomorrow, no one would notice apart from the taxi drivers of Strasbourg because it has little or no power on the great majority of issues.

What can we do in this situation? The first thing we can do is to laugh, as was suggested in paragraph 5 of the report, which refers to 137 Members of the European Parliament voting against ratification and said that the dissenting voices were either nationalists, communists or members of the extreme right wing. Frankly, if we laugh at people, we are not taking them seriously.

Secondly, we could spend money on trying to persuade people. However Europe spent € 8 million, the European Parliament spent € 8 million, France spent €8 million, and the Netherlands spent € 1 million, in trying to get the message across. The European Parliament even had a big slogan costing € 320 000, but it did not work.

We could deny people a referendum. That is what happened in Hungary, a country with a great tradition, where 87% wanted a referendum but the Parliament said that they would not get one.

The plain fact is that there is a significant gap between the politicians and governments and the people, and we should say something positive to them. My amendment suggests that governments should take account of the fact that two of the three nations that said “no” in referendums were basically expressing a point of view on the widening gap between member states and the people, “and considers that this justifies a review of consultation procedures when further treaties or decisions of significance are considered”.

I hope that that will be taken seriously because people have spoken and if we do not respond, we will let them down and let down our democracy as well.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Sir Teddy. I remind colleagues that they should try to be brief.

The next speaker is Mrs Papadimitriou.

Mrs PAPANIMITRIOU (*Greece*) – I congratulate Lord Russell-Johnston and Mrs Aleknaite on an excellent report, which I used widely while speaking in the Greek Parliament during the ratification process as Rapporteur of the majority party. I even tabled the report as an important document as part of our debate.

However, I must disagree with Lord Russell-Johnston on something he said this morning. Are we really short of powerful figures in Europe? We are not, and we never are. Perhaps we are just short of heroic or historic moments or intervals, and thank God for that. It is usually the time factor that makes excellence apparent.

Our era demands collective excellence more than powerful figures that would today appear as lonely islands within the calm or tormented tide of our globalised world's social ways.

This great report, along with Mr Elo's report on referendums, which was voted on in the Council of Europe Assembly, could provide a sound basis for the European debate. There is a political and moral question mark over direct and indirect democracy and I call on you to consult my ancestors, Aristotle and Plato, on the democratic rights of the enlightened citizen. We must also assess the impact of our inexcusable absence in terms of exercising our duties to inform and enlighten the citizens whom we represent.

I followed many of the television debates in France and I was amazed that the “no” campaign became more and more irrelevant to the main issues. Also, I was upset by the influence of the French debate through television on other countries. In terms of ratification by our parliament, the Prime Minister and leader of my party insisted on informing Greek society. I note that it was only after the French “no” that the Turkish accession issue came up as a question within Greek society as it did in France, Germany, Austria and elsewhere. We answered, and we persuaded our listeners.

Should we correlate this debate with the debate on terrorism? Are we all united and decisive on the second debate? Can anyone better than Turkey persuade the world that terrorism has no theological or religious references? Can anyone better than Turkey prove the multiculturalism that we are after with regard to the first part of this important document? In the Europe of our aspirations, with a political personality and common defence, is or is not Turkey helpful, perhaps indispensable?

I am optimistic – usually I am accused of being over-optimistic – that this is only a phase, it is not death. I think that we can use this opportunity as a springboard for a richer, deeper and more rewarding process. Beyond our national parliaments, I believe that all interparliamentary forums, and mainly WEU, have to undertake that role quickly and dynamically.

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr Coskunoglu.

Mr COSKUNOGLU (*Turkey*) – I am quite impressed with the report. In fact, I think that it contains more significant messages than the referendums that we have been talking about. One of the report's main revelations is that most Europeans did not know much about the EU Constitution when they were voting on it or discussing it. Paragraph 44 states that, in one country, “One in five people asked had not even heard of it.” What does that mean? It is clear. Among Europeans, there is a feeling about the EU that is associated with ongoing globalisation and how that affects their lives.

Paragraph 70 of the conclusions is profoundly significant. Its first sentence says that Europeans feel “betrayed”. Indeed, that seems to be the case. The second sentence in the paragraph mentions the necessity of harmonising “national situations”. If I understand that correctly, the EU or Europe means something to people and that has to be harmonised with national situations and individual lives.

I would like to ask the Rapporteurs whether there is any conflict between those two sentences in paragraph 70 and some of the statements made earlier in the report, namely in paragraph 68, where it is stated that “It would also seem that some issues which have nothing to do with the Constitutional Treaty are having an influence on public opinion.” However, that is only natural. Likewise, paragraph 3 of the draft resolution invites the national Parliaments of WEU/EU countries to “engage in debates, taking care not to include in them any domestic policy issues”. However, if I understand that correctly, that may be

impossible. Those domestic policy issues should be harmonised with Europe somehow. They should be harmonised with what this Assembly stands for: namely, defence and security.

I would like to give one example. One of the main issues being discussed nowadays is the European budget and whether it is wise to subsidise farming. Some 40% of the budget seems to be spent on subsidising farming, which is ten times more than the amount spent on research and development. Research and development in science and technology is paramount for the ESDP. That type of issue could be used to harmonise national interests and the European cause.

As John F. Kennedy said, a crisis can mean an opportunity as well as a threat. What seemed to be a crisis after the two referendums in the Netherlands and France may be a threat but it is more likely to be an opportunity. Because of the results of the two referendums, Europeans became aware of the Constitution and the relevant matters related to the Constitution. That opportunity should be used to create programmes to remove historical prejudices, to inform people and to develop political and cultural integration. Economic integration went too far and too fast. Political and cultural integration seems to be lagging behind. With those suggestions, I thank you for your attention.

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr Ferro Rodrigues.

Mr FERRO RODIGUES (*Portugal*) (summary) thanked the President, and said that the crisis in the EU had not been foreseen and the excellent report reflected that failure. In recent years, there had been much success in Europe – for example, with the establishment of the euro and the relationship between the euro zone and non-euro zones. The various councils of the Community had established new policies in defence, economic growth, employment, social and regional cohesion. One of the more recent achievements was the Constitutional Treaty. However, more recently, economic and social trends had run against what had been hoped for which had led to people having doubts about the Growth and Stability Pact. Economic growth had been slow and, although there were reasons for this, there was one undeniable fact. This was that there was no match between the European Council, and the messages put across by national governments. The EU agenda was not the agenda of national governments. Each government frequently tried to give a new twist to the European agenda, taking on board only matters of national interest and casting everything in a national light.

The European Council meeting would prove to be a decisive moment. National egos and the issue of financial crisis would have to be tackled. The true European ideal should be upheld and the financial perspectives should be adopted. Only truly European issues should prevail. The role of national parliaments should be strengthened and each parliament should take responsibility in these matters.

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr van Winsen, who is the last speaker on the list.

Mr van WINSEN (*Netherlands*) (summary) thanked the Rapporteurs for their contributions and said that it was unfortunate that they had found themselves in the position of presenting a report that was out of date. The debate should still be held, however, and all countries should have the opportunity to decide on their positions before 2006. A number of developments would take place at the European summit.

It was very difficult to analyse the results of the referendums and this was particularly true of the result in the Netherlands. “No” voters had expressed an incredibly diverse range of arguments and feelings. One “no” voter claimed that she had made her decision because the Netherlands had lost the Eurovision song contest!

It would be a pity if Europe were to be denied the opportunity to discuss the usefulness of referendums in representative democracy. Despite the result, most Dutch people wanted to see cooperation, particularly in the fields of security and defence.

In the Netherlands, 72% of school children said that they would have voted against the Constitution. This was perhaps a reflection of a lack of knowledge of developments in Europe. Clearly, it was the task of the Assembly to do something about this. The Dutch Government had learned the hard lesson that it could not sell the idea of Europe in a matter of weeks or months.

The report should be taken further and its conclusions expressed as an opinion of the Assembly. It should be followed up in order to give the Assembly the tools to breach the gulf between parliamentarians and citizens. The Assembly should concentrate on its core tasks of defence and security.

The PRESIDENT – I will now give the floor to both Rapporteurs, Lord Russell-Johnston and Mrs Aleknaite.

I call Lord Russell-Johnston.

Lord RUSSELL-JOHNSTON (*United Kingdom*) – Before I make my speech, I seek your guidance, Mr President. A lot of people have spoken. I always think that it is polite to comment on speeches, but that would take a little while – do I do it, or do I not do it?

The PRESIDENT – I call Mrs Aleknaite.

Mrs ALEKNAITE (*Lithuania*) – Thank you, Mr President. If Lord Russell-Johnston needs more time to express himself, I shall give him my time as a gift.

The PRESIDENT – That is very kind, Mrs Aleknaite. I see that you two are a very good team. I am told you were appointed together, which is very promising.

I have been informed that Lord Russell-Johnston may want to propose a motion to refer the report back to the Committee. Is that the case or not, Lord Russell-Johnston?

Lord RUSSELL-JOHNSTON (*United Kingdom*) – That is a different question. I said in my initial speech that it was agreed unanimously within the Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee that we would seek to have the report referred back to the Committee after the debate and before the amendments were discussed. So it is indeed my intention to do that after I reply to the debate – if you want me to reply to the debate.

The PRESIDENT – According to Rule 33, a member can move a motion to have something referred back to the Committee. First, of course, we will give you the opportunity to give some answers in the debate and general discussion now. It is already 13.10, so I ask you to be brief, Lord Russell-Johnston, and then we shall have a discussion on the motion about whether to refer the report back to the Committee. I shall ask whether any colleague wishes to speak for or against it, and we shall hear the opinion of the Chairman of the Committee and then vote on this procedure. But first, I call Lord Russell-Johnston to finish the general debate.

Lord RUSSELL-JOHNSTON (*United Kingdom*) – I shall be as quick as possible. Mr Falzon was positive and constructive, and described how political forces in Malta came together to support the Constitution.

Mr Mota Amaral is an old friend of mine; it is a great pleasure to see him back here following his Presidency of the Parliament in Lisbon. He said much with which I can agree, and his solution, providing for WEU to be involved in the EU, was sensible. I am sorry that there is to be a referendum in Portugal, for reasons to which I shall return. I would correct my friend on one point, however. He said that the public were becoming pacifist. There is no evidence of any such thing. Quite the contrary: the Eurobarometer says that 95% of people support interventions in defence of their national territory, and 82% are in favour of combating terrorism by force; 78% of Europeans say that they would like to be able to take action in Iraq without involving the United States. That figure includes a huge leap in public opinion in Italy.

Mr Gubert appeared not to have read our report, or he would have noticed that almost the whole of page 10 is given over to a quotation by him. He should be grateful for the free advertisement. I agreed with him about the referendums, however.

Mr Arlovic made a constructive speech; I am sure we wish Croatia well.

Mr Manzella asked for the report to express views on the ESDP, but that is not what the report was about. It was about reproducing the views expressed in national parliaments. We were not deputed to express our opinions. I agree with him that there is no umbilical cord between the ESDP and the Constitution, and that there is nothing to stop us proceeding as we should.

Mr Mercan always makes thoughtful and positive speeches, and I agreed with his today.

Teddy Taylor is an old foe of mine – he shakes his head, but it is true. He is actually a clever fellow, but he is a long-standing anti-European – Eurosceptic would be a kind way of describing him, and I always want to be kind to Teddy. He articulates, however, what worries a lot of people about the gap between the rulers and the ruled.

Mrs Papadimitriou took issue with me over whether there are men of character around these days. She said that the time factor makes excellence a factor. I am waiting for the mantle to descend on me. As I get older, perhaps one day I will be famous. Distance does lend enchantment; we look back and think that we cannot compete with those who went before. But I say that there are quite a number of impressive politicians around today. Nevertheless, her optimism was infectious, and I thank her for her kind remarks.

Mr Coskunoglu made an excellent speech. He may be right to say that it is difficult to disentangle domestic policy issues from European ones. I am sure he will concede that what we were trying to say was that national politicians should not exploit domestic issues in pursuit of their other aims.

Mr Rodrigues was right about national governments not selling things well, as I would paraphrase him. It often goes: if there has been a bad decision, it was a European decision; if there has been a good decision, it is a British, French or Dutch Government decision.

Mr van Winsen discussed the multiplicity of reasons for saying “no”. I was horrified to hear him say that 70% of Dutch children would vote “no” if they could. If we knew how to bridge the gap with our citizens, we could immediately set up the biggest PR firm in the world. I certainly wish I knew.

I do not believe in referendums. I think they amount to institutionalised mob rule. Mr Gubert mentioned distribution of the text and asked how many people had read it. It is not easy for everyone to read such documents; one needs some experience of doing that. It is too complex. Then there is the problem of the question asked in a referendum. The *International Herald Tribune* had a super cartoon showing an archetypal Frenchman with a beret and a Gauloise voting in the constitutional ballot. He says, “I vote no”, and then adds out of the corner of his mouth, “What was the question again?” That sums it up quite well.

I shall not go into the pros and cons of the Constitution because my report was never intended to do that. Incidentally, the Committee has decided to adjust the title of our next report so that it can deal with “trends in public opinion on the subject of European integration”, which is less narrow than simply the Treaty.

Despite the various hopeful remarks made today, including those by the British Ambassador, we must face the fact that the Treaty may be down the tubes by December – it is quite possible. This Assembly will nevertheless need to keep an eye on what is happening. Sir John Holmes emphasised the fact that defence was not attacked in the referendums in France or the Netherlands. That is borne out by the Eurobarometer results, which show that the public at large are in favour of greater defence integration and, I am sure, support what this Assembly does.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Lord Russell-Johnston.

I call Mrs Aleknaite.

Mrs ALEKNAITE (*Lithuania*) – Mr President, dear colleagues, I simply want to thank you all for this important lesson for me as a politician. I thank you for all your comments and especially for your European mood and positive thinking. I have to say that my appetite for Europe has increased after this debate, and I shall take that home as the most important impulse for my job in the European Affairs Committee of our Parliament.

The PRESIDENT – I congratulate you once again, Mrs Aleknaite, on your presentation and on your work on producing this report.

I call the Chairman of the Committee, Mr Budin.

Mr BUDIN (*Italy*) – (summary) thanked the Rapporteur and the co-Rapporteur for doing an excellent job, and thanked everyone who took part in the debates, and said that he could not contradict the proposal of the Rapporteur.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Budin.

The debate is closed.

Lord Russell-Johnston has asked leave, in accordance with Rule 33, to refer the report on parliamentary debates and trends in public opinion on ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Document [1893](#), back to the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations. I understand that that was also the request of the co-Rapporteur and the Chairman of the Committee.

We have to have a debate on this motion, and debate on the main question will be suspended while we do so.

If the motion is agreed to, the Assembly will immediately proceed to the next item on the agenda.

In the debate on the motion, after the mover I may call only one speaker against and then the Chairman or Rapporteur, whose opinions in favour we have already heard. I call Lord Russell-Johnston to explain in a few words why he wishes the report to be referred back to the Committee.

Lord RUSSELL-JOHNSTON (United Kingdom) – I shall be very brief, Mr President, because I have already stated the essential reason. We also discussed this issue yesterday. Our report ended on 10 May, before the two referendums that now dominate the whole scene took place. We felt that, instead of making an over-hasty response to the referendums, it would be more logical, thoughtful and sensible to refer the report back to the Committee, in order to take into account the debate that has taken place today and any amendments that might have been tabled, and to enable us to think the matter through carefully and sensibly before our next meeting.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone wish to speak against Lord Russell-Johnston's motion to refer the report in Document [1893](#) back to the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations? ...

That is not the case.

We shall now vote on Lord Russell-Johnston's motion to refer the report on parliamentary debates and trends in public opinion on ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe to the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations.

Does any member wish to propose a vote by roll-call? ...

That is not the case. We will vote by show of hands.

(A vote was taken by show of hands)

The motion is agreed to.

The report on parliamentary debates and trends in public opinion on ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe has been referred back to the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations. That concludes our business for this morning.

7. Date, time and orders of the day of the next sitting

The PRESIDENT – I propose that the Assembly hold its next public sitting this afternoon at 15.00 with the following orders of the day:

1. Developments in the Broader Middle East. *(Presentation of and debate on the report of the Political Committee and vote on the draft recommendation, Doc. [1894](#))*

Rapporteur: Mrs Josette DURRIEU (France, Socialist Group)

2. Arms control and non-proliferation: verification by satellite. *(Presentation of and debate on the report of the Technological and Aerospace Committee and vote on the draft recommendation, Doc. [1902](#))*

Rapporteur: Mr Jean-Guy BRANGER (France, Federated Group)

3. Presentation of the European Interparliamentary Space Groups by Senator François ROELANTS DU VIVIER, Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Belgian Senate, Chairman of the Belgian Parliamentary Space Group
4. Address by Mr Frank ASBECK, Director of the EU Satellite Centre in Torrejón (in the presence of Members of the European Parliamentary Space Groups).

Are there any objections?

The orders of the day for the next sitting are approved.

The sitting is closed.

(The sitting was closed at 13.25)

