



Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community

Press release – Friday 19 October 2007

Adoption of the Reform Treaty: Hope for the continuation of European construction

COMECE's Secretary General Mgr Treanor greets the announcement of an agreement on the new treaty for the European Union. The agreement, reached by the 27 Heads of States and Governments at the European Council of Lisbon last night, brings an end to four years of difficult endeavours and to the institutional crisis following the rejection of the EU constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands in 2005.

COMECE welcomes the fact that concern for the European common good and the interest of 500 million citizens finally prevailed over threats linked to issues of national interest.

COMECE particularly welcomes the introduction of article 15b in the Treaty establishing the European Community, which stipulates that *'The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States.'* And especially *alinea 3: 'Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations.'* On the basis of this article, which introduces a new provision into the Treaties, the EU institutions will engage in a deeper dialogue with the Churches, thus allowing Christians to accompany more effectively the process of European construction. This should lead to a Union characterized by more Justice and Solidarity and an enhanced Responsibility for major global challenges.

COMECE notes with interest that the Reform Treaty introduces a preamble to the Treaty on European Union that recognises the cultural, religious and humanistic inheritance of Europe¹. Nevertheless, Mgr Treanor considers that *'The debate about the Christian roots of Europe is inseparable from the reflexion on the European identity; thus, it needs to be continued'*.

The Reform Treaty will be officially signed by the 27 Heads of States and Governments on December 13th in Lisbon. The ratification process will then start: through referendum in Ireland and presumably by parliamentary decision in all the other Member States.

The COMECE Secretariat encourages Christians to follow closely the issues and challenges of the European debate during the following months. The Reform Treaty, despite its shortcomings and complexity, represents a satisfying institutional solution for the enlarged EU; it introduces necessary reforms into the decision-making process that should allow European construction to continue in an efficient and just way.

In the light of the outcome of the Lisbon Summit, it is worth recalling Pope Benedict XVI's recent remark: *'If (...) on some points justified criticisms can be raised about certain European institutions, the process of unification remains a most significant achievement which has brought a period of peace, heretofore unknown, to this continent, formerly consumed by constant conflicts and fatal fratricidal wars.'*²

¹ *DRAWING INSPIRATION from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law*

² Address of HH Benedict XVI - Meeting with the Authorities and the diplomatic corps. Hofburg, Vienna Friday, 7 September 2007