

SEVILLE SUMMIT WILL BRING 'SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS' ON IMMIGRATION POLICY

Madrid, June 12, 2002



Continuing his tour of European capitals, President of the European Council and Spanish PM Jose Maria AZNAR [*pictured left*] advocated reform to make EU 'more effective' and tackling of immigration 'with all that that implies'.

Immigration and asylum, he said, are 'key and fundamental issues' in today's Europe. Therefore, the EU needs to 'regulate immigration and direct it through legal channels'.

Aznar urged European governments to continue working on the reforms agreed in Barcelona at the opening of a conference of the Federation of German Industry yesterday. 'A growing economy is the best social policy' he said.

Spanish PM also pointed out that 'there no alternatives and no shortcuts' for making the EU one of the most prosperous areas in the world, reminding EU governments of the need to move towards zero deficit in 2004.

Immigration is to be the most important phenomom facing the EU for the next years. Spanish Minister of the Interior Mariano RAJOY said that it would be 'a foolish mistake' not to have a common immigration policy, as 'either we all control our borders or one of us doesn't and the whole thing is pointless'.

AZNAR also underlined that illegal immigration is a real 'challenge' which needs to be tackled at the Seville European Council on 21 and 22 June, and called upon the EU to fight against 'organisations trafficking in human beings'.

About the discussion of the reform of the European Council, Aznar said that in Seville 'we will be looking at measures to simplify and improve its work, though we do not intend to take decisions which could entail a reform of the Union's Treaties, but merely to start considering the matter'.