

**OPEN LETTER
FROM THE GREEN 8
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE**

DEFENDING THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

February 2003



INTRODUCTION

We, the Green 8, representing the eight major international environmental organisations in Europe, are alarmed that the environmental dimension is not adequately taken into account in the draft for a new European Constitution, as it has been presented by the EU Convention Presidium. The proposed first 16 articles neglect the shared European value of environmental integrity.

This value is enshrined in Article 2 of the present EC treaty, which sets the promotion of "a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment" as a task of the Community. The proposed Constitution not only omits this sentence, but contains a definition of sustainable development that is only based on social and economic considerations and does not even mention the environmental dimension. The wording of Art. 6 of the EC Treaty, which obliges the EU to integrate, in all its policies, environmental protection requirements, has also completely disappeared.

It is encouraging that Members of the Convention have submitted amendments responding to the serious shortcomings of these first draft articles.

We call upon you to support these amendments and to further ensure that the protection of the environment retains in the new European Constitution the prominent position it has acquired in the existing European treaties.

EUROPEAN VALUE OF ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY

Although the environmental movement at it is presently shaped emerged in the 1960's and 70's, Europeans have a long tradition of caring for the environment and promoting its protection and improvement. Some of Europe's earliest environmental organisations appeared already at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century as a reaction to unbridled industrialisation and urbanisation. More recently, Europeans have joined together to seek to protect their forests from threats including acid rain, unsustainable logging, and forest fires. Jacques-Yves Cousteau has become a European symbol for his battle to protect the world's seas. Most recently, the high value of environmental integrity shared by European citizens was vividly demonstrated by the outcry following the 'Prestige' disaster.

Europeans perceive environmental integrity as a public and universal good that transcends national borders. Hence it is not surprising that one of the most well recognised and respected European policies in international fora is the promotion of global sustainable development.

EUROBAROMETER RECORDS ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY AS SHARED EUROPEAN VALUE

On 5 June 2002, on the occasion of the World Day for the Environment, the Eurobarometer published the results of a survey of European public opinion with respect to environmental concerns.

- 86% of Europeans wish that the environment becomes a policy area of equal importance to the social and economic policies. In some countries such as Italy, Portugal and Luxembourg this answer was given by more than 92% of respondents.
- 75% of Europeans think that policymakers do not give adequate consideration to the environment when deciding upon other policies.
- 73% of Europeans regard the environment as the strongest factor determining their quality of life. Socio-economic factors rank second.
- 89% of Europeans are concerned about the consequences of environmental pollution on their health; 86% are preoccupied by the unsustainable use of natural resources and waste generation; 82% are particularly concerned with nature conservation; 72% are worried about climate change.

CONCLUSION

As the European Convention proceeds with the drafting of a new European treaty, the European value of environmental integrity as well as the EU's leadership role on sustainable development must both be confirmed and consolidated.

The Green 8, representing the eight international environmental organisations established in Brussels, call on the Members of the Convention to ensure:

- **That the protection and improvement of the environment, which constitutes a central objective of the European Union, is explicitly included in the treaty's definition of sustainable development.**
- **That the principle of policy coherence is included among the fundamental principles of the European Union, and in particular that all EU policies are consistent and integrated with the environmental policy objectives ('integration principle' Art. 6 EC Treaty). The Union should also ensure that its policies and actions do not negatively impact on the sustainable development and the environmental integrity of developing countries.**

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