



Copenhagen, 1 July 2006

CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF EU PARLIAMENTS PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

Preliminary remarks

- 1) The annual Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments took place in the Christiansborg Palace in Copenhagen on 30 June - 1 July 2006. The Speakers or their appointed designates from 37 parliamentary chambers from the 25 member states of the European Union, as well as the President of the European Parliament participated in the conference. The Speakers of the two acceding countries and two candidate countries as well as the Speakers from the parliaments of Norway and Liechtenstein were also in attendance. The Speaker of the Danish Parliament, Mr. Christian Mejdahl, chaired the proceedings.
- 2) The principal and first topic for discussion was interparliamentary cooperation and the future of Europe. Mr. Christian Mejdahl opened the conference by reminding the participants that the timing of the conference was very opportune – as it was taking place 14 days after the European Council had decided to prolong the period of reflection and to encourage national parliaments to strengthen cooperation within the framework of the Conference of European Affairs Committees (COSAC) when monitoring the principle of subsidiarity.
- 3) The Prime Minister of Denmark, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, introduced the subject of the future of Europe. The Prime Minister outlined three linked issues, which he felt must be addressed by the EU: how can Europe deliver concrete

results to its citizens, what is the future of the Constitutional Treaty and what is the capacity of the EU to include new members? In his contribution, the Prime Minister outlined his strategy in meeting these challenges. First, he stated that Europe must promote growth and employment - and thereby social security. Concerning the future of Europe, the Prime Minister stressed that he was confident that the German Presidency and the subsequent presidencies would be able to find workable solutions. Finally, on the subject of enlargement, the Prime Minister confirmed that there could be no doubt that the enlargement process should continue, but he warned that there were limits to how swiftly and how far the EU could be enlarged if EU cooperation is to maintain its ability to provide solutions to the challenges facing Europe.

- 4) The Vice-President of the European Commission, Ms. Margot Wallström, presented a contribution on the future of Europe where she stressed the need for increased cooperation between the European Commission and national parliaments. Commissioner Wallström remarked that heightening the involvement of national parliaments could help to attune European policies more closely with diverse circumstances and help in their effective implementation. With regard to the Commission's reactions to comments from national parliaments concerning individual proposals, Commissioner Wallström noted that the Commission could very well change a proposal in the light of comments from national parliaments.
- 5) Following the presentation from Commissioner Wallström and the subsequent debate, the two appointed rapporteurs on the subject of the future of Europe, Mr. Christian Mejdahl and the representative of the Speaker of the French Senate, Mr. Hubert Haenel presented their reports. While Mr. Mejdahl stressed the need to strengthen interparliamentary cooperation, Mr. Haenel pointed to the dichotomy between Europe doing too much in some areas, and too little in others. Mr. Mejdahl and Mr. Haenel were in agreement that the existing treaty provisions on the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality should be better utilised.
- 6) The Speaker of the Austrian National Council, Dr. Andreas Khol and the President of the European Parliament Mr. Josep Borrell, presented a report to the conference on the outcome of the Joint Parliamentary Meeting on the Future of Europe held in the European Parliament on 8 - 9 May 2006. They both agreed that the forum had provided a useful platform for European parliamentarians to exchange ideas and best practices during the period of reflection. Mr. Khol and Mr. Borrell proposed that a new Joint Parliamentary Meeting on the future of Europe should be hosted by the European Parliament and the incoming Finnish Presidency on 4 - 5 December 2006. The Speaker of the Finnish Parliament Mr. Paavo Lipponen extended the formal invitation during his subsequent intervention. The President of the European Parliament, Mr. Josep

Borrell, stressed in particular, the importance of the active participation of all parliaments in the reform of the Treaties of the European Union.

- 7) In the afternoon of 30 June Mr. Christian Mejdahl announced that the IPEX website was officially open for the use and benefit of the national parliaments. Mr. Mejdahl pointed out that IPEX would help to increase transparency in the European Union and, more importantly, also contribute to the improvement of the work of national parliaments on European issues. He also stressed that the success of IPEX would be contingent on the commitments made by parliaments to update and use the website regularly.
- 8) Mr. Mejdahl noted the adoption of a set of guidelines prepared by the Danish Presidency concerning the "Calendar for Interparliamentary Cooperation", which elaborated on procedural and technical provisions concerning updating and maintaining the calendar. The calendar will henceforth be available on the IPEX website, under the authority of the parliament hosting the forthcoming Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments.
- 9) The second topic of debate was an exchange of information on the debates that had taken place in national parliaments on the Commission's Legislative and Work Programme. During his introductory remarks, Mr. Mejdahl noted that the Secretaries General had recommended beginning the future debate with the publication of the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy in March. Mr. Mejdahl suggested that the European Commission present the Annual Policy Strategy collectively to the national parliaments either within the framework of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments, during a meeting of COSAC or in a special interparliamentary meeting organized by the European Parliament and the parliament from the member state holding the current EU Presidency. Mr. Mejdahl suggested that the national parliaments could organise national debates, with the possible participation of parliamentary sectoral committees. According to the Danish Presidency, debate on the Annual Policy Strategy should culminate with the Commission's presentation of the ensuing Legislative and Work Programme in COSAC, to be followed by coinciding debates in national parliaments. However, certain Speakers cautioned the meeting that the recommendation of the Danish Presidency might not be fully implemented in their parliaments due to parliamentary and constitutional constraints.
- 10) The Deputy-Speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Giulio Tremonti, presented the findings of the working group on "Assistance to Parliaments of New and Emerging Democracies". Mr Tremonti encouraged the Speakers to follow up the concrete results of the working group and recommended that the incoming Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments Presidency act upon the conclusions contained in the Final Report.

- 11) The Speaker of the Norwegian Parliament, Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, presented a contribution on “the EU seen from the outside - why the EEA is a good alternative to the EU for Norway”.
- 12) The Speaker of the Danish Parliament closed the conference by presenting the conclusions of the Presidency.

Conclusions of the Presidency

Concerning the future of Europe

- 1) The Speakers noted the decision of the European Council to ask the incoming German Presidency to prepare a report during the first half of 2007, which would outline how cooperation within the European Union could be further developed. The Speakers recalled that the report would form the foundation for future decisions concerning the Constitutional Treaty made by the European Council during the French Presidency. The Speakers suggested that the views of national parliaments should be taken into consideration in the final report.
- 2) The Speakers noted that with the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty by Estonia and Belgium, the parliaments of 15 Member States had already approved the Constitutional Treaty and welcome this ongoing process as the Finnish Parliament was expected to ratify the treaty in the near future. The Speakers respected the right exercised by some parliaments to delay their ratification.
- 3) The Speakers welcomed the initiative of the Finnish Parliament and the European Parliament in organising a second Joint Parliamentary Meeting on the future of Europe that would include a debate on possible future developments of the European Union.
- 4) The Speakers noted that 18 member states had already ratified the accession treaty for Romania and Bulgaria. The Speakers are looking forward to welcoming Romania and Bulgaria into the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments as full members in the near future.

Concerning interparliamentary cooperation

- 5) The Speakers suggested that COSAC consider a discussion concerning strengthening cooperation on monitoring the principle of subsidiarity, as suggested by the European Council on 15 - 16 June, which may be reported to the next Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments in Bratislava in 2007.

- 6) The Speakers called on national parliaments to examine how cooperation on the monitoring of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality could be strengthened.
- 7) The Speakers called on the incoming Presidency of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments to organise a working group to examine how to improve interparliamentary cooperation. The Speakers agreed that the working group should be open to all EU parliaments and should define its own working methods. The working group was invited to prepare a report for the next Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments in Bratislava on the following subjects:
 - Can the Hague Guidelines be strengthened?
 - Can the coordination between the various forums for interparliamentary cooperation - including The Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments, COSAC, meetings of parliamentary sectoral committees and Joint Parliamentary Meetings hosted by the European Parliament and the national parliament of the member state holding the Presidency of the Council - be improved, and if so how?
 - Can the current scheme of appointing the Presidency of Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments be improved?
 - Can the national parliaments strengthen cooperation between national parliaments, the European Parliament and the European Commission?

Concerning IPEX

- 8) The Speakers warmly welcomed the official launch of the IPEX website. The Speakers looked forward to the concrete results and benefits the IPEX project would give national parliaments in improving of parliamentary scrutiny of EU policy.
- 9) The Speakers pointed to the importance of ensuring that information and documents were regularly uploaded onto the IPEX website.
- 10) The Speakers noted that the good cooperation between COSAC and IPEX should eliminate duplication of work.
- 11) The Speakers called on the European Commission to ensure the timely and efficient transmission of Commission documents to the IPEX database together with appropriate bibliographical information (meta-data), in order to enable the automatic creation of IPEX dossiers.

- 12) The Speakers called on the IPEX Board to initiate contacts with the Council in order to ensure the transmission of Council proposals in the second and third pillar to the IPEX website.

Concerning relations with the European Commission

- 13) The Speakers welcomed the European Commission's commitment to transmit legislative proposals direct to national parliaments on adoption, and the endorsement of this commitment by the European Council 15 – 16 June.
- 14) The Speakers welcomed the European Commission's encouragement to national parliaments to provide comments in connection with new legislative proposals and consultation documents.
- 15) The Speakers welcomed the request from heads of state or governments that the Commission should duly consider comments from national parliaments on legislative proposals and consultation documents with particular regard to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.
- 16) The Speakers encouraged the European Commission to send written responses to comments submitted by national parliaments concerning new legislative proposals or consultation documents.
- 17) The Speakers called on the European Commission to ensure the timely translation of legislative proposals and consultation documents in all the official Community languages and their transmission to national parliaments, so as to allow them to examine proposals and documents under the same conditions.
- 18) The Speakers requested that the European Commission consider engaging with national parliaments on important new proposals and programmes.

Concerning parliamentary debates on the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy and Legislative and Work Programme

- 19) With regard to the various parliamentary traditions and constitutional systems in the Member States, the Speakers encouraged national parliaments to scrutinize the Annual Policy Strategy and consult with the Commission on their findings. The Speakers also encouraged national parliaments to proceed with the experiment of holding a coinciding debate on the Legislative and Work Programme within one month of its publication, however with full respect for allowing national parliaments the ability to hold debates in a form that would appeal to citizens. The Speakers called on the Secretaries General to consider specific provisions for the Commission to present its Annual Policy Strategy and Legislative and Work Programme to national parliaments in 2007.

- 20) The Speakers called on the European Commission to improve the form of the Legislative and Work Programme, in order to facilitate the debates in national parliaments. In particular the Speakers called on the Commission to provide specific information, including references to impact assessments and summaries, on all priority and non-priority initiatives listed in the annexes and associated indicative lists. The Speakers requested that the Commission publish the annexes and indicative lists in all Community languages in a timely fashion.

Concerning transparency

- 21) The Speakers recalled that greater transparency in the European Union has been on the political agenda for more than a decade. In this respect, the Speakers welcomed the decision of the European Council to introduce a new overall policy on increased transparency in the work of the Council of Ministers.
- 22) The Speakers noted the conclusions of the European Council concerning a new overall policy towards transparency with approval and said that the new policy would open meetings for legislation adopted through the co-decision procedure. Furthermore, the Speakers recalled that the Commission's presentation of new legislation, other than that adopted through co-decision, should be open to the public. The Speakers called on the Council of Ministers to implement the new policy to the greatest extent possible.

Concerning the rationalizing of interparliamentary cooperation in Europe

- 23) The Speakers noted the work being carried out by the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) on the rationalization of interparliamentary cooperation in Europe, and looked forward to its conclusions.

Concerning assistance to parliaments of new and emerging democracies

- 24) The Speakers applauded the concrete results of the working group and recommended that the incoming Conference Presidency act upon the conclusions

contained in the final report. The Speakers called on the Danish and Slovak Presidencies to send the working group's final report to the European Parliament and European Commission.

- 25) The Speakers asked the Secretaries General to conclude the necessary agreements to follow up the aim of creating an efficient and cost-effective exchange of information between national parliaments, the European Parliament and the services of the European Commission within the framework of existing networks and tools at European and global level.
- 26) The Speakers asked the incoming Presidency of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments, in cooperation with the Danish and Italian Parliaments, to undertake whatever steps they deemed necessary in order to improve cooperation with the European Commission in this respect.

Transmission of the Conclusions

- 27) The Speakers called on the Danish Presidency to publish the Presidency conclusions on the Speakers' website and to transmit them to the President of the European Commission, the President in office in the Council and to the CO-SAC Troika.