

Note by the Greek Presidency on the Institution of a COSAC Secretariat

The Greek COSAC delegation

With regard to :

- a) the proposal by the former Danish presidency to establish a COSAC Secretariat as formulated in the document presented at the XXVIII extraordinary COSAC of January 27, 2003
- b) the note of the Netherlands delegation, co-signed by the delegations of the European Parliament, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Germany and Latvia, dated 15/12/02
- c) the contribution by the Italian delegation on the institution of a COSAC Secretariat, dated January 27, 2003
- d) the contribution of the Netherlands delegation regarding the establishment of the COSAC Secretariat, dated March 12, 2003
- e) the report of Working Group IV of the European Convention on the role of National Parliaments in the European Union, presented in October 2002
- f) the draft Protocol on the role of National Parliaments in the European Union submitted to the European Convention in February 2003 and the proposed amendments thereto in March 2003.
- g) The proposal submitted by the Danish Delegation, on 14 March 2003
- h) The letter of the President of WEU Assembly, Mr Jan Dirk Blaauw, to Mr Vrettos, by which he stated that the Assembly is prepared to provide the permanent members of the proposed COSAC Secretariat, for an experimental period to be determined by COSAC, as a gesture of parliamentary solidarity,

Taking into consideration :

- a) the fact that COSAC is an interparliamentary forum which enables a regular exchange of views; COSAC neither is nor should be a European Union institution,
- b) the enlargement of the European Union and the undoubted need for ensuring continuity and coherence in COSAC's work,
- c) the fact that a small Secretariat providing technical support must not result in bureaucracy,
- d) the obvious difficulties of establishing a new body and funding it from the budgets of national parliaments,
- e) the fact that all delegations participating in the COSAC Working Group meeting in Athens on 19-20 March 2003 agreed on the need for continuity in the secretarial functions of COSAC and -as a consequence- on the need for a permanent COSAC Secretariat situated in Brussels and established for a trial period of three years,

Submits the following proposal:

- a) to set up a COSAC Secretariat consisting of a permanent part and a Troika part with rotating participation;
- b) the Troika part of the secretariat shall consist either of employees from the national Parliaments in the presidential Troika or the respective liaison officers (It is up to each Parliament to decide). A representative of the European Parliament administration could participate in the secretariat;
- c) The permanent part of the Secretariat, which will primarily ensure the continuity of COSAC work, shall consist of two employees: One of University level, who will be familiar with the functioning of National Parliaments and the E.U. institutions and one IT specialist;
- d) A formal evaluation of the COSAC Secretariat shall be carried out well in advance of the expiry of the three-year period to determine of possible continuation of the scheme;
- e) Head of the Secretariat will be the employee appointed by the Parliament which holds the Presidency.
- f) The COSAC secretariat will be situated in the European Parliament in Brussels; Its work shall be fully independent from the European Parliament;
- g) The Tasks of the secretariat will include among others,
" operating COSAC's website
" publishing minutes of COSAC and Chairpersons' meetings,
" operating an official archive concerning COSAC's documentation,
" co-ordinating the exchange of information between Parliaments, concerning their scrutiny tasks and especially the evaluation of principle of subsidiarity,
" offering assistance to the Parliament holding the Presidency or hosting a meeting , in connection with the preparatory work,
- h) The COSAC Secretariat will be established by the national Parliaments wishing to participate. National parliaments not wishing to participate in the financing of the permanent part of the COSAC Secretariat, have the possibility to opt out. These national Parliaments will naturally still participate on fully equal terms in the work of COSAC, and still benefit from the services provided by the COSAC Secretariat.
- i) An administrative agreement shall be concluded with the European Parliament concerning a number of practical aspects such as office space, interpretation, access to telephone lines, Internet, photocopier etc.
- j) Possible approval of the WEU Assembly proposal for providing one or two experienced employees for a trial period, would lead to a significant reduction of operational costs.
- k) The Chairpersons meeting shall lay down the overall conditions for the activities of the COSAC Secretariat, including general tasks and financing.
- l) The COSAC Secretariat shall start its work as soon as the relevant decision has been adopted by National Parliaments.