

Speech of Mr. László Kövér, Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly

at the opening of XLV COSAC

30 May 2011

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Dear Mr. Prime Minister, dear Mr. Commissioner,

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I warmly welcome you today at the plenary meeting of the COSAC. Let me begin with a personal remark: I welcomed you from this same pulpit a little more than three months ago on 11 February, at the COSAC chairpersons' meeting, the first parliamentary event of the Hungarian EU presidency and now, a little later the Hungarian National Assembly houses the last and largest scale programme of the presidency.

The colleagues coming from countries, which have already held the EU presidency, know what I mean when I say that we are after a fairly intensive period. I would not like to get involved in a lengthy evaluation – and I could give an overall evaluation only in June at the end of our presidency – but let me summarise in a few sentences the parliamentary events of the Hungarian EU presidency so far.

Between February and May we organised ten parliamentary meetings including this one. Eight took place here in Budapest and two were organised in Brussels jointly with the European Parliament. The topics of our meetings varied on a wide range meanwhile they closely fit into the priorities of the Hungarian EU presidency and the issues on the agenda of the European Union. We invited, for example, the chairpersons of committees on the

budget, foreign affairs, environment protection or health. I daresay on behalf of my colleagues, my fellow representatives concerned, the colleagues making professional arrangements as well as myself that we have not failed shamefully with the events so far in the European parliamentary co-operation and we are managing the presidency successfully.

As I have mentioned already, the COSAC forms a framework for the events of the Hungarian National Assembly relating to the EU presidency and I think that my colleagues working at other parliamentary committees will not be angry with me if I say that the COSAC plenary meeting is possibly outstanding among our events regarding both the number of participants and its significance. I can support this statement in two ways. On the one hand, the COSAC is the only parliamentary forum included in the text of the Treaties, and the profile of the meeting includes issues concerning the basic functioning of the Union, on the other.

Looking at the agenda of this meeting I believe that you are facing one and a half days which will be fairly difficult but rich in content because – just to mention a few items on the agenda – you can listen to the Prime Minister's evaluation of the achievements of the Hungarian EU presidency so far, then, on the basis of the speech of Vice-President Mr. Šefčovič, you can discuss the economic situation of the EU and the possibilities of prosperity, and then you can have a look at the state of the Union on the basis of MEP and Jean Monnet Professor, Mr. György Schöpflin's presentation introducing a discussion.

The discussion of the rules of procedure of the COSAC and the survey of the achievements of the Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments are not less important. Please let me tell a few words about the conference of speakers that I personally attended

and whose main issue was to ensure parliamentary scrutiny of the common foreign and security policy and the common security and defence policy.

Although, unfortunately, a final agreement could not be reached at the conference organised on 3-5 April in Brussels regarding the details of setting up a future organisation to perform the parliamentary scrutiny of the common foreign and security policy, however, I believe that there is not such a serious conflict among our views that cannot be settled in the future. The standpoints that are different for the time being can definitely be approached and I do hope that our Polish colleagues, who will chair the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments between 2011 and 2012, will be able to find a compromise acceptable to all. Finding a consensus is possible regarding which let me mention, without boasting, the example of the parliamentary presidency of Hungary which, at the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments in 2005, could establish the language regime that has been used and functioning well since then, and have it adopted. This was also a very sensitive issue.

Dear Colleagues,

Please let me speak about another issue the Hungarian EU presidency is deeply concerned about, namely, that of cultural diversity and introducing culture to people. Each event of the Hungarian National Assembly has been accompanied by an individual cultural programme adjusted to the topic of the given event, and we have held several major cultural events both in Budapest and in Brussels. You are lucky to be able to view both main cultural programmes in Budapest, one of them here in front of the Parliament building, where a photo competition entitled “Co-existence” and showing the co-existence of peoples in the Carpathian Basin is exhibited. The opening of the other large-scale exhibition showing the common Polish-Hungarian history is purposefully scheduled for

today evening. I would not like to spoil the surprise but I think I can say that you will see an exciting and high level exhibition before your well-deserved dinner tonight.

In the building of the European Parliament in Brussels we organised three exhibitions: in February we exhibited an extract of the above-mentioned exhibition “Co-existence”, in March those interested could view the pictures of a contemporary Hungarian painter in the topic of water, and in the past days photos taken of the Hungarian Parliament building were exhibited in the corridors of the European Parliament.

Dear Conference, dear participants, there is only one thing left for me to do, namely, to thank you for your kind attention and to wish you good work for today!