THEREFORE, THE ECSC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE,

— notes that the Commission's energy tax proposal is not appropriate for any of the objectives which are quoted as the reasons behind the proposal. Instead of harmonizing taxation, fresh distortions are introduced, in competition between energy sources and between national economies, for example. The competitiveness of energy-intensive industry is threatened, and employment and growth in the European Union will decline further. The shift of production to countries which have lower tax burdens will bring about a deterioration in the overall CO_2 balance,

— would point out that additional taxes would increase the costs of steel production and have a lasting negative effect on the competitiveness of the European steel industry on world markets. Such a step would do nothing to help the environment,

— would remind the Commission of the energy policy aims set out in the White Paper, namely to reconcile security of supplies, protection of the environment and cost effectiveness. The proposed energy tax would call into question the balanced energy mix and, in particular, disadvantage coal, which is the basic indigenous source of energy,

— would point out that the coal and steel industries are conscious of their responsibility towards the environment. The great successes in all environmental spheres are evidence of this. Coal and steel will continue their efforts in the future as well, if they are not prevented from doing so by taxation. Voluntary commitments are to be preferred to fiscal measures,

— notes that the climate issue must be tackled by a wide-ranging technology offensive. Coal technologies must be further developed and applied, including, in particular, in those countries which have lower standards. The measures already set up to achieve these aims must be reinforced. The introduction of an energy tax would be counterproductive,

— firmly opposes the presented proposal and would encourage the Commission to make the introduction of an energy tax in the European Union dependent on the introduction of measures with similar effect in the other industrial countries which are the European Union's main competitors, in particular the OECD countries. Only if measures are introduced on both sides can the negative consequences of the European Union introducing energy taxes unilaterally be avoided, or at least limited.

RESOLUTION OF THE ECSC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON THE RESEARCH FUND DECIDED ON AT THE AMSTERDAM EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF 16 JUNE 1997

(adopted unanimously at the 337th session of 10 October 1997)

(97/C 356/04)

1. THE ECSC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

— refers to the resolution of the European Council on growth and employment adopted at the meeting of the European Council on 16 and 17 June 1997 in Amsterdam [1],

— refers to its memoranda on matters connected with the expiry of the ECSC Treaty in 2002 [2],

reiterates below the main points of its position regarding the research fund it has now been decided to set up.

2. THE ECSC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

— takes as its starting point the expiry of the ECSC Treaty in 2002,

— points out that the willingness of the coal and steel industries to forego their own regulatory structure on expiry of the Treaty is combined with the urgent wish for a careful assessment to be made of which aspects of coal and steel policy have proved successful and which instruments are needed to ensure the continuation of a succesful Community policy,

— draws attention to the fact that all the participants now agree that collaborative ECSC research is one of the essential elements to be maintained beyond the expiry of the Treaty,

— points to the following reasons for this opinion:

[1] OJ C 236, 2. 8. 1997, p. 3.

[2] OJ C 206, 11. 8. 1995, p. 7, OJ C 334, 8. 11. 1996, p. 3 and OJ C 220, 19. 7. 1997, p. 12.

— collaborative research is highly effective, especially with regard to the opening up and consolidation of new markets,

— it has led to a division of the work of the research institutes that has crossed all the internal borders of the European Union, thus preventing an unnecessary and costly overlap of activities, without, however, eliminating competition between ideas relating to both technical and social aspects,

— it has led to fruitful cooperation in the field of research between the coal and steel producers and consumers, processors and suppliers,

— it has promoted an intensive exchange between the scientific world on the one hand and the research and development departments of undertakings on the other whereby, particularly for social research, representatives of both workers and experts were involved,

— it has made it possible, even in periods of low profitability and of social crisis, to continue with research and development without interruption,

— it has provided the necessary conditions for the launching of research projects that promised results not just in the short term but also projects in which only medium or long-term successes were to be expected.

3. THE ECSC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

is convinced that ECSC collaborative research can continue to be of great value in the future, for the following reasons:

— technical progress is dependet on a high level of material research and optimum use of energy,

— the effects on the labour market are considerable. Highly developed research secures and creates and creates jobs in both areas,

— there are currently some 300 000 workers employed in the European steel industry. The processing of steel provides 15 million people with jobs,

— the coal industry employs approximately 150 000 workers and a highly developed research effort is essential, particularly for the use of coal in energy production,

— these activities have considerable relevance to the environment,

— ECSC collaborative research will continue in the future to require a solid material basis.

It is therefore of great importance to ensure appropriate use of ECSC reserves, which have been built up from the levy applied to both industries independent of their profitability and which constituted a special European tax with no equivalent in any other field of European Union policy.

4. THE ECSC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

recommends in these circumstances that the Council of Ministers of the European Union, in forming its opinion of the future use of reserves and the interest accruing on them, should take account of the following key points:

— the ECSC reserves available should be administered with the expiry of the Treaty in 2002 independently of the general European Union budgetary appropriations. The transfer to an independent foundation run jointly not only by the European Commission and the European Parliament but also by representatives of the coal and steel industries and their employees, consumers and dealers, would be a suitable scheme. However, other forms of special administration of ECSC reserves can be considered,

— the investment of money from the ECSC reserves and any other voluntary contributions from the industry should be determined according to the principle of optimizing returns, i.e. aiming at the highest possible returns with the highest possible level of security. The use of assets as a guarantee for risks incompatible with these principles should not be considered,

— the full returns on such investment minus the administrative costs involved should be used for the benefit of technical and social coal and steel research. The branches upstream and downstream in each industry should be considered on equal terms, as has long been the tradition in the ECSC,

— in the distribution of returns between coal and steel research projects, a ratio should be determined based, among other criteria, on the level of contributions from the two industries to the total proceeds of the levy over the duration of the ECSC Treaty,

finally draws attention to the fact that the decision to be taken by the European Commission and the Council of Ministers on the use of the reserves and the income from the should in any event take account of the purpose for which they are earmarked, as laid down in the ECSC Treaty.