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EUROPEAN POLITICAL COOPERATION: POLITICAL COMMITTEE:

THE HAGUE, 14-15 MAY: ARAB-ISRAEL

SUMMARY

1. (A) PRESIDENCY TO CONTINUE WITH DISCREET DIPLOMACY. ALL AGREED A NEW STATEMENT WOULD BE PREMATURE. PRESIDENCY KEEN ON SENDING A CONFIDENTIAL LETTER TO THE PARTIES STATING THE TWELVE'S VIEWS. GENERAL LACK OF ENTHUSIASM, BUT WORKING GROUP LIKELY TO HAVE TO REVERT TO THIS AT LEAST FOR CONTINGENCY DRAFTING WORK.

(B) VAN DEN BROEK TO VISIT TUNIS 26 MAY FOR TALKS WITH KLIBI (ARAB LEAGUE) AND TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTER. PRESIDENCY SOUGHT AGREEMENT THAT WHILE PRESIDENCY WOULD NOT THEMSELVES SEEK A MEETING WITH ARAFAT, IF ARAFAT ASKED FOR A MEETING HE SHOULD NOT BE REFUSED. UK ARGUED STRONGLY AGAINST, BUT ELEVEN TO ONE IN FAVOUR. UK INSISTED (AS PRICE OF NOT BLOCKING CONSENSUS) THAT IN THE EVENT OF A REQUEST FOR A MEETING, PRESIDENCY SHOULD SPEAK STRONGLY TO ARAFAT ON RENOUNCIATION OF VIOLENCE AND ACCEPTANCE OF SCRS 242 AND 338.

(C) ORAL REPORT OF EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE GROUP APPROVED WITHOUT DISCUSSION.

DETAIL

2. THE PRESIDENCY'S ANALYSIS OF ITS REPORT ON CONTACTS WITH THE PARTIES IN THE REGION WAS WELCOMED AND ITS RECOMMENDATIONS BROADLY ENDORSED, IN PARTICULAR THAT THE PRESIDENCY SHOULD CONTINUE WITH QUIET DIPLOMACY. BUT THE IDEA OF A POSSIBLE STATEMENT BY THE

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TWELVE AT THIS STAGE GOT SHORTER SHRIFT. JACOBVITS (PRESIDENCY) THEN SUGGESTED A CONFIDENTIAL LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENCY TO THE PARTIES (ISRAEL, PLO, JORDAN, SYRIA, EGYPT, US). THE TWELVE HAD TO DO SOMETHING. A LETTER WAS A WAY TO MOVE THINGS FORWARD WITHOUT MAKING AUSTERE STATEMENT. THE LETTER MIGHT EXPRESS CONCERN AT THE STANDSTILL IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND WILLINGNESS TO HELP REACTIVATE THE PROCESS. ON SUBSTANCE THE LETTER MIGHT RECALL THE TWELVE'S EXISTING POSITIONS (VENICE ETC) AND SUGGEST AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE BASED ON SCRS 242 AND 333 WITH PARTICIPATION OF A JOINT JORDANIAN/PLO DELEGATION.

3. THOMAS (UK) QUESTIONED WHAT SUCH A LETTER WOULD ACHIEVE. HOW WOULD IT BE RECEIVED BY THE PARTIES CONCERNED? WE OUGHT TO HAVE A CLEAR VIEW OF THIS. IT WOULD HARDLY REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL. MOREL (FRANCE) AGREED. IT WAS NOT AT ALL CLEAR IF THE IDEA OF A JORDANIAN/PALESTINIAN CONFEDERATION WAS STILL VIABLE, WHILE PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION MEANT MANY THINGS TO MANY PEOPLE. THERE WAS A LITTLE MORE SCOPE FOR PROGRESS ON THE IDEA OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. BUT A LETTER FROM THE TWELVE ENDORSING A CONFERENCE WOULD BE A HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT STEP. THE TWELVE WOULD HAVE SPONSORSHIP OF THE CONFERENCE PINNED UPON THEM. BIANCHERI (ITALY) SAID A LETTER WAS AN INTERESTING PROCEDURAL SUGGESTION, NOT TO BE TOTALLY DISCARDED. ON SUBSTANCE, THIS WAS NOT THE MOMENT TO BACK A CONFEDERATION. IT WAS AN IDEA THAT MIGHT HAVE ITS DAY AGAIN DEPENDING ON JORDAN AND THE PLO, BUT NOT NOW. HE WAS DOUSTFUL TOO ABOUT OPEN SUPPORT FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. MURPHY (IRELAND) SAID A LETTER COULD AROUSE EXAGGERATED EXPECTATIONS ABOUT EUROPE'S ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS.

4. JACOBVITS SAID AGAIN THAT EUROPE HAD TO DO SOMETHING. KASEL (LUXEMBOURG) SUGGESTED FLOATING SOME NEW IDEAS (UNSPECIFIED) IN THE TROIKA TALKS WITH THE ARAB LEAGUE. JACOBVITS POINTED OUT THAT THE ARAB TROIKA (BAHRAIN, TUNIS, ALGERIA) WERE HARDLY KEY PLAYERS. KERKINOS (GREECE) COMPLAINED THAT THE TWELVE MIGHT WAKE UP ONE DAY TO FIND THE US AND SOVIETS HAD DONE A DEAL IN PRIVATE. VON BRAUNMUHL (FRG) SYMPATHISED WITH THE PRESIDENCY'S WISH TO ACT BUT SAW NO ALTERNATIVE TO CAUTION. THE MEWG COULD EXAMINE THE IDEA OF A LETTER. MOREL THOUGHT THE JUNE EUROPEAN COUNCIL WOULD BE IMPORTANT AND OUTLINED AN ELABORATE STRUCTURE OF POSSIBLE FURTHER CONTACTS LEADING TO AN AGREED REFERENCE DOCUMENT ON ARAB/ISRAEL WHICH THE LONDON EUROPEAN COUNCIL COULD PONDER AT THE END OF THE YEAR.

5. THOMAS WARNED AGAINST ACTIVITY FOR ITS OWN SAKE. IN PRACTICE THERE WOULD BE NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LETTER OR A STATEMENT. IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO PROMOTE THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AS A MILESTONE IN THE PROCESS: IT WAS NOT AT ALL CLEAR WHAT IT COULD USEFULLY SAY ON ARAB/ISRAEL. QUIET DIPLOMACY REMAINED THE RIGHT APPROACH. THAT DID NOT MEAN THE TWELVE WERE INDIFFERENT OR INACTIVE. FOR EXAMPLE BILATERAL CONTACTS COULD HELP (EG THE PRIME MINISTER'S FORTHCOMING VISIT TO ISRAEL). MOREL URGED THE TWELVE TO HAVE A FUNDAMENTAL THINK ABOUT ARAB/ISRAEL, ESPECIALLY IF THEY WERE SERIOUS ABOUT GETTING ON TOP OF THE TERRORIST THREAT.

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6. JACOBVITS SUMMED UP THAT THE PRESIDENCY'S REPORT ON ITS CONTACTS WOULD BE REVISED IN THE LIGHT OF THE DISCUSSION AND SUBMITTED AS AN AID TO REFLECTION AT THE 7/8 JUNE INFORMAL MINISTERIAL. ALL AGREED THAT THE PRESIDENCY SHOULD CONTINUE WITH ITS DISCREET CONTACTS. THE IDEA OF A LETTER COULD BE KEPT IN RESERVE. THE PRESIDENCY WOULD NEVERTHELESS PRODUCE A DRAFT FOR THE MEWG TO CONSIDER IN JUNE. MOREL AND THOMAS BOTH SAID THAT THIS WOULD IN ITSELF BE A SENSIBLE STEP. IF THE PRESIDENCY WANTED TO PRODUCE A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT FOR THE MEWG IT SHOULD BE DONE ON A HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL AND PURELY EXPLORATORY BASIS.

7. DISCUSSION THEN TURNED TO THE QUESTION OF CONTACT WITH ARAFAT. JACOBVITS SAID THAT THE DUTCH AMBASSADOR IN TUNIS HAD REQUESTED A CALL ON ARAFAT, AS AGREED BY THE TWELVE, BUT THIS HAD NOT YET BEEN ACCEPTED. A SENIOR PLO REPRESENTATIVE, ABU JAAFAR, HAD BEEN RECEIVED IN THE HAGUE BY THE DIRECTOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA (HORAK) AND THE DEPUTY POLITICAL DIRECTOR (WIJNAENDTS). VAN DEN BROEK WOULD BE VISITING TUNIS ON 26 MAY FOR A MEETING WITH THE ARAB LEAGUE. HE WOULD DO NOTHING TO SEEK OUT ARAFAT BUT IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT ARAFAT WOULD REQUEST A MEETING WITH HIM. IF SO, IN THE PRESIDENCY'S VIEW, VAN DEN BROEK COULD NOT REFUSE. DID ANY OF THE TWELVE DISAGREE?

8. THOMAS EXPRESSED STRONG RESERVATIONS, STRESSING THE PLO'S ASSOCIATION WITH TERRORISM AND KING HUSSEIN'S CURRENT EFFORTS TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE PLO TO ADOPT A MORE REALISTIC POLICY. A MEETING WITH ARAFAT AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL WOULD BE A MAJOR STEP FOR THE TWELVE. AN APPEAL FOR SUPPORT FROM OTHERS ELICITED TOTAL SILENCE. THOMAS SAID THAT IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES THE UK WOULD NOT BLOCK A CONSENSUS, BUT IF THE PLO PROPOSED SUCH A MEETING, THE DUTCH AMBASSADOR IN TUNIS SHOULD, BEFORE ANY COMMITMENT WAS MADE, ESTABLISH THE AGENDA FOR TALKS, THEIR TERMS OF REFERENCE AND REACH AGREEMENT IN ADVANCE ON PUBLIC HANDLING. IN ADDITION, IF SUCH A MEETING TOOK PLACE, VAN DEN BROEK SHOULD BE BRIEFED TO SPEAK IN FORTHRIGHT TERMS TO ARAFAT, URGING THE PLO TO RENOUNCE THE USE OF VIOLENCE AND TO ACCEPT UN RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338. THE UK RESERVED THE RIGHT TO SEND A COREU WITH SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR A CONTINGENCY LINE TO TAKE. JACOBVITS AGREED, SOMEWHAT RELUCTANTLY.

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