

Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments Tallinn, 23-24 April 2018

Minutes

The Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments took place on 23–24 April 2018 at the Conference Center of Hilton Tallinn Park Hotel.

As per tradition, the meeting of the Presidential Troika (Slovakia, Estonia, Austria, and the European Parliament) took place ahead of the general meeting. The Presidential Troika discussed the amendments to the draft Conclusions, and agreed on a compromise text that was discussed and adopted on the second day of the Conference.

The following Minutes include a short overview of the keynote speeches and interventions. Full texts of a number of keynote speeches as well as video recordings of the whole conference can be found at the [website](#) of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Opening Session

Mr. **Eiki NESTOR**, President of the Riigikogu, welcomed the participants in Tallinn, and gave a [speech](#) which focused on the importance of the EU and NATO for a small country like Estonia. Mr. NESTOR explained that after regaining the national independence in 1991, the Estonians knew that in order to be free and to prosper, Estonia had to integrate with its friends and allies as much as possible. Mr. NESTOR described some of Estonia's achievements in the field of digital services and e-government. After sharing some ideas on the topics of the future of the EU and European defense and security, Mr. NESTOR concluded by saying that freedom can never be taken for granted, and that the European countries need to keep working together to protect their values and way of life.

In his [address](#), Mr. **Antonio TAJANI**, President of the European Parliament, introduced a series of debates on the future of the EU, which the European Parliament has launched. Mr. TAJANI expressed the aspiration to involve as many European political actors as possible in the debate on the future of the EU, and called for a closer interparliamentary cooperation. Mr. TAJANI stated that one of the most urgent challenges to the EU is posed by migration, and raised the idea of a genuine 'Marshall Plan' for Africa which should be drawn up and implemented. In terms of European defense, Mr. TAJANI highlighted the need for developing an industry and a European market which would take advantage of economies of scale and allow for greater interoperability. Mr. TAJANI ended his speech by calling his colleagues to join forces to ensure that as many people as possible would be able to cast their votes in the upcoming European elections.

Session I: Future of the EU

The three keynote speakers of the Session I on the future of the EU were Mr. **Marek KUCHCINSKI**, Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland; Mr. **Andrej DANKO**, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic; and Mr. **Francois DE RUGY**, President of the French National Assembly.

Mr. **KUCHCINSKI**, Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, started by saying that the overarching objective for the EU should be the democratic renewal of the Union, and added that while the Polish people see the positive aspects that the membership of the EU brings to them, they also recognize the need for reforms, and have pinpointed areas in which the EU could do better. Mr. KUCHCINSKI argued that the EU must be rooted in the political reality of its Member States as well as the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, and called for strengthening the role of national parliaments in the Union. Mr. KUCHCINSKI stated that there is proof of a shortage of democracy in the EU, and that the EU is fundamentally a union of sovereign states. He emphasized the importance of common values, as well as the protection of national identities, and returning to Europe's Christian roots.

Mr. **DANKO**, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, started his address by stating that only a sincere and open dialogue will help the EU to move forward. Mr. DANKO said that political dialogue is not held only by political parties but that media and social media have a big role in influencing the debates. Mr. DANKO noted that it is important to remember the lessons that Europe has learned in the past, and contended that the benefits of freedom should not be taken for granted. He further argued that the withdrawal of a country from the EU is an extraordinary precedent, and that the cohesion of the EU is undermined by unfair practices such as employing double standards in terms of food on the European market. Mr. DANKO stated that the EU needs to work together and that it is better off when it has charismatic leaders who could elevate the EU to be an equal partner to countries such as the U.S. and China.

Mr. **DE RUGY**, President of the French National Assembly, argued that Europe means common cultural and historic heritage, but is also turned towards the future. The EU countries cannot build a common future if they do not agree on the values that unite them. For Mr. DE RUGY, National and EU sovereignty are complementary, and the EU is the only way for European countries to avoid marginalization in the world. The time when European countries could enjoy the benefits of peace while decreasing their defense spending is over. Mr. DE RUGY maintained that the EU should be able to protect its interests, but also work together with other countries in the world. Discussions on the future of the EU in various different formats are important, and every country should be able to decide the proper speed of integration for themselves. Digital efforts and asylum policy are examples of issues in which Europe should stand united.

The keynote speeches were followed by 25 interventions.

Ms. **Maria Elisabetta ALBERTI CASELLATI**, President of the Italian Senate, evoked the words of Alcide De Gasperi about a common European home, and commended the EU for bringing the longest period of peace to Europe. Geopolitical threats and climate change are issues that need to be tackled at the EU level, all the while showing respect for the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The management of the European borders is a common task for the EU countries; effective solutions and internal and external solidarity on this issue are vital.

Mr. **Demetrios SYLLOURIS**, President of the House of Representatives of Cyprus, expressed his hope that a debate on the future of Europe would serve as a proof of the determination of parliamentarians to undertake efforts to create a safe and prosperous Europe for its citizens. Security has emerged as a major topic that the EU should tackle; eliminating democratic deficit should also be very high on EU's agenda.

Ms. **Maja GOJKOVIĆ**, President of the National Assembly of Serbia, argued that the numerous challenges that the EU is facing point to an increasing need for open dialogue, cooperation and solidarity. Serbia is participating in finding solutions to common problems, and is committed to making a valuable contribution to the EU. Enlargement is one of the most successful policies of the EU, and even though some measures and associated reforms are difficult, they serve the interests of the Serbian citizens. For Serbia, it was important to receive a clear timeline for EU accession in 2025.

Mr. **Pío GARCÍA-ESCUADERO**, President of the Senate of Spain, started by saying that history has taught the Europeans that building walls and being in isolation causes serious problems. All actors and parties that are against Spanish national unity, for example, those calling for the independence of Catalonia, undermine the very basis of the Spanish Constitution and the tradition of the rule of law. Legal action is taken against people who engage in such activities, and undermining democracy, human rights, and the rule of law is a threat for the whole Europe.

Mr. **Milan BRGLEZ**, President of the National Assembly of Slovenia, argued the EU has still not fully solved the identity crisis it found itself in a decade ago. While the EU was busy with saving the Eurozone, it forgot its fundamental purpose of providing dignified life for its citizens. The EU should do more than pay lip service to its fundamental values. The EU should move from a blueprint to action, focus on real people, and create a more competitive, social Europe.

Ms. **Ana Maria PASTOR**, President of the Congress of Deputies of Spain, said that Spain has experienced a significant modernization and increase in welfare since joining the EU in 1982. The EU was up to its task when Spanish unity was attacked through the call for independence of Catalonia. These actions should serve as a lesson to all the European countries to show how important it is to respect the rule of law and the Constitution. Young people are waiting for politicians to provide workable solutions to tackle issues like unemployment and security.

Mr. **Calin POPESCU-TARICEANU**, President of the Senate of Romania, contended that Europe is facing unprecedented and varied challenges, and that Brexit is one of them. The EU needs to continue to protect fundamental values, and the Union really is the best existing common instrument we have. Romania wants to play a positive role in the future of the EU, including through its Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2019. A multi-speed Europe might amplify the differences between Member States; instead, the EU should do more for equality.

Mr. **Alojz KOVŠČA**, President of the National Council of Slovenia, asserted that the EU is at a historical juncture, and a multi-speed Europe with a heavy reliance on coalitions of the willing would create inequality, and undermine the EU and its values. More should be done for transit states as well as countries of origin of migrants – the issue of migration needs a common response from the EU.

Mr. **Ivan BRAJOVIĆ**, President of the Parliament of Montenegro, started by saying that whatever the future structure and form of the EU would be, Western Balkans and Montenegro will be part of it. Working towards the accession to the EU is an encouraging process. Montenegro wants to contribute to a better future, and has made great progress despite having lived through some tragic events. The EU should respond positively to countries in which citizens support pro-EU politicians in elections, allow no shortcuts, and admit all the countries that are ready for the accession.

Ms. **Maria Edera SPADONI**, Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy, contended that the EU citizens are increasingly detached from the Union and perceive it as inward-looking and unable to respond

to their needs. It is necessary to have more contact with the citizens, and leave no state, no social group, no individual behind. Growth and employment are important, more EU efforts should be financed from the EU budget. European laws and rules need to be created through a process that involves citizens directly. National parliaments can and must play a more active role, and maintain a dialogue with the European Parliament and the Commission.

Ms. **Ankie BROEKERS-KNOL**, President of the Senate of the Netherlands, remarked that two years after the Brexit referendum, one can only wonder what triggered such results, and pointed out that since then, the Franco-German bond has been rekindled. Ms. BROEKERS-KNOL called upon the leaders of France and Germany to actively involve other leaders, and encouraged the Member States to take an active role in broader EU issues. The Netherlands is of the opinion that the 27 should not maintain all expenses at the present level, nor does the country favour taxes at the European level. Solidarity benefits all the EU citizens, and transparency in decision-making is of utmost importance.

Ms. **Claudette BUTTIGIEG**, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malta, asserted that an anti-EU sentiment is evident among the Europeans, but that the citizens should not be blamed for this, as it is the responsibility of politicians to explain the issues related to the EU. The scale and repercussions of Brexit will be truly unprecedented. Some people say that the EU is doing too much, others are upset that it is not doing enough. Politicians are responsible for helping all the citizens to be involved in all the debates, and to use their power to make a difference at the EU level.

Ms. **Paula RISIKKO**, Speaker of the Eduskunta, identified herself as a Euro-optimist and argued that while the Union is not perfect, it is always improving. The debate about the future of the EU is important, but essential matters such as security, jobs, and prosperity is what people really care about. The choices that people are facing are more fundamental than being pro- or anti-Europe. Not every problem needs to be solved at the EU level. Talking about real issues such as inequality and migration is important.

Mr. **Gordan JANDROKOVIĆ**, Speaker of the Parliament of Croatia, started by saying that Croatia will soon mark the 5-year anniversary of joining the EU, and that there has been a lot of discussion about what the membership has brought to Croatia. The common goal should be that the citizens would not be against the EU or indifferent about it, but would take an active part in its further development. The principle of equal treatment is important; the enlargement of the EU should be seen as an investment in the EU, and the stability in Europe.

Mr. **László KÖVÉR**, Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary, alluded to many previous speakers having talked about the idea of strong EU Member States, and declared that the Visegrád countries would like to see European cooperation take place between nation states. It is important to strengthen oversight in EU legal issues, allow parliaments to use 'red cards' (as a subsidiarity control mechanism), and understand the importance of family unity. The EU needs to regain control over its external borders and treat all the countries according to their merits.

Ms. **Olga ZRIHEN**, Vice-President of the Senate of Belgium, reminded the delegates that it is 13 months until European politicians will return the trust that EU citizens have placed in them. There are economic challenges, but the general situation is good, and it is important to remember the positive things that the EU offers to its Member States. Young people are building the future of Europe, they need to be offered new and different perspectives as they were *born* Europeans, while a majority of the current generation of politicians *became* Europeans.

Mr. **Nikolaos VOUTSIS**, Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament, argued that the previous crisis has showed some failures on the part of the EU, and the reinforcement of social nature of the EU is something that all the countries in the Southern part of the Union support. The European Social Pillar is crucial; social covenants need to take into account the differences between European economies. The role of the European Parliament and national parliaments has to be reinforced.

Mr. **Jorge LACÃO**, Vice-President of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, started by saying that 10 years have passed since the Lisbon Treaty, a symbol of a stronger EU that has been instrumental in overcoming several challenges. There is more that needs to be achieved, and this requires having the courage to make decisions and find the necessary instruments to implement these. Europe needs common actions, growing means and better distribution. Contribution to the MFF is crucial: the EU is an economic and monetary union, but it is also a union of common values.

Dr. **Wolfgang SCHÄUBLE**, President of the Bundestag (Germany), addressed the issue of subsidiarity by saying that in the globalized world, some things can be done by nation states, but if Europe does not want to become irrelevant, it needs pan-European institutions. We need to decide which issues are better tackled by institutions and which ones by national governments, but giving national parliaments a huge role will not improve EU's decision-making. Differentiation in the speed and intensity of integration should not be criticized as long as it is not exclusive and all countries are invited to join.

Mr. **Michael MÜLLER**, President of the Bundesrat (Germany), said that it was lovely to be in Estonia and to take the opportunity to learn about a digital country. It is important to think about the changing world in which some jobs will disappear, new jobs will emerge, and the digital agenda will have an impact on life, social security, and healthcare. Being in Estonia is also a good reminder that peace and freedom do not come for free and have to be fought for. For the EU, return to national polities would be a step back; there is a lot that the Union can achieve when nations work together.

Mr. **Gerard LARCHER**, President of the Senate of France, argued that the EU needs a new basis to manage the new challenges. The goal of the Rome Declaration was to create a political union. It is important to find an added value in the EU, and not forget the values of the founders of the EU. Economic growth and young people are important priorities; reviewing treaties would not be useful. There is only one Europe: creating different categories of Member States or leaving someone behind would not be good. The European Parliament and national parliaments need to cooperate more.

Mr. **Stanisław KARCZEWSKI**, Marshal of the Senate of Poland, said that every Member State wants the EU to be strong, but the Member States have different definitions of this strength. For Mr. KARCZEWSKI, a strong and agile EU is not one where EU institutions have the broadest powers and the Member States are treated as provinces. National governments have a stronger democratic mandate than the EU institutions. Poland firmly opposes multi-speed Europe, and believes that the EU has to serve the Member States, and not be their superior.

Mr. **Mars DI BARTOLOMEO**, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg, expressed his satisfaction that the Speakers are discussing the values that the political activities of the EU are based upon. But it also shows that there is cause for concern because it seems that the values are not the same across all the EU Member States. It is important not to let the EU institutions become a mess. We need to make a clear decision whether the EU is still united in its main values or whether the Member States establish their own values as they see fit.

Ms. **Ayşe Nur BAHÇEKAPILI**, Deputy Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, said that Turkey contributes to the solutions of various problems that the EU is facing, migration and security being two examples. Turkey is committed to joining the EU, but there are artificial obstacles preventing this. The EU needs Turkey to be a global power, and supporting the Western Balkans is in line with the effort to support Balkan integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. Turkey believes in the values of the EU and is part of Europe; it is not right to put candidate countries in different categories.

Ms. **Tsveta KARAYANCHEVA**, President of the National Assembly of Bulgaria, reminded her colleagues that Bulgaria is currently holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU, and the country celebrated its 10-year anniversary of joining the EU last year. Bulgaria clearly sees an added value in its EU membership and wants to make this value more pronounced and tangible for all the Member States, be they older or newer. In the context of Brexit, more integration is needed: it will help the EU develop horizontally. European integration would be incomplete without including the Western Balkans in the Union. External border protection and security should be reflected in the post-2020 MFF, cohesion policies should be continued.

Session II: European Security and Defense

The President of the Riigikogu, Mr. Eiki **NESTOR**, opened the session and introduced the speakers: Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, Ms. **Ināra MŪRNIECE**; President of the German Bundestag, Dr. **Wolfgang SCHÄUBLE**; and President of the Austrian National Council, Mr. **Wolfgang SOBOTKA**.

Ms. **Ināra MŪRNIECE**, Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, started by noting that during the Estonian presidency, significant progress was made in creating the European defense architecture. However, a new level of ambition is needed as the crises at Europe's borders force us to act to protect our societies. Ms. MŪRNIECE said her own country of Latvia welcomes the deepening of the EU defense cooperation and the launching of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), which will complement NATO. PESCO is a major step forward and now practical results are needed. Within PESCO, Latvia sees a particular value in military mobility projects, and closer EU cooperation in defense industry has many benefits. Speaking about cyber-defense and hybrid threats, she expressed her contentment that the EU-NATO practical cooperation is progressing, and stated that even more cooperation is needed to adapt to the digital age. Ms. MŪRNIECE touched upon the topics of the future of EU defense policy and the need for increased activities in strategic communication. She stressed that PESCO is valuable, and that although the European citizens support EU defense cooperation, further practical work is needed.

Dr. **Wolfgang SCHÄUBLE**, President of the German Bundestag, emphasized the need for collective security and a common foreign and security policy to face the new threats of the globalized world. There is an understanding in Europe that we must take greater responsibility for our own security; this is also one of the top priorities for the EU citizens. Despite this, EU community institutions are relatively powerless and there is no great readiness to share national sovereignty. Dr. SCHÄUBLE expressed his personal belief that there is a need for a European army. A large gap between the necessary and the feasible in European security and defense policy remains, but there have been significant achievements. There is a need to strengthen the role of national parliaments in implementing the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the German Bundestag is currently seeking enhanced rights to information in this field. Intensified cooperation between EU national parliaments and changing relevant laws can help in ensuring

sufficient parliamentary involvement in security and defense policy. It is crucial to clarify the kind of missions we collectively want to use our armed forces for, and define our common interests, priorities and strategies. Dr. SCHÄUBLE ended his speech by evoking the unique histories and diversity of European countries, but stressed the importance of making compromises and learning to think together.

Mr. **Wolfgang SOBOTKA**, President of the Austrian National Council, emphasized that European security and defense is one of the major issues in which we need more Europe as new threats have emerged and Europe needs to assume more responsibility for its own security. Security must be seen in a comprehensive way, and Europe needs means to protect its external borders and ensure stability and security in its neighborhood. Security is an essential factor in strengthening the citizens' confidence in the EU. The fight against terrorism has shown how European solidarity in security matters can work in practice, but measures are needed to combat the financing of terrorist activities and curb their propaganda. Action must also be taken at the national level; the Austrian Parliament has adopted a comprehensive security package. The dangers of cyber-attacks, targeted information and disinformation campaigns, and hate postings on social media must also be noted. Protection of the EU's external borders is crucial for curbing illegal migration to Europe; a crisis-proof framework for migration needs to be created through more joint action. In order to ensure peace and security in Europe's neighborhood, cooperation in civil and military crisis management needs to be strengthened. The EU has the responsibility to strengthen stability in the Western Balkans, and make progress in bringing the region closer to the EU. Among other things, this can be done by intensifying exchanges at the parliamentary level.

After the addresses, the President of the Riigikogu **Mr. Eiki NESTOR** began the debate part of the session. There were 18 interventions.

Ms. **Ankie BROEKERS-KNOL**, President of the Senate of the Netherlands, mentioned new challenges of hybrid warfare and major steps to increase defense cooperation. She also underlined the importance of the EU commitment to the countries in the Western Balkans. The issue of migration is a challenge that none of the EU Member States can manage on their own. The conclusions of the EU-Africa Summit of November 2017 should be translated into concrete actions.

Mr. **Steingrímur J. SIGFUSSON**, Speaker of the Althing of Iceland, expressed gratitude on behalf of the Speakers of the parliaments of the EFTA countries for the opportunity to participate in the debate. We are all the same European nations and want to contribute to peace, prosperity and stability. The United Kingdom is an important trading partner for the EFTA countries and the Brexit negotiations will hopefully be concluded successfully.

Ms. **Maria Edera SPADONI**, Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Republic, believes that terrorism and organized crime must be fought, but emphasis should be on prevention and social policies. The EU should keep pursuing fundamental rights and freedoms, and any waiver of the present rights can only be temporary, proportional, and limited to situations of imminent threat. The priority in the fight against terrorism should be a better coordination at the European level among the intelligence communities, and we need to approve the proposals to combat the possibilities of self-funding for criminal organisations.

Mr. **Jorge LACÃO**, Vice-President of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, admitted that there are several global challenges and new threats. A common response for common problems is needed. He

stated that parliaments must play a major role in security. Portugal has changed its law on monitoring assessment to give the parliament new competences to scrutinize PESCO. The development of European defense and security should not be done at the cost of other dimensions.

Ms. **Ayşe Nur BAHÇEKAPILI**, Deputy Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of the Republic of Turkey, stated that her country closely follows up the contributions of Europe to security and defense, and that these should be complementary to NATO. Turkey is an integral part of European security and its role should be remembered. Turkey prioritizes stability, sustainable development and peace in the Balkans, and all the countries in the region should be supported in their membership aspirations to European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Mr. **Gordan JANDROKOVIĆ**, Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia, spoke about the complexity of the security environment and new challenges. Croatia welcomes the establishment of PESCO that must be set up on the principles of inclusiveness, solidarity and complementarity with NATO. Also important is the protection of the EU's external borders. He also emphasized the importance of South-East Europe for European security.

Sir **Lindsay HOYLE**, Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Ways and Means of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, expressed his gratitude to the EU Member States for the support given during the Russian aggression. He stressed the need to continue to ensure that we are at the forefront in fighting cyber as well as physical threats. He maintained that everyone must fight terrorism together and share knowledge and information. He also mentioned the role of NATO and the need to legislate social media.

Mr. **Milan BRGLEZ**, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, said that an effective common EU foreign and security policy has to be focused, make use of EU's key advantages and be based on underlining EU values. He stressed that when the EU or its Member States take action to tackle external threats, they must adhere to the strict rules of international law. In an altered security environment, we must also rethink the notions of security itself. According to him, we must first and foremost act in a preventive manner. When addressing contemporary threats we must preserve the delicate balance between security and liberty. Scrutiny exercised by national parliaments plays an extremely important role.

Mr. **Alojz KOVŠČA**, President of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia, stated in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework that significantly greater resources will have to be allocated to mutual defense. At the same time, we must find a way to preserve the level of resources intended for the cohesion policy. He also acknowledged the importance of stability in the Western Balkans. These countries must fulfil accession conditions, but the EU should do more to encourage reforms and engage more actively.

Mr. **Stanisław KARCZEWSKI**, Marshal of the Senate of the Republic of Poland, said that the EU can and should be the structure that enhances the security of our common continent. However, in the context of PESCO, we have to remember that decisions regarding capabilities should be made inside NATO military structures. The role of the European Defense Fund should also be clearly defined. The Member States need to coordinate their efforts to tackle Russian propaganda.

Mr. **Milan ŠTĚCH**, President of the Senate of the Czech Republic, talked about the political debates in his country, and its military activities and operations around the world. He stated that the priorities of the Czech Republic regarding the cooperation between the EU and NATO are the deepening of cooperation in the fight against hybrid threats, coordinating exercises, cooperation on reinforcing the defense capabilities,

tackling migration issues, facilitating cross-border mobility of military material and personnel, and cooperation of intelligence services. He also mentioned Brexit, PESCO, and social media as a weapon.

Mr. **Gerard LARCHER**, President of the Senate of the French Republic, stated that the Europeans want more security from the EU. In order to fight the Islamic terrorism, we need to develop efficient information exchange systems, strengthen Europol and Eurojust, and fight against radicalization. He also mentioned social media issues, the situation in prisons, and the need to teach European values at schools. We need to protect our external borders more efficiently. He also talked about the need for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to Africa, and the external security of Europe. He gave an overview of the French military activities and operations. He also stressed that the European defense should not duplicate NATO. In addition, he talked about intelligence capability, cyber security, strengthening the Schengen area, and the future cooperation with the United Kingdom.

Mr. **Viktoras PRANCKIETIS**, Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, talked about the common challenges that the European countries face and also mentioned the unsafe nuclear power plant under construction in Belarus. He called for solidarity in collective defense, military mobility and energy security. He said that we have to address problems in the countries of origin and must always act for the benefit of our citizens.

Mr. **Nikolaos VOUTSIS**, Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament, stated that Europe needs to remain a global power devoted to peace and security. Greece supports the efforts to strengthen the autonomy of the EU in the field of security and defense, but challenges must be met in full respect of the values. He also talked about PESCO, the United Nations, blows to the peace in the Middle East, and the cooperation between the EU and NATO. He also stressed that it is wrong to link refugee flows to terrorism and emphasized the need to solve the Cyprus issue.

Mr. **Boguslaw Marian LIBERADZKI**, Vice-President of the European Parliament, stated that European security and defense is about protecting people, defending the Union and playing a global role. There has been a dramatic change in the security environment and we need to work on our capabilities that should be complementary to NATO. The European Parliament has strongly supported the recent developments in European defense. He also talked about the European Defense Fund, cyber security and the Multiannual Financial Framework.

Mr. **Talat XHAFERI**, President of the Assembly of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, admitted that in the past years the security situation in Europe and beyond has been a serious challenge for the EU and the aspiring states. NATO is also of utmost importance. He talked about his country's NATO membership aspiration and active contribution to the security of our continent. Security challenges have a negative impact on the endurance of the European principles and values, and we should pay attention to these negative developments.

Ms. **Ayşe Nur BAHÇEKAPILI**, Deputy Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of the Republic of Turkey wished to comment on the terminology used in the debate. She stated that terrorist organisations should not have any religion or nationality. Labelling terrorism as Islam will result in marginalization. She used the example of her own country of Turkey: a predominantly Muslim country at the forefront of the fight against Daesh.

Lord **McFall of Alcuith**, Senior Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom, hoped that the spirit of cooperation and friendship between the United Kingdom and the EU will continue. A successful

Brexit can only be built on an enduring foundation. The need for a positive and cooperative relationship with Europe is important in a globalized world that is increasingly interdependent.

Discussion and adoption of Conclusions

The last item on the agenda was the debate and the adoption of the Conclusions. Mr. **NESTOR** thanked his colleagues for all the amendments and suggestions on the Presidency Conclusions. The original text was prepared by the Presidency, and the majority of the amendments were accepted.

During the final discussion, Mr. **KUCHCINSKI** from the Polish delegation proposed adding a reference to Christianity into the text. This motion was supported by the Hungarian and Lithuanian delegations. Ms. **KARAYANCHEVA** from the Bulgarian delegation proposed adding a further segment on migration and the EU's external borders. Mr. **NESTOR** agreed with the numerous delegations that took the floor to speak against accepting any new amendments, and made the decision to keep the final version of the [Conclusions of the Presidency](#) as had been previously agreed by a vast majority of delegations.

Concluding remarks

In his concluding remarks, Mr. **NESTOR** thanked all the participants for attending the conference and for their active participation in the debate. Mr. **Reinhard TODT**, President of the Federal Council of Austria, invited the delegates to the next Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments, which will be held in Vienna on 8–9 April 2019. As per tradition, the Conference of Secretaries General of EU Parliaments will take place ahead of the Speakers Conference, on 27–28 January 2019, also in Vienna.