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Dear Colleague,

Thank you very much for the invitation to attend the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments in Nicosia from 21 to 23 April. I believe the meeting's agenda is particularly relevant as it addresses a number of important topics, including Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Government in the Economic and Monetary Union (TSCG).

I do, however, regret having to inform you that the Senate of the Netherlands will not be able to participate in the meeting. Despite our best efforts to ensure representation at the Conference, the preparations for the abdication of Queen Beatrix and the investiture of King Willem-Alexander which will take place in Amsterdam on the 30th of April 2013 prevent me from travelling to Cyprus. Both the Senate's deputy- Presidents happen to have conflicting obligations they cannot reschedule.

I would also like to take this opportunity to contribute to the proceedings of the Conference by outlining the position of the Dutch Senate on the establishment of a conference under Article 13 of the TSCG. The issue has been debated on various occasions by the standing committees for Finance and for European Affairs. The Senate has also actively participated in the informal discussions on this subject in Luxemburg in January of this year and in Copenhagen in March. In addition to the useful suggestions made by other parliaments, I would like to put forward the following points for consideration during the Speakers Conference.

First of all, I believe it is important that the 'Article 13-Conference' is to link up with the plenary COSAC meetings, as far as timing and venue are concerned.

Second, the new Conference is to maximise synergies with the Chairperson's Meeting of the Committees on Finance. Depending on the size of the delegations we will agree on, as well on the agenda at hand, we should open up participation in the Conference to members of committees competent on Economic and Social Affairs. It would follow that the planning of the Conference would match the schedule of the European Semester .



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A final point relates to the nature of the Conference, which I believe should be geared towards exchanging information and best practices among Parliaments, rather than taking decisions. This principle is to be reflected in any possible meeting conclusions that may be drawn up.

The position of the Senate is closely aligned with that of the House of Representatives and I will therefore request that my colleague from the House of Representatives, Ms. Van Miltenburg speaks on my behalf where appropriate.

I trust the Speakers Conference under your chairmanship will be pleasant and productive and I look forward to meeting you, as well as our Colleagues at our next meeting.

Yours sincerely,

G.J. de Graaf

President of the Senate of the Netherlands