EUROPEAN UNION
THE COUNCIL

Brussels, 13 May 1998
(OR. f)

8415/98

LIMITE

FIN 124
ECOFIN 113

NOTE

from: Budget Committee

~~to :Permanent Representatives Committee/Council~~

~~Subject: SEM 2000~~
– Draft conclusions of the ECOFIN Council on 19 May 1998

1. The Commission submitted a report to the Council on Phase III of SEM 2000 (improving cooperation with the Member States).

2. The Budget Committee examined that report at its meetings on 7 and 12 May 1998. Following its discussions, the Budget Committee finalized draft conclusions.

3. The Permanent Representatives Committee is requested to recommend that the ECOFIN Council on 19 May 1998 approve these conclusions as annexed hereto, following examination of the SEM 2000 item on its agenda.

ANNEX

The Council welcomes the desire of the Working Party of Personal Representatives on SEM 2000 to adopt simpler provisions for management and financial control and to define responsibilities more clearly. The Council would stress that it is necessary for the bodies involved in preparation of the new programmes and enlargement to take account of the outcome of the Working Party's discussions;

The Council is pleased that all the Member States concerned have responded to the Court of Auditor's Report for 1996. It notes the need for close on-going cooperation in a spirit of partnership between the Commission and the Member States so that the necessary measures are taken in response to the Court's observations;

The Council welcomes the undertaking given by the Commission that it will submit a discussion paper on reform of the Financial Regulation before the end of the present six-month period and then propose a full overhaul of that Regulation at the start of next year, while stressing the importance of not delaying adoption of the seventh and eighth series of revisions;

The Council welcomes the fact that the first meeting of the informal network of evaluation experts has been held and the Commission's first evaluation report produced. It would stress that this constitutes an important first stage in developing evaluation of Community programmes while keeping in mind that a sustained effort lasting several years will be necessary in order to develop the techniques involved. The Council thinks that an adequate system of evaluation and exploitation of the resulting information must play a major role in the legislative and budgetary process;

The Council is pleased that the Commission intends to continue entrusting the Working Party of Personal Representatives with the task of monitoring progress of the work involved in its initial programme and to consult it on any new questions of common interest. It looks forward to the Commission's forthcoming reports on the progress of work in the light of the Working Party's recommendations.