

EU Speakers' Conference, Stockholm, 14-15 May 2010
Welcoming Address on 14 May by Speaker Per Westerberg, the Swedish Parliament

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Dear colleagues,
Dear friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all, from the whole of Europe, to Stockholm and to this conference.

You are also very welcome to the Riksdag and our plenary hall, and I look forward to two very fruitful and interesting days.

During this first session, we will focus on the consequences of the Treaty of Lisbon for national parliaments and for cooperation between parliaments.

The meeting here in darkest December last year was the starting point for our discussions regarding cooperation.

Since then we have exchanged ideas and identified issues that need to be addressed through an open process of deliberation carried out on a designated forum on IPEX. You have all received a progress report on the IPEX forum debate on interparliamentary cooperation. Later today we will consider the different issues addressed on the forum, included in the progress report.

Colleagues,
We have also discussed the format and working methods of the EU Speakers' Conference.

We tested a working-group format last time, and later this afternoon we will discuss the challenges and possibilities of new forms of media such as Twitter, Facebook and blogs. Technical developments in society can pave the way for greater public participation and involvement – for those who are willing and able to use them.

How technical developments can be used to increase participation and communication between politicians and citizens is one question we will address, and a few parliaments will be demonstrating examples of how they use new channels of communication at a number of stations just outside the plenary hall.

This will, I hope, provide an opportunity to examine and obtain information about the various parliaments' ways of using new technologies.

Also, we have tried to provide a basis for the last part of the afternoon session in a way that will inspire and show possibilities. We have included a panel of external experts during this part of the conference and a moderator to give us input on how our democratic systems are affected by the use of these new communication channels. It is also possible for you to follow the Twitter-feed created for this conference, live outside in the Chamber Foyer.

I hope that the conference as a whole will serve as a forum for discussion and that each one of you takes the opportunity to give your view on the various topics on the agenda.

As for the proceedings I foresee no formal speeches but interventions and short remarks. I think we will have a more vivid debate that way. Colleagues wishing to intervene in the debates are to fill in the "Request for the floor-form". For introductions and key note speeches I will welcome colleagues up to the podium. And if you wish to make a short remark, which I

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hope you will, to any intervention, just press the "Request the floor-button". Short remarks and questions are made from your seat.

Colleagues,

During the informal part of the meeting on Saturday, we will discuss preparations for the world conference of Speakers of Parliament. For instance, we need to focus on the proposal to reform the IPU into a treaty-based organisation.

There will also be time to discuss other matters on the Geneva agenda.

We will conclude the informal part with a tour de table where we exchange experiences of the financial crisis and the consequences for parliamentary budgets.

But I will not say too much about the discussions that are soon to take place.

Instead let me, once again, wish you all welcome to Stockholm, the Riksdag and this conference.

Now I will give the floor to Mr Maroš Šefčovič, Vice President of the European Commission. He will tell us more about the Commission's view on the political dialogue with national parliaments and discussions on subsidiarity and information exchange, as well as the future plans for evaluation and monitoring in the area of freedom, security and justice.