



FEDERAL PARLIAMENT OF BELGIUM

Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the EU Brussels, 4 – 5 April 2011

Topic: Parliamentary scrutiny of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

PRESIDENCY PROPOSAL

Comments by Italy's Chamber of Deputies

The EU Speakers Conference will take place on 4 and 5 April 2011 in the Belgian Federal Parliament in Brussels.

Following the conclusions of the previous conference (Stockholm, 14-15 May 2011), the Belgian Presidency proposes the following regarding the organization of inter-parliamentary scrutiny of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

The national Parliaments and the European Parliament are invited to bring forward their remarks to the Belgian Presidency no later than Monday **14 March 2011**.

On the basis of these remarks, the Belgian Presidency will draft a compromise text which it will submit to the EU Speakers Conference.

On 15 September 2010 the Chamber of Deputies unanimously approved a motion on the initiative to establish an interparliamentary Conference for European Foreign, Security and Defence Policy. On 16 September 2010 the Senate approved a nearly identical motion.

The comments of the Chamber of Deputies are based also on the content of those motions.

Proposal:

1. An Inter-parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is set up. It is composed of delegations of the national Parliaments of the EU Member States and the European Parliament.
2. Each national parliamentary delegation shall consist of four members¹.
3. The total number of delegates from the European Parliament shall not exceed one third² of the members of the Conference³.
4. Each national Parliament of a candidate Member State may be represented by an observer.

The Conference should replace and incorporate the existing Conferences of Foreign Affairs Committee Chairs and Defence Committee Chairs.

As regards the number of members of the Conference, the number of members of the European Parliament proposed by the Belgian Presidency seems excessive, especially in the light of previous experience, such as the COSAC.

The proposal to set the number of representatives of each national parliament at 4 is acceptable.

The members of the delegations of the national parliaments should be selected on a meeting-by-meeting basis, in order to avoid turning the Conference into a permanent assembly (as that of the WEO was). The model used for the interparliamentary conferences would be appropriate.

5. The Conference shall have its seat in the European Parliament in Brussels. Meetings shall be organized twice a year in Brussels or in the country holding the rotating Council Presidency. Extraordinary meetings shall be held when deemed necessary or urgent.

¹ I.e. 108 members representing the parliaments of the 27 Member States.

² I.e. 54 members representing the European Parliament.

³ I.e. a total of 162 members.

The Chamber of Deputies agrees with this proposal and emphasizes that, wherever the meetings are held, simultaneous interpretation should be available in all EU languages.

6. The meetings shall jointly be presided over by the national Parliament of the Member State holding the rotating Council Presidency and the European Parliament.

The Chamber of Deputies agrees with this proposal.

7. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union shall be invited to the meetings of the Conference in order to set out the outlines and strategies of the common foreign and defence policy of the Union.

The Chamber of Deputies considers this point to be especially important.

8. The Conference may express opinions.

The Chamber of Deputies feels that the Conference should not formulate opinions but should instead only adopt consensus conclusions that are not binding for the parliaments.

9. The secretariat of the Conference shall be provided by the European Parliament.

The Chamber of Deputies feels that the Conference should have a streamlined operational structure, composed of officials from the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the Troika Member States, or at least the parliament of the country holding the Presidency.

10. The Conference shall approve its rules of procedure and working methods on the basis of the aforementioned principles.

The Chamber of Deputies agrees that the Conference should approve its rules of procedure, once its operational principles have been established.