



Speech delivered by Mogens Lykketoft, Speaker of the Danish Parliament at the 47 COSAC meeting held on 23 April 2012.

Ladies and gentlemen

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

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It is an honour to officially open the 47th meeting of the COSAC here at the Tivoli Congress Centre.

This is the seventh time Denmark has held the EU Presidency, but it is the first time we have planned

a meeting outside of the premises of the Danish Parliament.

When Denmark held the Presidency in 2002 there were only 15 Member States. However, now the EU has 27 Member States and 6 other countries are official candidates. With representatives from that many countries it is becoming a challenge for national Parliaments to hold presidency events.

We are ready to meet this challenge, because the benefits of cooperation between Parliaments greatly outweigh the practical problems.

I experienced myself a very fruitful meeting at the Speaker's annual Conference in Warsaw two days ago.

Dear colleagues,

We are meeting at a time with big challenges ahead. Looking around Europe, it is clear that the economic crisis is beginning to affect the political and social fabric of our societies.

Youth unemployment is a challenge that I especially find distressful and sad to observe.

Despite recent developments, I believe that by agreeing to the Fiscal Compact, we are on our

way to ensure economic stability and restore confidence in the European economies.

Now we must – as concluded by EU heads of State and Government in March – focus on the growth and jobs agenda. After all, the best way to ensure the trust of citizens is by providing stability and jobs.

Much has to be done at the national level, but it is also important that we work in a coordinated manner at the European level.

If not, our efforts will be wasted and it might be difficult to maintain the cohesion of the European Union.

The growth and jobs agenda is a top priority for the Danish presidency. The last 20 years the

Single Market has been a key driving force in stimulating growth and jobs in Europe.

Never has it been more vital than now to realise the potential of the Single Market. However, this will only be possible if we all continue to work together – Governments, Parliaments and the EU Institutions.

On the national level as well as on the European level, we must also be careful - in this time of crisis and economic restraint - to make sure we remember to focus on long term job creation.

Last week's proposal from the Commission points in this direction, but we should also focus on education, research and so on.

Dear friends, the EU is an evolving project and so is the role of national Parliaments in the EU. With the Treaty of Lisbon the national Parliaments gained a new role as guardians of the principle of subsidiarity.

Furthermore, the Fiscal Compact together with recent EU legislation has tied together the national budget process to the overall political decisions in the EU.

As parliamentarians we must accept this responsibility.

As parliamentarians we must also accept the responsibility we have with regard to improving democratic accountability in Europe.

This does not only mean that we should actively participate in the EU decision making process when relevant.

We should also participate actively in the political dialogue with the Commission as well as improve our own understanding of Europe through the exchange of best practices and networking with other parliamentarians.

Last but not least, we have to communicate the importance of European cooperation to our citizens.

I hope this meeting of the COSAC as well as the other meetings organised by national Parliaments will help us with regard to our understanding of European issues and solutions – and get us one step closer towards building a more democratic and accountable Europe.

I wish you all a very productive and successful meeting.