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**COMMITTEE ON BUDGETARY CONTROL**

02-COM-CONT(2009)D/0442

302764 11.02.2009

Mr Pierre de Boissieu  
Deputy Secretary General of the  
European Council  
Rue de la Loi, 175  
B-1048 Bruxelles

Dear Mr de Boissieu,

The Committee on Budgetary Control (CONT) is currently preparing its recommendations for Parliament's decision to grant or to postpone the granting of discharge for the financial year 2007 to the other institutions and in particular to the Council.

In this context, our Rapporteur, Mr Søndergaard, has contacted you and your services on several occasions in order to request formal and official bilateral meetings to discuss matters concerning the budget execution of the Council for 2007. However, these repeated requests have not received a positive (or any) answer from the Council on the pretext that a Gentlemen's Agreement of 1970 precludes both Council and Parliament questioning each other's budget execution.

On behalf of Parliament, as discharge authority for the execution of the Community budget, the Chair of the committee on budgetary control of the previous legislature and yourself on behalf of Council agreed to an informal procedure to exchange information within the framework of the discharge procedure to Council. However, Parliament has on several occasions expressed its dissatisfaction with the current practice of a mere informal dialogue (lunch) between our two institutions regarding the Council's discharge which does not make a meaningful discharge possible and we are rather shocked by the lack of transparency and openness for official dialogue from the Council's side.

May we stress in particular Parliament's repeated call<sup>1</sup> for maximum transparency in the area of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and its request that the Council, in accordance with points 42 and 43 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 17 May 2006<sup>2</sup>, makes sure that Parliament is informed about the budgeting and use of all

<sup>1</sup> Resolutions of 24 April 2007, OJ L 187, 15.7.2008, p.21 and T6-0135/2008 of 22 April 2008; not yet published  
<sup>2</sup> OJ C 139, 14.6.2006, p.1.

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

L-2929 Luxembourg  
B-1047 Bruxelles  
F-67070 Strasbourg

Tel 00352/43 00 1  
Tel 0032/2 28 42 111  
Tel 0033/3 88 117 40 01

Fax 00352/43 00 29 494  
Fax 0032/2 28 49 075  
Fax 0033/3 88 25 65 01

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CFSP expenditure. Therefore we are of the view that Parliament should be given the chance to scrutinise Council's expenditure, of any kind, in a comprehensive and transparent manner in order to be in a position to grant discharge.

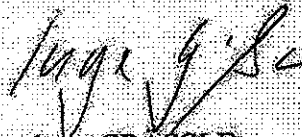
Unfortunately it was not possible for our Committee to have an official discussion with your institution due to the absence of your representative during the debate at our meeting of 16 February 2009 when the draft report related to the Council's discharge was discussed.


We therefore urge you to provide our rapporteur, with the information and documents requested in the annex to this letter, so that our committee may propose to the whole Parliament the granting of discharge to the Council.

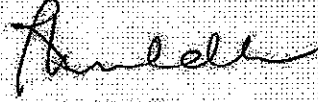
It would be highly appreciated if your answers could be drafted in English and sent to the rapporteur (with a copy to the Secretariat of the Committee on Budgetary Control - [jozsef.blaszauer@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:jozsef.blaszauer@europarl.europa.eu)) if possible by Tuesday 10 March 2009.

With best regards,

  
Søren Bo SØNDERGAARD  
Rapporteur

  
Ingeborg GRÄSSLE  
Coordinator EPP-ED

  
Paulo CASACA  
Coordinator PES

  
Jan MULDER  
Coordinator ALDE/ADLE

  
Bart STAES  
Coordinator Greens/EFA

Encl.: Annex

Cc. Javier Solana, Secretary General of the Council

## Annex

### 1. "*comptes hors budget*" (cf. internal auditor's recommendation R.2 of 2007)

How many accounts "hors budget" the Council did have in 2007? When these accounts were established and with what purpose? Which is the legal base used for these accounts? Which amount is covered by every single account? Is the Council able to provide Parliament with the list of all transactions for each of these accounts for the financial year 2007 as well as the list of authorising officers by delegation per budget line?

### 2. "*vérification des factures*" (cf. internal auditor's recommendation R.1 of 2007)

On which ground did the internal auditor come to the conclusion that ex-ante verification did not work in a satisfactory manner? Are all budgetary lines subject to *ex ante* and/or *ex post* controls? How many invoices were checked, which percentage of the invoices were taken in the sample and which percentage of those were affected by errors? Did the Council prepare any action plan to solve this problem and, if yes, when is it going to be implemented?

### 3. Concerning budget line 2202 (interpreting costs)

Could the Council explain the doubling (from 2006 to 2007) of budget line 2202 dedicated to interpretation? Why does the Council need to transfer money from this line to delegates' travel expenses? Why did the Council use 12.672.000 euro from interpretation to delegates' travel expenses in 2006? Why did not it increase the specific budget line for the same amount in 2007? What is the specific amount the Council transferred, regarding the financial year 2007, from this budget line to line 2200 or any other line?

### 4. Concerning budget line 2200 (travel expenses of delegations)

The legal base for this budget line is partly Council decision (No 190/2003) of the Secretary-General of the Council/High Representative for the CFSP, which has not been published in the Official Journal. For the sake of transparency, could the Council put on its website and its register of references all its Decisions?

### 5. Concerning budget line 2237 (other operating expenditure)

Could the Council provide Parliament with the list of the associations which received money for the financial year 2007 specifying the amounts received per association?

### 6. Concerning budget line 3002 (special advisers in the field of the ESDP/CFSP)

Which amount did the Council transfer to this budget line for the year 2007 and for how many special advisers?

### 7. Could the Council provide Parliament with the full list of budgetary transfers concerning the 2007 budget?