

Van Dijk

laid down in the Rules of Procedure, he simply will not approve this report. There is not a single bad word in it. So I call upon the Assembly to vote against referring this report back to committee.

*(Parliament decided to refer the matter back to the committee responsible)*

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**Report by Mrs Schleicher on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection (A3-0292/94) on the submission of the European Parliament to the World Health Organization's European conference on environment and health**

*(Parliament adopted the resolution)*

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**Report by Mrs Thyssen on behalf of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy (A3-0331/94) on the proposal for a Council directive amending Directive 77/388/EEC and introducing new simplification measures with regard to value added tax – scope of certain exemptions and practical arrangements for implementing them (COM(94)0058 – C3-0188/94 – 94/0062(CNS))**

Thyssen (PPE), *rapporteur*. – (NL) Mr President, I simply wish to tell honourable Members that we have tabled only two amendments to this report and accepted the rest because we wanted it to go through. This is a proposal for the simplification of VAT measures. It is important that we should not postpone it but that it should go through. But that does not mean that we are otherwise very happy with the directive. We find in particular that the proposal does not go far enough. In the Committee on Economic Affairs we had a discussion with Mrs Scrivener, who promised us that the matter would be further considered. We have difficulty in particular with the section on the imposition of VAT on speculative transactions. This must be a compulsory rather than an optional system and it is essential for the detailed rules of application in the various Member States to be harmonized. That is what I wanted to say to honourable Members, Mr President, but at the same time I should like to urge that we should approve the proposal before us today, because the proposed simplification does somewhat improve the present difficult situation with which firms are faced in the transitional arrangement of the VAT system.

*(Parliament adopted the resolution)*

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**Report by Mr Arbeloa Muru on behalf of the Committee on Development and Cooperation (A3-0320/94) on the establishment of a Mediterranean assembly – Community policy in the Mediterranean**

*(Parliament adopted the resolution)*

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**Report by Mr Andrews on behalf of the Committee on Development and Cooperation (A3-0324/94) on the situation of the elderly in developing countries**

*(Parliament adopted the resolution)*

### 3. Statement by the President

**President.** – Ladies and gentlemen, before I continue with the Agenda and leave the Chair for the last time during my term of office, perhaps I may have leave to make one or two brief concluding remarks.

During this week our Parliament has taken a decision of historic importance by voting in favour of enlargement. With the confirmation by the European Parliament of the applications for accession made by Norway, Austria, Finland and Sweden, the general public has become aware that this European Parliament has decisive powers and that it takes its responsibility very seriously. Six weeks before the European elections this represents an important signal to the electorate.

With the Single European Act and the Treaty of Maastricht vital new powers have been conferred upon our Parliament: the right of assent in cases of accession, association agreements and international Treaties, rights of joint decision in internal market legislation, in the sphere of research, the trans-European networks and consumer protection. By the new procedure for joint decision-making we have so far successfully concluded eleven legislative procedures, four of them with mediation between Parliament and the Council, and the Fourth Framework Research Programme has been to a considerable extent drafted with the help of our Parliament. The budgetary legislation has been supplemented by inter-institutional agreements. There is greater scope for planning the work of legislation, which has become politically more transparent, as a result of the annual legislative programme. We have approved the Statute of the Ombudsman. It will be the task of the new Parliament to make the appointment to this new office.

I have consciously used my position in the past two and a half years to transpose into practice for our Parliament the new provisions of the Treaty of Maastricht, to make them applicable and to safeguard them between the institutions. In doing so I have applied myself emphatically in the sense of the triad of the institutions to obtain regular contacts and close agreement with the Council and the Commission. These included the regular dialogue and the many inter-institutional contacts at both official and semi-official levels.

Similarly we have tried to extend contacts with all other institutions and bodies of the European Community. But still there is need above all for a clear change of awareness in the Council to grasp fully Parliament's new role and to conclude important dossiers in the autumn. I include amongst these a settlement with regard to research committees, comitology and financing of the foreign and security policy, to mention only the most important.

We have done important preliminary work for the new Parliament. The previous inter-institutional agreements are amongst them, together with the reform of the Rules of Procedure. We have shown that in politically important matters we are in a position to discharge our powers

**President**

in consciousness of our responsibilities. We have proved that in the budgetary procedure, in the reform of the structural funds, the Fourth Framework Research Programme and now too with our assent to enlargement. We have shown that the principle of the political argument can mobilize a qualified majority in this House over and above national interests and political fragmentation. That alone must be the criterion for decisions in the European Union in future.

One of the most important decisions in the new Parliament will be the vote for the appointment of the new Commission. We have sketched out the guidelines for that. The means for this Parliament's participation in the preparations for the next inter-governmental conference are of great importance. The painful experiences with regard to the ratification debates on the Maastricht Treaty have made it clear that the next alterations to the Treaty must no longer be negotiated by ministerial officials behind closed doors. The time for cabinet diplomacy is past. Our citizens require openness, a voice in the proceedings and democratic control. In this sense I should like to make a new appeal to the heads of State and government at the next summit in Corfu.

More transparency and democratic control will also be obtained by our national parliaments' coming more closely to grips with the European Agenda. So during my period of office I have paid great attention to closer collaboration between the European Parliament and national parliaments and wherever possible I have encouraged this collaboration.

For the future too there are important subjects high up on the political agenda of the Union, which are worth tackling together with the national parliaments. I am thinking of labour and employment questions as described in the Commission white paper, of questions of immigration and right of asylum or of the fight against organized crime. We have made our contribution to the Community's external relations by regular, valuable contacts with third countries and other organizations – I am thinking in this connection for example of the Council of Europe. So I should like to express my thanks to the chairmen and members of delegations who have essentially borne this work.

In this we have directed our attention in particular to the new democracies in Eastern and Central Europe, the applicants for accession and the developing countries, especially those of the ACP. Many peoples and their heads of State regard our Parliament as the guarantee of European values and democratic traditions, as the advocate for human rights and self-determination. On my visits to Member States and outside the Community too I have repeatedly been able to make that clear. Thus President Zafy for example has only recently reminded us impressively of this claim, which is directed to us from outside too. But I would remind you too of the speeches of the Czech President, Vaclav Havel, and of Yitzhak Rabin, who stressed emphatically that this Parliament is not only a legislative machine but also serves as a platform and a megaphone where the great themes of our time are concerned.

During my period of office we have had to share painfully in many events around us without really being able to influence them. The tragedy of the war in the former Yugoslavia is among them, and the tragedies in Rwanda

or Somalia. On the other hand our hopes, our faith and our convictions with regard to peace and justice have been fulfilled in other regions of the world. South Africa has had a free election for the first time. In the Middle East the peace process has taken on real shape and the European Union will have kept up its material, political and moral contribution.

It has been for me an honour and a privilege to preside over this Parliament, to lead it and to represent it outside. I have tried to serve you all according to the best of my knowledge and conscience and my thanks go to you for your support. I should like to thank the Vice-Presidents who have represented me in many different ways not only here in the Assembly but have also helped as a collegiate body to steer the destinies of our Parliament in sometimes difficult waters. I am also grateful in particular to the Group Chairmen who have the not always easy task of ensuring that our decisions taken together are also applied in the multiplicity of interests within the groups.

I should like to thank the Chairmen of committees and particularly too the rapporteurs who have prepared and presented here their indispensable contributions with great expertise and efficiency. I also thank the Secretary General and those who have worked with us in our institution for the work they have done. I should also like most particularly to thank my own staff. In addition I should like to express my thanks to the Commission and the permanent representatives of the Council who have tried to make collaboration with this Assembly fruitful and so have made my task easier.

*(Loud applause)*

**Vanni d'Archirafi, Member of the Commission. – (IT)** Mr President, I thank you for allowing me to speak. I listened carefully to the full review which you made of the work done by this Parliament during the span of its term of office.

I am anxious to stress on behalf of the Commission the great spirit of collaboration which has existed between the two institutions and to say also how glad I am to be present at the last sitting of this Parliament's term of office, precisely because what distinguishes the democratic system is the fact that the end of one period links up with the beginning of another, which will start on 12 June.

I should like to say a final few words to express my personal satisfaction at having worked with this Parliament, making progress within the sphere of my responsibilities on some important questions of interest to the whole Community.

It is this Parliament which, having come in under the implementation of the Treaty of Maastricht, is leaving it endowed, even though not fully, with greater powers which will give a deeper significance to the democratic content of the Community, and it is thanks to this Parliament that the Community has reached enlargement, a stage which, I hope, will be followed by others giving greater depth to the integration of the Community itself.

Personally, Mr President, I must make known to you, apart from my thanks, my feelings of great admiration and respect for the way in which you have guided the labours of this Parliament.

*(Applause)*