

CONTRIBUTION OF THE XLIII COSAC

1. Israeli military operation against the flotilla sailing to Gaza

- 1.1. COSAC deeply regrets the loss of life during the Israeli military operation against the flotilla sailing to Gaza and offers its condolences to the families of the victims.
- 1.2. COSAC condemns the use of violence.
- 1.3. COSAC supports the demands by the High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf of the EU for an immediate, full and impartial inquiry into the events and the circumstances surrounding them.
- 1.4. COSAC supports the EU call for an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza.

2. Polish air tragedy

- 2.1. COSAC expresses its deep sorrow on the tragic death of the President of the Republic of Poland and of all the members of his delegation in an air accident on 10 April 2010. The symbolic significance of the tragedy is heightened by the fact that it occurred on the 70th anniversary of the Katyn Massacre that marked an entire generation during one of the saddest episodes in European history.

3. Economic crisis

- 3.1. COSAC expresses its concern regarding the deep economic crisis that has had an important effect in all European economies and societies, bringing about sluggish growth and high levels of unemployment and debt, and that has led Governments to intervene in order to sustain the banking and financial system, maintain economic activity and ensure the welfare system.
- 3.2. COSAC supports the commitment of the European Union towards a renewed strategy for sustainable growth and employment, as set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy put forward by the European Commission and supported by the European Council. National Parliaments are urged to follow up on EU 2020.
- 3.3. COSAC notes with concern that, at the present day, no Member State of the Euro group fulfils the criteria set out by the Stability and Growth Pact, regarding public deficit, debt and price stability requirements, even though national situations vary.
- 3.4. COSAC believes that the measures agreed by the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the members of the Euro area for the financial stabilisation of Greece were unavoidable. The members of the Euro zone believe that the Euro is needed and that the effects of the international financial and economic crisis would have been even worse without the common currency.

3.5. COSAC supports the creation of efficient mechanisms to regulate and control financial markets in order to avoid a similar crisis in the future.

4. The Climate challenge – preparing for Cancun

4.1. COSAC takes note of the conclusions of the European Council Meeting on 25-26 March 2010, and reiterates the conclusions of its XLII meeting held in Stockholm on 5-6 October 2009 regarding the Climate challenge – the road to Copenhagen.

4.2. COSAC thus urges the EU institutions to play a proactive part in preparing the next UN Climate Conference – COP16 – in Cancun, Mexico on 29 November 2010 to 10 December 2010. The main objective remains to reach a global and comprehensive legal agreement with the objective of keeping the increase in temperature below 2° C compared to preindustrial levels.

5. The institutional framework

5.1. At its first ordinary meeting to be held after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, COSAC congratulates Mr. Herman Van Rompuy on his appointment as President of the European Council, and Baroness Catherine Ashton on her appointment as High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission.

5.2. COSAC hopes that the Treaty of Lisbon will live up to its full potential and that the appointment of Baroness Ashton will bring about an effective common foreign and security policy, with the support of the European External Action Service that should be operative as soon as possible.

5.3. Given the special nature of this policy area, COSAC underlines the fundamental role of national Parliaments in the parliamentary scrutiny of the common foreign and security policy as well as the common security and defence policy.

5.4. COSAC supports the EU's accession to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as established in Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union, and calls for the negotiations leading to its accession to be completed soon. These negotiations should eventually ensure that the European Union may submit written comments and take part in hearings when applications are submitted in relation to Legal Acts of the Union. The national Parliaments should have the opportunity to submit their comments to the European Commission on its negotiation mandate.

5.5. COSAC notes the proposal for the amendment of the Treaties as regards the transitional measures concerning the composition of the European Parliament, which provide for 18 additional seats at the European Parliament, as agreed by the European Council at its meeting on 18 and 19 June 2009.

6. The EU institutional balance

- 6.1. COSAC welcomes the enhanced possibilities for parliamentary scrutiny of EU affairs which is a result of the strengthening of the parliamentary dimension of EU activities brought about by the Lisbon Treaty; notes in this context the increased ability of both national Parliaments and the European Parliament to influence European policy and the possibility for greater cooperation in order to secure democratic scrutiny of European policy.
- 6.2. COSAC underlines that inter-institutional agreements should not in any circumstances affect the inter-institutional balance of the Union and the letter and the spirit of the Treaty on European Union.
- 6.3. COSAC recalls that the independence of the European Commission should not be questioned and that the acts of the Council assume a particular significance for national Parliaments which exercise control of this body through their respective Governments. COSAC expects that respective prerogatives of all EU institutions be maintained, as defined in the Treaties, which entails no change in the status of the Council, thereby upholding the ability of national Parliaments and the European Parliament to influence European policy.

7. Regional strategies

- 7.1. COSAC wishes that the members of the Union for the Mediterranean may continue to build on the values and goals established 15 years ago in the Barcelona Declaration and reinforced during the Paris Summit of July 2008, in order to make the Mediterranean region an area of peace, development and human and cultural dialogue and therefore welcomes the Union for the Mediterranean Summit due to take place in 2010.
- 7.2. COSAC reiterates its support for the consolidation of the relationship between the European Union and Latin America. COSAC welcomes the results of the 6th EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit held in Madrid on 18 and 19 May.
- 7.3. COSAC welcomes the launching of the EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy, which is an important macro-regional strategy since its successful implementation and mid-term review pave the way for an enhanced regional cooperation.
- 7.4. COSAC reaffirms its long term support for the European Neighbourhood policy and the Eastern Partnership, including the shaping of a parliamentary dimension of the Eastern Partnership.
- 7.5. COSAC notes with interest the public consultations being held on the Danube Strategy, with the aim of adopting and launching this strategy in the course of 2011.

8. Enlargement

8.1. COSAC welcomes all current applications for membership to the European Union. COSAC also calls for the negotiations with all candidate countries to be satisfactorily continued, provided that established principles in this area, particularly the Copenhagen Criteria, have been met.

9. Definition of draft legislative acts

9.1. COSAC expresses its concern that the view of the Commission and the Council as to what constitutes a “draft legislative act” would exclude from the scrutiny of national Parliaments under Protocol (No 2) certain legislative acts which are legislative in substance and could raise issues of subsidiarity. COSAC calls on the Commission and Council to review their position.

10. The future role of COSAC

- 10.1. The Treaty of Lisbon allows, since 1 December 2009, for draft legislative acts, as defined by Article 289 (3) TFEU, to be scrutinised through the procedures and with the effects established in Protocol (No 2) on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. COSAC wishes to congratulate the European Commission and the Council on their response, which has so far contributed to a smooth running of the new Protocol (No 2). Likewise, COSAC welcomes the process of political dialogue with the European Commission. Monitoring the role of the national Parliaments as outlined in particular in Article 12 of the Treaty on European Union and its respective Protocols will remain one of COSAC's priorities.
- 10.2. The so-called “Early-Warning System” as established in Protocol (No 2) and the coordination mechanism between national Parliaments should play an adequate role in COSAC. Therefore, COSAC considers it necessary for its ordinary meetings to become venues for the exchange of views on politically sensitive issues with relevant members of the European Commission and the Council, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, as well as with the President of the Council, in the context of the statutory role of COSAC.
- 10.3. COSAC ordinary meetings could include the presentation by the President of the European Commission of his institution's Annual Working Program in the first semester and an assessment of the Commission's activities in the course of the year in the second semester.
- 10.4. Furthermore, COSAC invites a response to this Contribution from the European Commission, the Council Presidency and the European Parliament.