

David Cameron response to statement on the EU Treaty

Speaking in response to the Prime Minister's Statement on the EU Treaty, in the House of Commons today, Conservative Party Leader, David Cameron, said:

Check against delivery

"I thank the Prime Minister for his statement.

I notice he couldn't bring himself to mention his visit to Lisbon.

I am delighted the Government has finally adopted our position of saying that Europe should focus on the real issues - and not institutional reform.

However the whole country will ask: how he can possibly say that, having just signed up to an all-encompassing constitution that transfers powers from Westminster to Brussels?

And how can he say it when he won't even put this Constitution, with its massive institutional changes, to the British people in a referendum?

Before turning to the constitution, let me ask about areas where decisive action is needed: the Balkans, Iran, Darfur. And on Burma I very much agree with what the Prime Minister said.

On the Balkans, clear signals are needed.

Kosovo shouldn't be left in limbo. No other borders should be re-opened. And military reserves should be deployed to demonstrate Europe's resolve.

In terms of sending out these clear signals, does he agree with me that if Serbia wants to join the EU, she should co-operate fully with the War Crimes Tribunal?

That meaning arresting Mladic and Karadzic and getting them to the Hague.

Next, Iran.

What's needed is a combination of engagement and sanctions.

We have consistently argued that while the United States needs to do more in terms of engagement, Europe needs to do much more in terms of sanctions.

What progress was made in persuading other European countries that new export credits should be banned and that access for certain Iranian banks to the European financial system should be restricted?

On Darfur, the Prime Minister said three months ago that more than 20,000 troops and police were necessary.

I agree.

Today there are fewer than 10,000.

Can the Prime Minister tell us when this shortfall will be made up?

Turning to the constitution, the key issue is the referendum.

Isn't it the case that he won't restore trust in politics unless he keeps his promise to hold one?

Labour MPs put the commitment to a referendum in their election addresses.

Trade unionists voted for it in the TUC.

Every opinion poll shows it's what people want.

This issue isn't going to go away.

In trying to justify breaking his promise, the Prime Minister says this Treaty is not the Constitution.

Doesn't he understand this simply won't wash?

The German Chancellor, the Irish Prime Minister, and the Spanish Foreign Minister all completely undermine what the Prime Minister says by saying the Treaty is pretty much the same as the Constitution.

And the author of the constitution, Giscard D'Estaing, said last month that the Constitution's "essential points.... re-appear word for word in the new project. Not a comma has changed"

The Prime Minister's argument has simply collapsed.

Doesn't he see that this sort of approach makes him look shifty and untrustworthy?

Doesn't he see that, far from it getting him out of his troubles, denying people a referendum is just digging him in deeper?

This Treaty obviously is the constitution.

It contains an EU President, a Foreign Minister and an EU diplomatic service.

It gets rid of the veto in 60 areas.

And it contains a new ratchet clause which allows even more vetoes to be scrapped without a new inter-governmental conference.

When I put that point to him in October, he claimed the measure was already there in the Single European Act.

It wasn't.

The new clause, for the first time, allows virtually any veto to be scrapped in almost any area.

That measure was not in the Single European Act or in any treaty before this one.

Once again, he's treating people like fools.

So the Prime Minister hasn't been straight about the constitution.

And that was only made worse by his frankly bizarre performance in Lisbon last week.

Was he going to go, or not?

Was he going to sign the Treaty, or not?

Were the cameras going to record it, or not?

He couldn't summon up the courage to decide.

Isn't this all of a pattern for this Prime Minister?

We get troop withdrawals that have already happened.

The election that never was.

And now the signing ceremony that wouldn't take place.

Not a word in the statement about actually signing the Treaty.

I expect Macavity hopes we've forgotten all about it.

Didn't the senior diplomat get it right when he said of the Prime Minister's "dithering": "he's ended up with the worst of all worlds... If he wants to send a Euro-signal that he's indecisive, he's just sent it"

And as for the Foreign Secretary, in all the centuries of British Foreign Secretaries, representing this country overseas, has there ever been a more ludicrous moment than the Foreign Secretary so isolated and alone that the only person to turn up and shake his hand was the usher who'd handed him the pen?

Isn't it the case that European leaders now see the Prime Minister in the same light as the British people, not as the strong leader he posed as in July, but as the Prime Minister he has turned out to be: weak, dithering – second rate would be a bonus

with this Prime Minister - and not straight with people?

Doesn't he recognise that the best chance he has to redeem himself is to give people the referendum they were promised?"