

## Brussels, 25 March 2004

### **"The time for a Constitutional Treaty settlement has come, and that time is now" says COX**

Speaking today before attending this evening's meeting in Brussels where EU leaders will discuss the draft EU constitution, Pat Cox MEP President of the European Parliament, appealed to heads of Government to find the political will with the aim of completing the negotiations before the European elections, saying,

"The time for a constitutional treaty settlement has come, and that time is now."

"My own sense is that there is a change in mood and a willingness to compromise on the issues which blocked the last Brussels summit. We must capitalise on this."

"No-one wants another Brussels "lost weekend" like December. A second failure would further undermine public confidence in the European project, and further procrastination risks creating new doubts internationally about the seriousness of our purpose, further alienation as regards the European project and a widening delivery gap."

"I believe that the elements of a successful treaty compromise are now at hand. I urge the Irish Government to take the necessary concrete steps to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion within the Irish presidency."

He added,

"A breakthrough now, after the disappointment of December would provide a powerful signal that the European Union with 25 Members States has the will to work together and move forward. It would put behind us the difficulties and sometimes disarray which were shown up at various stages in 2003 and restore the confidence of our citizens in the European project."

"And if there is a will to proceed, we should proceed quickly. So my appeal to EU leaders is simple: go for it, and as soon as possible. We in the European Parliament believe that the aim should be an agreement before the European elections."

"We are approaching the home straight and the Irish Presidency must go for gold. Given sufficient political will and momentum - which was lacking last December - the details will follow."

"The issues and difficulties we have observed in the last few months on seeking agreement on a constitution will not become easier with time."