

## **Presidency Conclusions**

Budapest, May 6-7, 2005

### **Preliminary remarks**

1. The Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the European Union took place in Budapest in the Hungarian National Assembly on 6-7 May 2005. The Presidents of the National Parliaments of the EU Member States, the European Parliament, the two acceding countries and the two candidate countries participated at the Conference. The Presidents of the National Parliaments of the Western Balkan countries were invited to attend the second day of the Conference. The Speakers' Conference was chaired by the President of the Hungarian National Assembly, Mrs Katalin Szili. The Hungarian Prime Minister, Mr Ferenc Gyurcsány addressed the Conference, he emphasized that Europe needs to be more competitive in order to preserve and strengthen the European values.
2. The Presidents discussed the following topics: interparliamentary co-ordination, the co-operation between the European Commission and EU Parliaments, rationalization of the European interparliamentary organizations, EU Parliaments and the financial perspectives for 2007 – 2013, ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, contribution of the EU Parliaments to the enhancement of the global role of the EU, parliamentary relations between the EU and the Western Balkans.
3. In her introductory speech, Mrs Katalin Szili, President of the Hungarian National Assembly summarized the experiences of the new co-ordination mechanism and reported to the Conference about the implementation of the Hague Guidelines.
4. The Vice-President of the European Commission, Mrs Margot Wallström presented the short and long term goals of the Commission aiming to reinforce co-operation with the National Parliaments. The Commission is willing to play an active role as "facilitator" of the important work of electronic exchange of EU-related information between National Parliaments, using, in particular, the IPEX network.
5. Mr Wolfgang Thierse, President of the German Bundestag, presented the main findings of the questionnaire on "Rationalizing our interparliamentary co-operation". He expressed the view that the tasks and objectives of the assemblies are to publicise and promote the objectives of the relevant organisations and to monitor compliance with each organisation's underlying principles and to contribute to the better scrutiny of the governments' work.
6. Mr Lubomir Zaoralek, the President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic outlined the role National Parliaments should play in the process of concluding the new financial perspective. Josep Borrell, President of the European Parliament clarified the role of the European Parliament in the adoption of the financial perspective.
7. Regarding the ratification process of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Mr Herman de Croo, President of the Belgian House of Representatives, described the attitude of the public towards the Constitution and examined the possible ways of raising awareness among Union citizens of the need for it, as well as considered what role the National Parliaments could play in that respect.
8. On the contribution of EU Parliaments to the enhancement of the global role of the EU, Mr Pier Ferdinando Casini, President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies emphasized the importance of the added value the international action of EU Parliaments represents. Mr Casini raised the possibility to set up a working group on activities of technical assistance to Parliaments. He will present the detailed proposal to the host of the upcoming Conference, the Danish Folketing.

9. The Presidents discussed the EU-Western Balkans relations with the active participation of the Presidents of the Parliaments of the Western Balkans. Mr Andreas Khol, President of the Austrian National Council, pointed out that the integration of the countries of the Western Balkans to the EU will create a zone of stability and strengthen the global role of the EU. Countries with an aspiration to join the EU must come to terms with their own past and the domestic political debate related to it and must espouse the values for which the EU stands.

10. The Conference took note of the following documents:

- An expression of opinion on the trial of the Bulgarian and Palestinian medical staff in Libya, tabled by the Slovakian delegation;
- An expression of opinion on the situation of the journalists kidnapped in Iraq, tabled by the Romanian delegation.

### **Conclusions of the Presidency**

1. The Conference stressed the importance of further strengthening the relations between the European Commission and the National Parliaments, and the realization of the concrete short and long term targets presented by the Vice-President of the Commission, Mrs Margot Wallström.

2. Interparliamentary co-operation has to work as a real process, there must be a regular dialogue between Parliaments in-between the meetings of the Conference of Speakers. The links between the Conference of Speakers and the other EU interparliamentary meetings should be strengthened. In line with the Hague Guidelines, the Conference should play a leading role in defining the priority areas for co-operation. The calendar of EU interparliamentary activities for 2005 compiled by the Hungarian National Assembly provides a good basis and useful tool for planning the work of the Parliaments. The continuity of interparliamentary co-ordination should be ensured by the host Parliament of the next Conference. The previous and the upcoming hosts should provide assistance in these activities.

3. The Presidents noted with satisfaction the operation of the new language regime.

4. The Conference welcomes the "declaration on the role of National Parliaments in the European debate: Raise national European awareness" adopted by the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC). The Conference calls upon the National Parliaments to hold a debate preferably in plenary session each year on the annual legislative and work programme of the European Commission with due respect for their internal work programme, legal framework and traditions. The Conference requests the incoming Presidency of the Conference to make the necessary consultations to find an appropriate timeframe for the implementation of the declaration, and report back to the Conference on the experience with the implementation of the declaration.

5. The Presidents agreed that in the context of the early warning system to be introduced by the Constitution, the six week period available to National Parliaments for subsidiarity control should start when the particular legislative proposal has been translated into every official language of the EU. The Presidents welcomed the co-operative intention expressed in that regard by the Vice-President of the Commission, Mrs Margot Wallström.

6. The IPEX project has been developed gradually since it was set up in 2001. A permanent framework of the future operation of IPEX has been agreed on by the Secretaries General and noted by the Presidents, allowing for an effective way of functioning. After the Budapest Conference the test phase of the new IPEX website will be launched, paving the way for the extension of electronic co-operation between EU Parliaments.

7. The Presidents expressed their view that the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe might be seen as the continuation of an integration process that has been in the making for almost as many as fifty years. They believe it is important to conclude the ratification process in 2006.

8. The Union should dispose of the necessary resources for the needs of the enlarged Union. The principles of solidarity, economic and social cohesion, efficient and economic use of funds shall be assured.

9. The Presidents emphasized that the efficiency of interparliamentary activities should be improved by the rationalisation of the existing organisations and not by creating new ones. An interesting debate has started at the Budapest Conference. It was agreed that the Conference has to play pivotal role in elaborating proposals for the rationalisation of European interparliamentary co-operation, however it was not possible to adopt proposals at this point.

The host of the upcoming conference, the Danish Folketing, was asked to form a working group which will follow up on the debate about rationalization of the European interparliamentary organizations. The working group shall be charged with the task to analyse the European interparliamentary organizations according to their functions in order to possibly put forward a proposal for rationalization and efficiency. The working group may consider the possibilities of co-operation among the delegations of the EU Parliaments in the margin of the meetings of interparliamentary organisations.

The working group will be set up in co-operation with the troika Parliaments (Hungary and Slovakia), the Parliament of the rapporteur (Germany) as well as all those who wish to participate in this task. The working group will present its recommendation at the forthcoming conference in Copenhagen in June 2006.

10. The Conference stressed the importance to continue the debate on how the EU Parliaments may promote a more co-ordinated and more efficient appearance of the Union on a global scale. Within this context Parliamentary activities should be monitored by the Conference of Speakers based on regular exchange of views.

11. The Conference stated that the integration of the countries of the Western Balkans to the European Union should be further strengthened. The EU Parliaments should play an active role in the transformation process of the region by sharing their experiences with the Parliaments of the Western Balkans. It is of particular importance that the EU Parliaments should give the necessary assistance to the Parliaments of the region. In this respect, both bilateral and multilateral forms of co-operation should be used, such as exchange of parliamentary experts or holding parliamentary meetings on specific topics with visible follow-up.

12. The next Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments will take place in Denmark in June 2006. The National Council of the Slovak Republic has put forward an offer to host the Conference of Speakers in 2007.