



# EU Speakers' Conference

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Stockholm, 14-15 May 2010

## Presidency Conclusions

SVERIGES   
RIKSDAG 

## Introductory remarks

1. The Conference met in Stockholm on 13–15 May 2010. The Speakers (or their representatives) of 30 chambers from 24 member states of the European Union, as well as the President of the European Parliament, participated in this Conference. The Speakers of the parliaments of three candidate countries for membership also attended the Conference.
2. Their Majesties King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia received the Speakers and Secretaries-General of parliaments on 14 May.
3. After the opening address by Speaker of the Riksdag Mr Per Westerberg, the Conference debated *The Lisbon Treaty and Interparliamentary Cooperation*. The theme was addressed on the basis of three topics:
  - a. The topic “The European Commission and National Parliaments” was introduced by Mr Maroš Šefčovič, Vice President of the European Commission with responsibility for inter-institutional relations.
  - b. Opening remarks on the topic “Fora for Interparliamentary Cooperation” were given by Ms Theresa Cunillera, Deputy Speaker of the Spanish Congress of Deputies, Mr Gianfranco Fini, Speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and Mr Jean Bizet, Chairman of the Committee for European Affairs in the French Senate.
  - c. The topic “Challenges and Expectations for Future Interparliamentary Cooperation” was introduced by Mr Per Westerberg, Speaker of the Riksdag, followed by observations by Mr Přemysl Sobotka, President of the Czech Senate.
4. *New technologies and Communication – Challenges for Parliaments* addressed such issues as the growing use of social media, the challenges and opportunities offered by these new forms of communication in contacts with the public, and how our democratic systems are affected by using these new communication channels. The theme was introduced by H.E. Mr Matthew W. Barzun, US Ambassador to Sweden and Mr Åke Grönlund, Professor of Information Science at Örebro University in Sweden. After the introductions, the keynote speakers Ms Ene Ergma, President of the Estonian Parliament and Mr Vannino Chiti, Deputy Speaker of the Italian Senate shared their views on how their parliaments respond to new forms of

communication and social media. The exchange of views that followed at the Conference was led by a moderator, Ms Mia Odabas, journalist.

5. The debate on *New technologies and Communication – Challenges for Parliaments* was supplemented with more practical demonstrations outside the plenary hall of ongoing developments in parliaments. A separate presentation of the experiences of the European Parliament was also given.
6. During the informal part of the meeting in the 1+1 format, the Speakers dealt with the two issues *Preparations for the World Conference of Speakers of Parliament* and *The Financial Crisis and Consequences for Parliamentary Budgets*.
7. A somewhat different procedure was applied for the proceedings, in order to develop the formula of the Conference. Short remarks and immediate reactions as a complement to prepared interventions were encouraged. During one item, a moderator facilitated the debate.
8. The plenary deliberations were open to the public and the press. It was also, for the first time, possible for the public to follow the open parts of the conference via the social network Twitter, [www.twitter.com/eusc2010](http://www.twitter.com/eusc2010). Followers could contribute to the discussion by including #eusc2010 in their Tweets.

## Presidency Conclusions

### **Concerning the Lisbon Treaty and Interparliamentary Cooperation**

1. The Speakers consider it important that national parliaments, while respecting their respective constitutional rules and parliamentary traditions, should be in a position to make full use of the possibilities the Treaty of Lisbon grants them to contribute actively to the good functioning of the European Union.

### **Regarding the European Commission and National Parliaments**

2. The Speakers underline the earlier initiatives and efforts of the European Commission to establish and improve the political dialogue with national parliaments, both with reference to monitoring the application of the principle of subsidiary and regarding the political content.
3. The Speakers note that increased contacts and dialogue between the Commission and national parliaments remain important for the general scrutiny of EU matters by

national parliaments and for their contribution to the good functioning of the Union. In this regard, they take note of the willingness of the European Commission to present its annual work programme in national parliaments.

## **Regarding Fora for Interparliamentary Cooperation**

### *Evaluation and Monitoring in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice*

4. The Speakers concur in the request of COSAC that the EU institutions should enter into dialogue with national parliaments when drafting and negotiating regulations dealing with parliamentary oversight of Eurojust and Europol, and that national parliaments should be given reasonable time to express their views. The Speakers welcome the announced consultation document from the Commission in this regard.
5. The Speakers consider that an interparliamentary meeting, in an appropriate format ensuring adequate representation, preferably by the parliamentary committees or bodies responsible for issues concerning the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, should be arranged on the oversight mechanisms as part of the consultation process regarding the Europol and Eurojust regulations. The Speakers ask the incoming EUSC Presidency to contribute to preparations for such a meeting.

### *Future Parliamentary Scrutiny of European Security and Defence Policy*

6. Given the special nature of the common security and defence policy (CSDP) and the role of national parliaments in the smooth functioning of the European Union, the Speakers stress the fundamental role of national parliaments in the future parliamentary scrutiny of the common foreign and security policy including the CSDP.
7. The Speakers ask the incoming EUSC Presidency to take the discussion forward on this basis, with a view to reaching an agreement at the next meeting of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments.

### *The Future Role of COSAC*

8. Following Article 9 of the Protocol on the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union, the Speakers note that Article 10 of this Protocol opens the possibility for a discussion concerning the future role and composition of the conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs [COSAC]. In this regard,

they concur that the Treaty of Lisbon's provisions imply a more general approach than before to interparliamentary cooperation.

9. Given that EU matters are increasingly on the agenda of the specialised committees as effective scrutiny and implementation often require their specialist competence, the Speakers consider that political debates on specific issues or themes are best held in meetings or other contacts involving the relevant committees. In this context, they highlight that contacts between specialised committees should be developed and strengthened. Concerning the future role of the conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs [COSAC], the Speakers will await the results of the internal discussion of COSAC before drawing conclusions.

## **Regarding Challenges and Expectations for Future Interparliamentary Cooperation**

### *Coordination in the Planning of Interparliamentary Cooperation*

10. The Speakers consider networking, regular contacts and cooperation between the EU parliaments important for the parliaments' ability to scrutinise the work of their respective governments on EU matters, which is in turn essential for the legitimacy of the Union's decisions.
11. For intensified interparliamentary cooperation to be conducted in an efficient manner, the Speakers consider that improved coordination of interparliamentary activities within the EU is important. The Speakers stress the importance of developing established structures to meet future needs in interparliamentary cooperation. Overlapping meetings or debates should be avoided. In this regard, the Speakers have taken note of discussions held by their Secretaries-General concerning an extended "trio" formation as the most appropriate base for coordination and planning. This formation would address issues relating to the format of organisation as well as coordination of meetings held on an ad hoc basis.
12. The Speakers ask the incoming EUSC Presidency to further explore the proposal to schedule regular conferences for parliamentary committees dealing with European affairs, foreign affairs and defence as well as justice and home affairs in cooperation with the European Parliament. They also ask the incoming EUSC Presidency to elaborate on how to strengthen links between the different Council constellations and national parliaments.

13. The Speakers acknowledge the important work of the Brussels representatives and their valuable contribution to the informal exchange of information including on subsidiarity.
14. The Speakers encourage all initiatives aimed at establishing standards for digital data and documents, so as to make information on the activities of parliaments and EU institutions more easily accessible and transparent, and entrust the IPEX Board with this task.
15. The Speakers take note of the declaration of cooperation of the next trio – Poland/Denmark/Cyprus – signed in Stockholm on 14 May.

*Revision of the Guidelines for the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments*

16. The work of the Conference of Speakers is conducted in accordance with the Guidelines for the Conference of Presiding Officers, adopted at the Conference in Rome in September 2000. The Speakers note that the Guidelines have been complemented by separate accords and practices since their adoption. The Speakers underline the necessity of an update of the present Guidelines within the debate on interparliamentary cooperation as a consequence of the Treaty of Lisbon.
17. The Speakers commend the adoption of the revised Guidelines – “The Stockholm Guidelines for the Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments” – and believe that the Conference has made a valuable contribution to the revision, helping to increase visibility in how the Conference operates by bringing the Guidelines up to date and codifying complementary accords and practices so as to contribute to effective interparliamentary cooperation within the Union (enclosed).

**Concerning New Technologies and Communication – Challenges for Parliaments**

18. The Speakers acknowledge that technical developments in society can facilitate greater public participation and involvement in parliamentary work. In this regard, they welcome future exchanges of experiences as well as discussions relating to new forms of communication and their impact on parliaments.
19. The Speakers encourage the use of new technologies for meetings of the Conference as well as for other interparliamentary meetings. In this regard, the Speakers ask the incoming EUSC Presidency to further explore the use of videoconferences as a

means of communication between parliaments to be followed up at the next meeting of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments.

### **Regarding preparations for the World Conference of Speakers of Parliament**

20. The Conference debated the draft declaration of the World Conference of Speakers in July in Geneva. The focus of the World Conference of Speakers should be on the main topics on the agenda, such as the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the challenges of the global economic and financial crisis etc. At the same time, the Speakers supported the debate that has started inside the IPU about its structure, its further democratisation and its cooperation with the United Nations. A broad majority of Speakers were in favour of deleting the paragraphs dealing with the role of the IPU (section D) in this document. Several Speakers are not in a position to endorse them for constitutional reasons. The Conference authorised the presiding Speaker Mr Westerberg to inform the President of the IPU.

### **The Financial Crisis and Consequences for Parliamentary Budgets**

21. The Speakers had a valuable exchange of views on the current financial situation and shared experiences on the consequences for parliaments.

### **Incoming EUSC Presidency**

22. On behalf of the Belgian Parliament, Mr Geert Versnick, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives, invited the Speakers to the next Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments in Brussels on 3-5 April 2011 and the Secretaries-General to a preparatory meeting on 16-17 January 2011.