



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)

Overview of the Responses to the Belgian Presidency Proposal

On 25 February 2011, the Belgian Presidency proposal relating to the parliamentary scrutiny of the CFSP and the CSDP was forwarded to the national parliaments and the European Parliament. In that correspondence, the members were requested to transmit their observations and amendments to the Presidency by 14 March 2011.

On 23 March 2011, formal and informal responses had arrived from the following assemblies:

Spain (Senado),	Cyprus,
Belgium (Chambre des représentants and Sénat),	Bulgaria,
Austria (Nationalrat and Bundesrat),	Estonia,
Finland,	France (Sénat),
Poland, (Senat and Sejm),	Hungary,
Ireland (Dáil Éireann and Senead Éireann),	Latvia,
Italy (Camera dei Deputati and Senato),	Lithuania,
Netherlands (Eerste Kamer and Tweede Kamer),	Luxembourg,
Czech Republic (Poslanecká Snemovna and Senát),	Greece,
United Kingdom (Commons and Lords),	Portugal,
Sweden,	European Parliament

The following 11 assemblies have not made their point of view known: Germany (Bundestag and Bundesrat), Denmark, Spain (Congreso de los Diputados), France (Assemblée nationale), Malta, Romania (Camera Deputatilor and Senat), Slovakia and Slovenia (Drzavni Zbor and Drzavni Svet).

This overview lists the points on which there is a consensus as well as those on which there are different views. However, proposals that are supported by only one parliamentary assembly are not included in this note.

a. General Observations

The Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the European Union proceeds to establish a European Interparliamentary Conference on Foreign Affairs, Security and Defence.

The Conference will replace the Conference of Foreign Affairs Committee Chairs (COFACC) and the Conference for Chairs of Parliamentary Defence Committees (CODAC).

The Conference will work in close collaboration with the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC).

b. Scope of the Conference

The purpose of the Conference will be to examine all matters concerning the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy.

The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will submit a report to the Conference on the CFSP and the CSDP. The President of the European Council, the members of the national governments, the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the Council and any other relevant body for these matters may also be heard.

The Conference may express opinions and adopt conclusions. These are not binding on the Parliaments of the European Union.

c. Composition of delegations

The Conference shall consist of delegations from the national parliaments of the European Union and the European Parliament. Each delegation shall consist of six members. In bicameral systems, each assembly shall designate three members.

This proposal is supported by nineteen parliamentary assemblies: Austria (2), Bulgaria, Czech Republic (2), France (Sénat), Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands (2), Poland (Senat), Portugal, Spain (Senado), Ireland (2) and the United Kingdom (2).

Minority Viewpoint 1:

The delegation of each national parliament shall consist of four members and that of the European Parliament of fifty-four members.

This proposal is supported by three parliamentary assemblies: Belgium (2) and the European Parliament. The parliament of Italy (2) supports a similar position but recommends a lower number of representatives of the European parliament.

d. Delegation members

Each Parliament shall compose its delegation according to its own rules. The delegation shall preferably consist of members who are specialists in foreign affairs, defence and European affairs.

This proposal is supported by eight parliamentary assemblies: France (Sénat), Lithuania, Portugal, Netherlands (2), Poland (Senat) and the United Kingdom (2). It is also in line with the conclusions of the COSAC meeting of October 2010.

Minority Viewpoint 1:

Each Parliament shall compose its delegation according to its own rules. The delegation shall preferably consist of members who are specialists in foreign affairs and defence.

This proposal is supported by five parliamentary assemblies: Czech Republic (2), Latvia, Luxembourg and Spain (Senado).

e. Observer Status

The Parliaments of EU candidate countries shall be invited to the meetings as observers. The participation of other interested national parliaments is governed by the rules of procedure of the Conference.

This proposal is supported by seventeen parliamentary assemblies: Belgium (2), Bulgaria, Estonia, France (Sénat), Italy (2), Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands (2), Poland (Senat), Portugal, the United Kingdom (2) and the European Parliament.

f. Venue for the Meetings

The Conference shall meet in the capital of the country holding the rotating Council Presidency.

This proposal is supported by eighteen parliamentary assemblies: Austria (2), Belgium (2), Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland (2), Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg¹, Poland (Senat), Portugal, Spain (Senado) and the European Parliament.

Minority Viewpoint 1:

The Conference shall meet in Brussels.

This proposal is supported by thirteen parliamentary assemblies: Austria (2), Bulgaria, Finland, France (Sénat), Greece, Hungary, Ireland (2), Netherlands (2) and the United Kingdom (2).

The majority of the parliaments concerned have no wish to organise the Conference in the European Parliament. Seven parliamentary assemblies are specifically opposed to this idea: Bulgaria, France (Sénat), Greece, Netherlands (2) and the United Kingdom (2).

¹ Exceptionally, the Conference may meet in the European Parliament in Brussels or Strasbourg

Minority Viewpoint 2:

The Conference shall meet in the European Parliament in Brussels.

This proposal is supported by seven parliamentary assemblies: Belgium (2), Finland, Italy (2), Spain (Senado) and the European Parliament.

g. Frequency of the Meetings

The Conference shall be organised twice a year.

This proposal is supported unanimously.

h. Conference Chair

The Conference shall be chaired by the national parliament of the country holding the rotating Council Presidency.

This proposal is supported by ten parliamentary assemblies: Austria (2), Czech Republic (2), Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Luxembourg, Poland (Senat) and Portugal.

Minority Viewpoint 1:

The Conference shall be chaired by the national parliament of the country that is holding the rotating Council Presidency in consultation with the two other members of the troika.

This proposal is supported by nine parliamentary assemblies: Bulgaria, Finland, France (Sénat), Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands (2) and the United Kingdom (2).

Minority Viewpoint 2:

The Conference shall be chaired by the national parliament of the country holding the rotating Council Presidency in consultation with the European Parliament.

This proposal is supported by nine parliamentary assemblies: Belgium (2), Ireland (2), Italy (2), Hungary², Spain (Senado) and the European Parliament (Belgium and the European Parliament would welcome a formal co-presidency).

² In consultation with European Parliament and the two other members of the troika.

i. Conference Secretariat

The secretariat of the Conference shall be provided by the COSAC secretariat.

This proposal is supported by nine parliamentary assemblies: Austria (2), Ireland (2) Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania and Luxembourg.

Minority Viewpoint 1:

The secretariat of the Conference shall be provided by officials of the European Parliament and the national parliaments.

This proposal is supported by five parliamentary assemblies: Cyprus, Czech Republic (2) and Italy (2).

Minority Viewpoint 2:

The secretariat of the Conference shall be provided by the national parliament of the country holding the rotating Council Presidency.

This proposal is supported by three parliamentary assemblies: Poland (Senat), Portugal³ and Spain (Senado)⁴.

Minority Viewpoint 3:

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

This proposal is supported by three parliamentary assemblies: Belgium (2) and the European Parliament.

j. Language Regime

The language regime of the Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the European Union shall be applied.

This proposal receives broad support.

³ Together with the COSAC secretariat and the representatives of the national parliaments in Brussels.

⁴ Together with the Troika and the European Parliament

Minority Viewpoint 1:

The languages of the Conference shall be the official languages of the European Union.

This proposal is supported by three parliamentary assemblies: Italy (2) and Portugal.

k. Financing

The Conference shall settle the question of its financing in its rules of procedure.

The national parliaments are unanimous in demanding that the financing be kept as low as possible and that no additional financing be envisaged.

l. Rules of Procedure

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