

EU Speakers' Conference, Stockholm, 14-15 May 2010
Challenges and Expectations for Future Interparliamentary Cooperation on 14 May
Introduction by Speaker Per Westerberg, the Swedish Parliament

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Dear Colleagues,
Dear friends,

When we met in December last year, we identified the initial priorities and formats for the continued process on interparliamentary cooperation in the era of the Lisbon Treaty. Following the December meeting, we launched the IPEX Parliamentary Forum on the Lisbon Treaty in January this year.

We will soon resume the discussions initiated in December and continue with a general debate, but let me first report on the state of play and make a few comments on a couple of suggestions we have received.

At the preparatory meeting on 8 March, the Secretaries-General agreed on some initial issues of priority.

The meeting of the Secretaries-General concluded that the issue of coordination in the planning of inter-parliamentary meetings should focus on the role of the EU trio presidency.

In order to strengthen continuity between consecutive trios and the connection with the EU Speakers' Conference, the planning coordination process should be managed by an extended "trio-plus" formation. That is the three national Parliaments of the member states sharing the incoming Trio Presidency, together with the European Parliament and the first EUSC Presidency Parliament in the trio to follow, should elaborate and present a plan for the interparliamentary activities during their Presidency period.

I consider it important to ensure continuity in the planning process. The link between consecutive trios as well as the EUSC Presidency is therefore of value.

Colleagues,

We need a clear platform for our cooperation. The background paper on a revision of the Guidelines for the Conference of Speakers was posted on the IPEX forum in early April. The Belgian Senate, the Irish Parliament, the Hungarian Parliament, the UK House of Lords and Portuguese Parliament responded and suggested adjustments. Taking into account the suggested adjustments, I am putting forward a revised proposal for amendment of the guidelines, in accordance with the present guidelines.

The scope for revision has been limited, primarily aiming to increase visibility in how the Conference operates, while keeping the present structure and wording as far as possible.

Nevertheless, I still think it is important to increase visibility in how the Conference operates by bringing the guidelines up to date and codifying complementary accords and practices reached during the past decade. You received this morning an annotated proposal for amendments concerning the revision of the Guidelines.

I look forward to your reflections and comments on the proposal. I also hope that we can reach a conclusion regarding the guidelines.

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At the December meeting, we also identified interparliamentary cooperation regarding the area of freedom, security and justice as an issue of priority for debate. And I am pleased that we have addressed the issue of the involvement of parliaments in the drafting of regulations on parliamentary participation regarding Europol and Eurojust, and reached some conclusions regarding the future process.

Friends,

I do not regard our meeting today as the end of the debate. It would be premature to draw final conclusions at this stage. We need to continue discussions, to gain more experience of the new role of parliaments, to proceed by trial and error and to let things come to maturity.

So, when looking ahead to the rest of our meeting as a pit stop in the debate, we should focus on the issues where it is possible to reach some results among us today.

I, for my part, believe that the Ipex forum has led to a systematic exchange of information, but this new method now needs to be evaluated. Since the Swedish Presidency of the EU Speakers' Conference is drawing to a close, we have to leave that task to our Belgian friends.

I now hope that we can share our views on these issues, but also exchange expectations for future cooperation and address challenges in that context.

Before I open the floor for debate I will give the floor to Mr Přemysl Sobotka, President of the Czech Senate.

Please colleague, you have the floor...