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Green light for the European Constitution

Co-president Frassoni asks for a positive vote in plenary debate

Speech by Monica Frassoni, Green/EFA Co-President

Frassoni (Verts/ALE), on behalf of the group. □ (IT) Mr President, a majority in the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance is in favour of ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, because it sees it as an important step on the road leading to the political integration of our continent. Despite the Treaty's many shortcomings, there are no other alternatives in the current political and institutional context.

The proposed Constitution establishes the Union as a community based on fundamental rights, grounds European policies in a code of common values, defines clear and binding objectives, and expresses a commitment to uphold sustainability in the economic, social and environmental fields. It includes social rights among traditional human rights, ties the Union's external actions to compliance with international law, simplifies procedures, clarifies competences, expands the scope of Community decisions, and increases transparency and the democratic legitimacy of the Union, as well as opportunities for its citizens to play a part.

The text has a good many gaps and pitfalls in it, and it is understandable that there should be growing disaffection towards the European project among many people, associations and movements politically close to us, in whose eyes the Union is not yet able to respond to their concerns or to be a political entity fully able to act for a better, less unfair world. To deny this reality, as our fellow Members do in their report, is, in our view, inappropriate.

Turning the motion for a European Parliament resolution almost into a propaganda exercise, pretending that it is the ideal outcome of noble, harmonious work done in the best possible manner, even saying that the Intergovernmental Conference left the Convention's text unaltered □ although we know that that is not true because all the amendments made by the Intergovernmental Conference made the text worse: one need only think of the Legislative Council or the disagreement over the budget □ none of that will convince a single Eurosceptic or help us win over all those who, far from fearing a non-existent European superstate, know that the Union is not yet united enough or cohesive enough.

For us Greens, the European integration process cannot be considered complete with the adoption of the Constitution, partly because other countries and peoples, beyond the current 25, are still finishing or starting out on their journey to join the Union. In that respect too, unlike the rapporteurs, we believe that the Union's institutional system is still too confused and complicated and will not last much longer without further reform. We therefore believe that any development and improvement of the future European Union will depend on ratification of this text.

It is a dangerous illusion to believe that rejecting this text would prepare the way for another, better or even ideal constitution. On the contrary, throwing it out would leave us with the provisions of the Treaty of Nice, which are much less advanced in terms of both the values of their objectives and the institutional structure they propose. If the Treaty were defeated, it would be an ideal opportunity for the Eurosceptics to point out that the people no longer want Europe, whereas we know very well that this is not the case. It would also convince many governments that the Convention method that timid, half-hearted attempt to overthrow undemocratic, inefficient methods of reform like diplomatic talks and the power of veto can lead nowhere.

We therefore have a double objective: to approve this Constitution so that we can quickly lay the foundations for its successor, by seeking to build a strong, stable alliance with those political, social, associative and economic forces that believe, as we do, that in order to achieve our aims of social justice, ecologically sustainable development and peace, we must not only win the elections again at a national level, but also make European democracy stronger and more complete. To do that, we need to take back the initiative, and it is on that point, Mr President, that I believe it will be possible to rebuild a united front of all those who are today convinced of the inescapable need for European democracy but are divided in their evaluation of this text.

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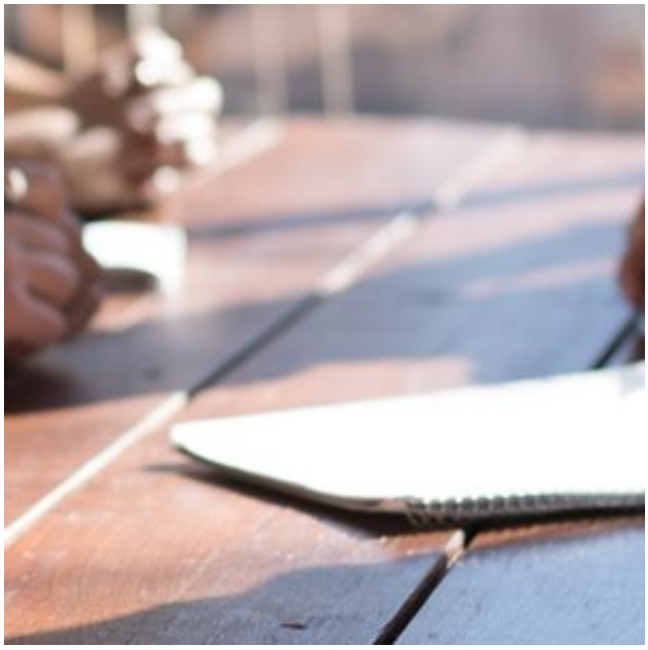
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