

XXXIV COSAC - summary

The meeting of Chairpersons on 17-18 July 2005 prepared the ground for the main COSAC meeting on a number of procedural and administrative matters. In the light of developments on the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, the Chairpersons also held an exchange of views with Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the Commission and Commissioner for Institutional Relations and Communications Strategy, on the way forward for the Treaty's subsidiarity mechanism, and methods of scrutiny of the Annual Work Programme of the Commission.

The XXXIV COSAC was held in London on 9-11 October 2005. In setting the agenda for this plenary meeting of COSAC, the United Kingdom Parliament had clearly in mind a recent change to COSAC's Rules of Procedure which now require that the principal business on each agenda shall be derived from COSAC's role as a body for exchanging information, in particular on the practical aspects of parliamentary scrutiny.

Accordingly the two major topics discussed were:

- scrutiny of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, and
- scrutiny of impact assessments (with the participation of Mr Moavero Milanesi, Deputy Secretary General of the European Commission).

The meeting also heard a presentation by the Rt Hon John Prescott MP, Deputy Prime Minister, on behalf of the United Kingdom Presidency of the Council.

In the light of developments on ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, COSAC also debated parliamentary aspects of the Treaty including the Council meeting in public and enhanced scrutiny of subsidiarity. There was consensus that, whatever the future of the Constitutional treaty, national parliaments could do more to enhance parliamentary scrutiny of subsidiarity and proportionality under existing provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty. Agreement was reached that national parliaments would scrutinise EU legislation for subsidiarity and proportionality using the provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty. National parliaments were asked to suggest topics on which during the following year there could be a concerted effort to examine subsidiarity and proportionality in depth in all national parliaments wishing to do so.

COSAC also agreed that its secretariat should continue to operate; that Presidency parliaments should be able to invite Special Guests as observes for debates when an item on the Agenda warranted it; and took note of suggested possible topics for future discussion, in accordance with the Rules of procedure.

Finally, COSAC adopted a "Contribution addressed to the EU Institutions" that focused on CFSP scrutiny, better regulation and openness in the Council. Following the meeting, steps were taken to raise the profile of the Contribution by for the first time translating it into all Community languages; by publishing it in the *Official Journal of the EU*; and by sending it to the Presidents of the EU Institutions—positive reactions to the Contribution were received from Commission President Barroso and Vice-President Verheugen.