

CONFERENCE OF THE SPEAKERS OF EU PARLIAMENTS

Copenhagen, 29 June - 1 July 2006

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President of the Italian Senate

(draft)

Mr President, distinguished colleagues,

The message Ms Margot Wallström conveyed to us is evidence that inter-parliamentary co-operation and direct dialogue between national representative assemblies and EU institutions have become well established.

The European construction process, once exceedingly focussed on the governmental side, is now characterised by a strong parliamentary dimension, whose development is to be seen as irreversible.

It is important that the Commission redouble its efforts to ensure that documents are transmitted to all parliaments simultaneously in each national language.

Only in this way will it be possible to safeguard the principle of language equality, as is clearly affirmed in the Treaties, and promote such timely and informed debate within EU Parliaments, as is necessary for the growth of a true public European space.

Our Conference is taking place at a particularly complex time for Europe.

I believe that the work done at the Convention, where for the first time our Parliaments have taken a leading role in the

European constitutional process, cannot and should not be forgotten.

Several proposals have been tabled on how to resume our path.

But in this search, I believe we should bear a guiding principle in mind.

A strong common effort is necessary to provide momentum to the fundamental part of the Treaty concerning institutional strengthening.

Without such strong governance Europe may not act effectively in a rapidly changing world environment.

I am truly convinced of this.

And so is the Italian Parliament which, by a virtually unanimous vote, was one of the first assemblies to ratify the Constitutional Treaty.

In this context, we should welcome the European Council's decision to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome with a solemn declaration in which each can reaffirm its commitment for the common European project. This declaration will be adopted in Berlin on 25 March 2007.

The Italian Parliament wishes to play a role, alongside the other EU Parliaments, to make sure that this anniversary marks a major political phase also for us, the representatives of the European peoples. Therefore the Italian Parliament is planning to organise a meeting in Rome ahead of this occurrence which would give us an opportunity to meet again on the eve of such an important event.

Giving new impulse to Europe anyway does not mean neglecting to pay heed to the concerns, to the message sent by those parts of the public opinion which, by saying “no” to the ratification of the Treaty, have triggered the current pause of reflection.

It is essential to listen to citizens and understand citizens, their expectations and their demands.

At the same time, they should be exhaustively informed on the benefits of Europe and receive adequate political responses.

At the meeting of 8-9 May, President Borrell and Speaker Kohl rightly called the attention of all EU Parliaments on four topics of key importance for the future of Europe.

These are concrete issues which have probably not been adequately addressed so far.

Present times call for effective institutions, but also demand that decisions be made with the broadest possible participation at political and social level and that Europe act as a democracy based on the primacy of citizens.

As a result, the principle of subsidiarity – the real corner stone of the European Union – will be strengthened.

Subsidiarity in the relations between the Union and its member states.

Subsidiarity also in the relations with Regions and other levels of local government, as was appropriately emphasized through the establishment of the partnership and the Committee of the Regions.

But subsidiarity also means concerted efforts of all European and national institutions to enlarge the borders of economic and social co-operation, and to enhance everyday responsibility of individual citizens, households, economic players – and their organisations – in a wide and open European context.

National and regional Parliaments directly derive from citizens and have always been their interlocutors of choice. As such, they have an important role to play also in this field.