LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE MAASTRICHT TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

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Introduction

Belgium, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom signed the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty) at Maastricht, Netherlands on 7th February 1992.

The Treaty Articles provide for its entry into force on 1st January 1993. The political set back the Treaty received in the negative vote in the Danish referendum and the wafer-thin majorities in the French referendum as well as in the United Kingdom House of Commons, have had the effect of delaying the original time-frame envisaged in the Treaty. However, at the recent Edinburgh Summit, there were some positive developments towards restoring the Treaty to the original course envisaged by its signatories.

In examining the far-reaching international legal implications, arising from the Maastricht Treaty, it is important, particularly for those states outside the European Community membership, to study the extent to which the Treaty seeks to modify established principles of International Law and the legal consequences arising from such changes, in the conduct of international relations with member states of the European Community.

A secondary aspect which is of significance from the legal point of view, would be the changes which the Maastricht Treaty seeks to effect on established institutional structures within the European Community, such as the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice.

Structure of the Treaty

The Maastricht Treaty comprises three principal segments. viz: (i) an Economic and Monetary Union; (ii) a political union; and (iii) reforms of the existing structure of the Community.

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