THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, in particular Article 100c(3) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament,

Whereas Article 100c(3) of the Treaty requires the Council to adopt measures relating to a uniform format for visas before 1 January 1996;

Whereas the introduction of a uniform format for visas is an important step towards the harmonization of visa policy; whereas Article 7a of the Treaty stipulates that the internal market shall comprise an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of persons is ensured in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty; whereas this step is also to be regarded as forming a coherent whole with measures falling within Title VI of the Treaty on European Union;

Whereas it is essential that the uniform format for visas should contain all the necessary information and meet very high technical standards, notably as regards safeguards against counterfeiting and falsification; whereas it must also be suited to use by all the Member States and bear universally recognizable security features which are clearly visible to the naked eye;

Whereas this Regulation only lays down such specifications as are not secret; whereas these specifications need to be supplemented by further specifications which must remain secret in order to prevent counterfeiting and falsification and which may not include personal data or references to such data; whereas powers to adopt further specifications should be conferred on the Commission;

Whereas, to ensure that the information referred to is not made available to more persons than necessary, it is also essential that each Member State should designate not more than one body having responsibility for printing the uniform format for visas, with Member States remaining free to change the body, if need be; whereas, for security reasons, each Member State must communicate the name of the competent body to the Commission and the other Member States;

Whereas, to be effective, this Regulation should apply to all visas covered by Article 5; whereas Member States should be free also to use the uniform visa format for visas which can be used for purposes other than those covered by Article 5 provided differences visible to the naked eye are incorporated to make confusion with the uniform visa impossible;

Whereas, with regard to the personal data to be entered on the uniform format for visas in accordance with the Annex hereto, compliance should be ensured with Member States’ data-protection provisions as well as with the relevant Community legislation,

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:
Article 1

Visas issued by the Member States in conformity with Article 5 shall be produced in the form of a uniform format (sticker). They shall conform to the specifications set out in the Annex.

Article 2

1. Further technical specifications for the uniform format for visas relating to the following shall be established in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 6(2):

(a) additional elements and security requirements including enhanced anti-forgery, counterfeiting and falsification standards;
(b) technical standards and methods to be used for the filling in of the uniform visa.

2. The colours of the visa sticker may be changed in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 6(2).

Article 3

1. The specifications referred to in Article 2 shall be secret and not be published. They shall be made available only to bodies designated by the Member States as responsible for printing and to persons duly authorized by a Member State or the Commission.

2. Each Member State shall designate one body having responsibility for printing visas. It shall communicate the name of that body to the Commission and the other Member States. The same body may be designated by two or more Member States for this purpose. Each Member State shall be entitled to change its designated body. It shall inform the Commission and the other Member States accordingly.

Article 4

1. Without prejudice to the relevant more extensive provisions concerning data protection, an individual to whom a visa is issued shall have the right to verify the personal particulars entered on the visa and, where appropriate, to ask for any corrections or deletions to be made.

2. No information in machine-readable form shall be given on the uniform format for visas unless it also appears in the boxes described in points 6 to 12 of the Annex, or unless it is mentioned in the relevant travel document.