

# EPP JOINS FORCES IN THE CONVENTION

***Brussels, February 28, 2002***

The President of the European People's Party, Wilfried Martens, today chaired the inaugural meeting of the "EPP Convention Group". Elmar Brok, MEP was elected Chairman of this Group. He will be assisted by a Presidency: Göran Lenmarker, Sweden; Jacques Santer, Luxembourg; Jozsef Szajer, Hungary and Eduardo Zaplana, Spain.

On the occasion of this inaugural meeting, EPP President Martens declares: "The Members of the Convention belonging to the European People's Party or the EPP/ED Group in the European Parliament declare their commitment to work together in one political group in the preparation of the meetings of the Convention.

The decisions made by the European Council in Laeken give a far-reaching mandate to the Convention. This has given a clear signal for a new and different approach replacing the purely intergovernmental preparation of Treaty reforms by a comprehensive Convention based on a political, democratic and open model.

The EPP is the only European Party having presented a comprehensive concept for a European Constitution. The EPP feels obliged to carry on the historic achievements of its founders and of the post-war generation Christian Democrats. Visionary reform steps in Europe have been carried out when our political family carried the political responsibility.

For us, The European Union, having established the freedom of movement, the Single Market and the Economic and Monetary Union, is the most successful political project ever undertaken in Europe. Due to the upcoming enlargement process - the uniting of Europe - we now need extraordinary efforts to continue the success story of European Integration.

The Nation States individually have lost their ability to secure alone peace, external and interior security, prosperity and growth in a globalised world. In many cases we will have only one alternative: strength within a team or being alone and marginalised. We call for a definition - on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity - of the policy areas to be decided upon at European level. These competences of the Union have to be laid down in the Constitution.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights has to become integral part of the European Constitution. The Charter of Fundamental Rights will strengthen the EU as a Community of Values and improve the protection of fundamental rights. The intention is not to introduce new rights but to assimilate the already recognized and existing agreements into the *acquis communautaire*.

The same democratic rules have to be applied on both the European and the National levels. The EPP stresses the need to overcome the standstill in the reform process because the status quo simply will not work in a time of a massive enlargement. A comprehensive reform of the institutions is needed because EU citizens have a right to a transparent process of legislation and decision-making."