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SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

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MINUTES

of the 1829th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 7 May 2008

(morning)

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(SEC(2008)1865) 19

Single sitting: Wednesday 7 May 2008 (morning)

The sitting opened at 12.28 hours with Mr BARROSO, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr BARROSO	President	
Ms WALLSTRÖM	Vice-President	
Mr VERHEUGEN	Vice-President	
Mr KALLAS	Vice-President	
Ms REDING		
Mr DIMAS		
Mr ALMUNIA		
Ms HÜBNER		
Mr BORG		
Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ		
Mr POTOČNIK		
Mr KOVÁCS		
Ms KROES		Items 1 to 16 (in part)
Ms FISCHER BOEL		
Mr McCREEVY		Items 1 to 16 (in part)
Mr ŠPIDLA		Items 1 to 16 (in part)
Mr MANDELSON		Items 1 to 16 (in part)
Ms KUNEVA		
Mr ORBAN		Items 1 to 16 (in part)

Absent:

Mr BARROT

Vice-President

Mr FRATTINI

Vice-President

Mr FIGEL'

Mr REHN

Mr MICHEL

Ms FERRERO-WALDNER

Mr PIEBALGS

Ms VASSILIOU

(7 May 2008)

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

Mr ADAMIŠ	Chef de cabinet to Mr FIGEL'
Mr PESONEN	Chef de cabinet to Mr REHN
Ms SPANOU	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms VASSILIOU

The following also sat in:

Mr VALE DE ALMEIDA	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Ms DURAND	Acting Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr SØRENSEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr GRAY	Commission Spokesman – DG Communication	Item 16
Mr GASPAR	Acting Director-General, Bureau of European Policy Advisers	
Mr THEBAULT	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	Items 8 to 15
Mr CABRAL	Adviser <i>hors classe</i> in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 8 to 16
Ms ERLER	Chef de cabinet to Mr VERHEUGEN	Item 16
Mr PLECITY	A member of Mr VERHEUGEN's staff	Items 8 to 16
Mr GIUDICE	A member of Mr ALMUNIA's staff	Items 8 to 15
Mr SERVOZ	Secretariat-General	Item 16

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2008)1829/3; SEC(2008)562/2)

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

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(SEC(2008)1829)

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

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND SPECIAL MINUTES OF 1828TH MEETING

(30 APRIL 2008)

(PV(2008)1828; PV(2008)1828, PART II)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 1828th meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(SEC(2008)557)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group held on Wednesday 30 April (SEC(2008)557).

It paid particular attention to the following:

4.1. *LEGISLATIVE MATTERS*

i) Preparations for the meeting of COREPER I (7 May)

(point 1.3 of the IRG record)

- Sustainability criteria for biofuels – specifications relating to petrol, diesel and gas-oil and promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (directives) – CORBEY and TURMES reports – 2007/0019 (COD) and 2008/0016 (COD)
(SI(2008)265 and /2)

The Commission decided at this stage to reserve the position of its representatives in contacts with the other institutions and to ask the IRG to monitor developments in this dossier closely, particularly as regards the points outstanding, and to ask the Chefs de cabinet to come back to this dossier at a forthcoming weekly meeting.

4.2. *RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL*

ii) Programming of Council business

(SI(2008)263)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2008)263 on the Council meetings between 1 and 14 May.

4.3. *RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT*

iii) Preparation for May I part-session – non-legislative matters

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- Interinstitutional agreement between Parliament and the Commission on procedures for implementing Council Decision 1999/468/EC laying down the procedures for the exercise of implementing powers conferred on the Commission, as amended by Decision 2006/512/EC (committee procedure) – FRASSONI report – 2008/2002 (ACI)

(7 May 2008)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2008)2596 and the agreement annexed to that note, with a view to proceeding to the signature of the agreement, subject to the following declaration, which would be presented to Parliament by the Commission's representative :

“Declaration by the Commission - The Commission welcomes the report of Ms Frassoni, which approves the conclusion of the bilateral agreement between Parliament and the Commission on procedures for implementing Council Decision 1999/468/EC, as amended by Decision 2006/512/EC. In this context, the Commission underlines that paragraph 11 of the agreement covers extremely urgent cases in general.”

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

(point 3.5.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved documents SP(2008)2630 and /2 on the action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its March 2008 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

v) Participation by MEPs in international conferences

(point 3.7 of the IRG record)

- Seventh meeting of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) (New York, 21 April to 2 May 2008)

The Commission decided to reply to the request to the PRESIDENT from Mr PÖTTERING, President of Parliament, concerning the participation by seven MEPS in the above-mentioned meeting, with a reminder about the procedure agreed between the two institutions.

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

vi) Commission opinion on the amendments proposed by Parliament to the regulations and general conditions governing the performance of the Ombudsman's duties

(point 4.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission adopted the opinion distributed as SEC(2008)1878, for transmission to Parliament, the Council and the Ombudsman, as well as to the national parliaments.

It also approved the line set out in SP(2008)2086/3.

4.5. OTHER MATTERS

vii) Joint statement by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the European Commission - Reinforcing cooperation on nuclear energy for peace and development

(point 5.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission authorised the PRESIDENT to sign the joint statement – set out in SEC(2008)581 – at the meeting on 7 May with the Director-General of International Atomic Energy Agency.

5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

**5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2008)563 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 28 and 30 April.

5.2. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES**(SEC(2008)564)**

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 5 and 8 May.

5.3. EMPOWERMENT**(SEC(2008)565 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 28 and 30 April.

5.4. AD HOC EMPOWERMENT CONCERNING THE PRELIMINARY DRAFT GENERAL BUDGET OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES FOR THE 2009 FINANCIAL YEAR (PDB 2009)**(SEC(2008)514/13)**

Further to the decision taken by “finalisation” written procedure on Tuesday 6 May (E/775/2008) concerning the approval of the statement of estimates of revenue and expenditure for 2009, which would serve as a basis for the 2009 preliminary draft general budget, the Commission decided to empower Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ, Commission Member responsible for the Budget, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, to finalise the various documents which made up the 2009 preliminary draft general budget, for transmission to Parliament and the Council.

5.5. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation/subdelegation procedure between 28 and 30 April, as archived in Greffe 2000.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2008)566/3)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2008)72/3)

***COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION ON THE SCREENING OF
EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES - FOLLOW-UP TO THE
APRIL 2007 SCREENING REPORT***

(SEC(2008)541 TO /4; SEC(2008)542; SEC(2008)543)

The Commission took note of the information set out at point 1 of PERS(2008)72/3 and, on a proposal from the PRESIDENT, in agreement with Ms WALLSTRÖM, M. KALLAS and Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ, approved the communication set out in SEC(2008)541/4 and instructed the ABM Steering Group to monitor its implementation.

7. RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

***7.1. PREPARING FOR THE SECOND MEETING OF THE
TRANSATLANTIC ECONOMIC COUNCIL (BRUSSELS, 13 MAY)***

(SEC(2008)1868)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr VERHEUGEN distributed as SEC(2008)1868.

***7.2. QUARTET MEETING ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
(LONDON, 2 MAY) AND AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE ON
PALESTINE (LONDON, 1 AND 2 MAY)***

(SEC(2008)1867)

The Commission took note of the information note from Ms FERRERO-WALDNER in SEC(2008)1867.

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK - EMU@10: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES AFTER 10 YEARS OF ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION
(COM(2008)238 TO /4; SEC(2008)553 AND /2; SEC(2008)554)**

Mr ALMUNIA briefly introduced all the issues referred to in items 8 to 15 of these minutes.

He began with the recommendation proposing that the euro area be extended to Slovakia on 1 January 2009. He pointed out that the convergence report presented that day for the countries with a derogation with regard to Article 121(1) in relation to convergence criteria for adoption of the euro, namely Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden, showed that Slovakia did indeed meet the criteria for the adoption of the single currency. He pointed out, however, that, although the assessment of the inflation criterion was positive at this stage, further efforts were needed to ensure that inflation was kept in check once the single currency had been adopted. He was delighted to note that, once the decision-making process within the Council, Parliament and the European Council was completed, Slovakia could become the sixteenth member of the euro area. He also emphasised that this decision proved that the euro area was open to any Member State that wanted to join and could show that it was ready.

He went on to welcome the four proposals, set out in items 12 to 15, on the abrogation of excessive deficit procedures with regard to the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Italy and Portugal, and a similar proposal in relation to Poland expected in June. He noted that, for the first time since 2002, no Member State in the euro area was in an excessive deficit situation. He reminded the meeting, however, that the

performance of a number of Member States was close to the thresholds and that the Commission would have to turn its attention to this matter in the near future.

Lastly, Mr ALMUNIA mentioned the report on ten years of Economic and Monetary Union, referred to in this item, which had already been discussed in depth within the Commission in recent weeks (see PV(2008) 1825, item 8). In particular, he praised the exceptional achievement over the last year of the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs in drafting the report and incorporating the many external contributions. He explained that he would be presenting the initiative to Parliament later that day, and to the Council of Ministers the following week, with a view to launching and structuring a debate on EMU within the other institutions, in the Member States and with the citizens of Europe. He said that he intended to submit a roadmap on the future of EMU to the Commission later in the year.

The PRESIDENT then referred to the various documents relating to the abrogation of the excessive deficit procedures, which in his view was proof of the effectiveness of the European budgetary surveillance system and of the scale of the efforts made by the Member States concerned.

He also welcomed the recommendation on the adoption of the single currency by Slovakia, which had been made following a strict assessment of the criteria. He said that Slovakia deserved to be congratulated on the progress it had made and encouraged to continue to pursue appropriate policies.

He mentioned the report on ten years of EMU, which he felt represented a major success for the EU; he felt it would be useful to launch a wide-ranging debate on the future of the EMU and to put forward proposals which would take full advantage of the benefits of the euro area.

Finally, the PRESIDENT thanked Mr ALMUNIA and the departments under his authority for their excellent work.

The Commission then held an exchange of views, during which the following points were highlighted:

- the prospects of certain Member States fulfilling their commitments under the Stability and Growth Pact;
- the importance of emphasising that, while Slovakia's adoption of the euro marked a major achievement, the country should also continue its adjustment efforts, particularly in the fields of productivity, labour costs, and competitiveness;
- the need to emphasise that Slovakia's performance on inflation had improved compared with previous financial years largely as a result of strong growth and the Government's determination to pursue the necessary reforms;
- the determination of the euro-area Member States to improve the coordination of policies to strengthen the stability and the international role of the euro.

Mr ALMUNIA replied to the various comments made, declaring that he felt convinced of the need to continue with certain national budgetary consolidation efforts, to maintain a degree of vigilance as regards inflationary pressures in Slovakia, and to learn from the experiences of the past. Finally, he stated that the Eurogroup was planning to discuss at its next meeting the challenges arising in particular from the coordination of policy and the role of the euro in the world. He believed that the report before the Commission would increase awareness of the need to ensure macroeconomic stability and continue structural reforms both during the preparatory stages for the adoption of the single currency and within the euro area.

The Commission approved the communication in COM(2008)238/4, for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Central Bank, and to the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SEC(2007)553/2, the contents of which were noted.

**9. 2008 CONVERGENCE REPORT ON BULGARIA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, HUNGARY, POLAND, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA AND SWEDEN, PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 122(2) OF THE EC TREATY
(COM(2008)248 AND /2; SEC(2008)567 AND /2; SEC(2008)568; SEC(2008)569)**

The Commission approved the convergence report set out in COM(2008)248/2, for transmission to Parliament, the Council and the European Central Bank, and to the national parliaments, together with the technical annexes in the staff paper distributed as SEC(2008)567/2, the contents of which were noted.

**10. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 122(2) OF THE TREATY ON THE ADOPTION BY SLOVAKIA OF THE SINGLE CURRENCY ON 1 JANUARY 2009
(COM(2008)249; SEC(2008)568; SEC(2008)569)**

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Council decision set out in COM(2008)249, for transmission to Parliament, the Council and the European Central Bank, and to the national parliaments.

**11. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION AMENDING REGULATION (EC) NO 974/98 AS REGARDS THE INTRODUCTION OF THE EURO IN SLOVAKIA
(COM(2008)250; SEC(2008)568; SEC(2008)569)**

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Council Regulation in COM(2008)250, for transmission to Parliament, the Council and the European Central Bank, and to the national parliaments.

**12. RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ABROGATING
DECISION 2005/185/EC ON THE EXISTENCE OF AN EXCESSIVE
DEFICIT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

(SEC(2008)571 AND /2; SEC(2008)575; SEC(2008)569)

The Commission approved the recommendation in the document distributed as SEC(2008)571/2, for transmission to the Council.

**13. RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ABROGATING
DECISION 2005/182/EC ON THE EXISTENCE OF AN EXCESSIVE
DEFICIT IN SLOVAKIA**

(SEC(2008)572; SEC(2008)575; SEC(2008)569)

The Commission approved the recommendation in the document distributed as SEC(2008)572, for transmission to the Council.

**14. RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ABROGATING
DECISION 2005/730/EC ON THE EXISTENCE OF AN EXCESSIVE
DEFICIT IN PORTUGAL**

(SEC(2008)573; SEC(2008)575; SEC(2008)569)

The Commission approved the recommendation in the document distributed as SEC(2008)573, for transmission to the Council.

**15. RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ABROGATING
DECISION 2005/694/EC ON THE EXISTENCE OF AN EXCESSIVE
DEFICIT IN ITALY**

(SEC(2008)574; SEC(2008)575; SEC(2008)569)

The Commission approved the recommendation in the document distributed as SEC(2008)574, for transmission to the Council.

**16. POLICY DEBATE ON THE “SMALL BUSINESS ACT” FOR EUROPE
(SEC(2008)1865)**

Mr VERHEUGEN opened the debate by recalling that the “Modern SME Policy” was launched in 2005, as part of the implementation of the Lisbon Community programme, because of the conviction that the future of European competitiveness, growth and employment would depend on the creation of new enterprises and the expansion of existing enterprises in Europe. The work carried out since then had made it possible to identify potential and to map out the road that remained to be travelled.

Taking advantage of the dynamics generated by the new cycle of the growth and employment strategy, the “Small Business Act” for Europe represented a unique opportunity to create a framework ensuring that when European and national policies were made, thought would be given first to their impact on SMEs.

Since the decision to draft a “Small Business Act” was made last year, Commission departments had examined every possible opportunity for maximising the potential of small and medium-sized enterprises and associating the Member States with this initiative. As work had progressed, the concept had emerged of a “Small Business Act” combining legislative proposals, political commitments and concrete measures.

In this regard, talks at the informal meeting of the Competitiveness Council on 14 April had been encouraging, and the Member States had expressed strong support for the priorities and possible architecture of the initiative. In another positive development, national authorities had also begun placing greater importance on policies concerning SMEs. Mr VERHEUGEN mentioned in that regard the joint letter that French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown had sent to the Commission expressing their interest in the initiative and stating that this issue would be a priority during the future French presidency.

Mr VERHEUGEN highlighted the key role that Member States' political commitment would play in this regard. He also congratulated the departments on their work identifying potential initiatives and mentioned possible areas for action that had been raised during the public consultation.

The goal was for the "Small Business Act" to be adopted on 2 July, and he was grateful to the members whose efforts had ensured that a number of proposals related to the initiative would be adopted in the same timeframe. The European Investment Bank would be announcing its new strategy for SMEs on the same day, and additional Commission proposals would supplement this package of measures by the end of the year.

In conclusion he stated that, although the cooperation of the various departments had moved the dossier forward considerably, during the weeks to come it would be advisable to further develop the proposed set of Community actions. This would require a joint effort, which he was confident would enjoy all parties' support.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr VERHEUGEN for his work preparing the dossier, including the note that would help inform the debate.

He explained that improving conditions for enterprises, in particular SMEs, constituted one of the Commission's key political priorities under the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment and cited the benefits SMEs had already reaped under the "legislate better" programme.

It was true, however, that enterprises were forced to operate in an environment that was not as dynamic as one might wish, that other parts of the world were doing better in this regard and that only a few small European enterprises had developed enough to succeed on the world market. The first aim of the “Small Business Act” should be to exploit SMEs’ potential for growth.

He confirmed that not just the future Council presidency and many Member States but also the European Parliament and other stakeholders were awaiting an ambitious initiative; he too referred to in the letter from Mr Sarkozy and Mr Brown.

Mr VERHEUGEN’s proposal to combine an action plan with concrete legislative measures was to be welcomed, and the PRESIDENT suggested adding a number of principles or framework conditions intended to support SMEs over their entire lifecycle – by for example cutting the time necessary to set up a company or obtain authorisations or simplifying tender procedures.

Improving conditions for enterprises was a shared responsibility, and therefore these principles could be applied simultaneously at national and Community level, constituting a “single act” defining SMEs’ rights and obligations in the internal market. The principle of subsidiarity would be respected since the rights and obligations would be worked out by the Member States on the basis of common objectives.

Regarding the status of the “Small Business Act”, the PRESIDENT mentioned the lengthy period required to set up a legally binding instrument. The quickest way to ensure results would be for the December European Council to express its support for the principles in question.

In conclusion, the PRESIDENT evoked the need, for communication purposes, to demonstrate how the initiative could simplify matters for enterprises and improve their access to the market, in full compliance with Community rules. It would also be important to make clear the EU’s desire to give SMEs the means to grow in the European internal market and take their place on a dynamic world market.

The Commission then held a discussion that identified the following:

- the importance of SMEs for innovation, growth and job creation;
- the priority that the Commission wished to attach to this initiative in its work programme;
- the broad-based support for the policy document and for the coordinated approach between Member States and at European level proposed in the paper;
- the support for the legislative and non-legislative measures proposed with a view to further bolstering European SMEs;
- the importance of impact analyses for assessing the practicability and effectiveness of the different measures proposed;
- the cross-cutting nature of the dossier and the numerous policy areas concerned, necessitating close cooperation between the Commission departments when they draw up the proposals;
- the outlook for state aid and the important contribution it makes to improving conditions for SMEs, as well as the importance of disseminating more effectively and implementing at the level of the Member States this renewed regulatory framework for SMEs;
- certain doubts, however, regarding the case for state aid designed specifically to support high-growth SMEs, given the risks of distorting the conditions of competition, but also the difficulty of arriving at a clear definition of such SMEs, and the preference for an approach geared instead to facilitating general access by SMEs to markets;
- the major contributions made by the European Investment Bank to support SMEs and, at the same time, the pressing need for such support to be provided in accordance with the state aid rules in force;

- the desirability of promoting business start-ups and management by women, in particular by way of the policy on state aid, and the models provided by certain business promotion programmes in a number of Member States;
- the contribution that application of the Services Directive could make to assisting SMEs in developing their cross-border activities;
- as regards intellectual, industrial and commercial property rights, the responsibility of the Member States for lowering the registration and renewal charges for patents and for helping to create a European patent;
- the important aspect of simplification of the measures proposed for SMEs, this being a principle that has also been applied in connection with the 7th research and technological development framework programme for 2007-2013, notably as compared with the previous framework programmes;
- the importance of facilitating access by SMEs to public procurement procedures, including in the field of research and development;
- the case stipulating in the research and technological development framework programme that enterprises in danger of losing their SME status during project implementation may retain it for the entire duration of the project;
- the support for the training and qualification measures for SMEs, for the introduction of an apprentice mobility programme within the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci programme and for the creation of a mobility programme for would-be entrepreneurs ;
- the importance of taking into account the specific constraints for SMEs as regards health and safety at work;
- the training opportunities available to SMEs under the European Social Fund;
- the case for specific rules for SMEs in the field of labour law and flexicurity;

- the importance of reducing red-tape for SMEs, and in particular company registration fees but also in the context of public procurement;
- the importance of fostering a positive attitude affording entrepreneurs a second chance following a non-fraudulent insolvency;
- as regards taxation, the possibility of reducing tax on profits re-invested by companies ;
- the possibility of across-the-board application of a reduced level of VAT on services with a high labour intensity and simplifying the rules on VAT invoicing;
- the positive effects on SMEs of some degree of harmonisation of direct taxation.

The PRESIDENT thanked the Commission Members for their contributions to the discussion and encouraged Mr VERHEUGEN to press ahead with the work.

He noted that the “Small Business Act” was one of the flagship initiatives of the present Commission and could make a major contribution to the outcome of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment; in his view, the Commission should therefore present an ambitious initiative that met the expectations of the European Council, Parliament and stakeholders and comprised a set of principles or framework conditions, an action plan focusing on the measures likely to have the greatest impact and a set of practical initiatives. Designed as a “single act”, the “Small Business Act” for Europe should set out a certain number of practical and operational principles that were applicable at national and at Community level to the interaction of public authorities with SMEs; it might be of a politically binding nature in the form of an undertaking recorded in the conclusions of the European Council, having regard to the intentions of the future Presidency of the Council.

The Commission took note of the conclusions of the policy debate.

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The meeting closed at 13h30.