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Mr Jimmy Hood MP
Chairman
European Scrutiny Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London SW1P 3JA
UK

17th July 2002

Dear Colleague,
Dear Jimmy,

Thank you very much for your letter of 11 June 2002 and the proposals for the reform of COSAC and its future direction.

At a meeting of the spokespersons of the parliamentary groups on the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union of the German Bundestag, we intensively discussed the suggestions put forward jointly by the House of Commons and the House of Lords. There was cross-party agreement among our Committee members, who shared the conviction that – in COSAC's interests – it is essential to link the internal debate on reform closely with the current work of the European Convention. The Convention's plenary debates and the deliberations of its working groups, which were established last month, will result in the drafting of a coherent overall concept for the strengthening of the role to be played by the national parliaments in the EU. The Committee on the Affairs of the European Union believes that any discussion on the reform of COSAC that is conducted independently of the Convention's proposals would tend to weaken rather than strengthen the profile of the national parliaments in the EU.

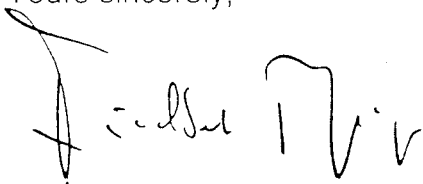
I would therefore like to propose that COSAC establishes a close dialogue with the European Convention and in particular its working group on the role of national parliaments, which intends to conclude its work at the end of September. As decided in Madrid, the issues relating to COSAC's future agenda, the simplification of its voting procedure and the secretariat question should be examined in the light of the results of these workings.

Furthermore, the significance of COSAC as a flexible forum for the open exchange of information and opinion was highlighted by the German Bundestag in the context of the IGC that drafted the Amsterdam Treaty. The full involvement of the parliaments of the candidate countries and the opening of COSAC's meetings to the public have strongly confirmed the importance of this role in recent years.

However, in view of the key role of the European Parliament in the further integration process, the German Bundestag has emphatically rejected the creation of a new, institutionalised advisory body composed of representatives of the national parliaments. There was no support in the German Bundestag for the reform of COSAC into an organ that would formally represent the national parliaments and be upgraded into an EU-level decision-making body in certain areas. This stance has been expressly endorsed by the spokespersons of the political groups on the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union in the course of the current discussion about COSAC.

I am taking the liberty of sending this letter also to our Danish colleague Claus Larsen-Jensen and I am already looking forward to our further joint discussions on ways of improving COSAC's effectiveness.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Friedbert Pflüger', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dr. Friedbert Pflüger
Chairman of the Committee
on the Affairs of the European Union
of the German Bundestag