

**17th Inter-Parliamentary Conference
for the Common Foreign and Security Policy
and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP)**

4 September 2020

via video conference

Statement by the Co-Chairs

Preliminary remarks

The 17th Inter-parliamentary Conference (IPC) for the CFSP/CSDP was held in the context of the parliamentary dimension of the German Council presidency on 4 September 2020. Due to the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Conference was held for the first time via video conference. It was attended by parliamentarians from the EU Member States and the European Parliament. Also taking part were parliamentarians from EU candidate and potential candidate countries.

We, the co-chairs of the 17th IPC:

- Believe that the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has confirmed the need for a stronger and more effective EU foreign and security policy. The pandemic revealed a weakened global system where multilateralism is being attacked. In the changing geopolitical landscape the EU's responsibility is to act as a global player and defender of multilateral rules based order, with the United Nations at its core, strengthening international cooperation through the system of multilateral organisations, engaging strategically with like-minded partners and other global actors. Highlight, in that regard, the important role of national parliaments and the European Parliament in the field of CFSP and CSDP.
- Welcome the “Global EU Response to the COVID-19 crisis” directed at the most vulnerable countries and recall that the EU's geopolitical actions need to be underpinned by adequate budgetary allocations through the upcoming MFF. Note that the COVID-19 pandemic reveals the need to reduce the dependency on third countries in certain sectors and highlight the urgent need for the EU to strengthen its strategic autonomy.
- Are very concerned by the dangerous tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean; call for urgent de-escalation and the establishment of an environment conducive to dialogue and negotiations; in this regard, support the mediation efforts by the German government; emphasize the need to support Greece and Cyprus to resolve the tensions.
- Take the view that the EU needs to urgently define an overall strategy for its mid- to long-term relations with Turkey, considering the country's continued backsliding on democracy, the rule of law and human rights, but also bearing in mind the continued shared interests in areas such as trade, migration and security.
- Support the demands of the Belarusian people for a new, free and fair presidential election to be held in Belarus with the participation of international observers, including the OSCE. Call on the Belarusian authorities to refrain from violence and intimidation against peaceful

protesters and to release all individuals detained for political reasons and those arbitrarily detained. A peaceful solution must be found through dialogue involving all domestic stakeholders in order to ensure a prosperous future for a sovereign Belarus.

- Express concern at the particularly fragile situation in Lebanon. The terrible tragedy that befell the people of Beirut demands our solidarity and the EU and its Member States have immediately stepped in to assist Lebanon in its relief and reconstruction operations. Underline the important need to ensure that Lebanon embarks on an ambitious process of reforms that can confer on it political and economic stability and address the legitimate concerns and democratic aspirations of its people. Welcome the unanimous adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 2539(2020) renewing the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and calling, inter alia, on the Government of Lebanon to facilitate UNIFIL's prompt and full access to sites requested by UNIFIL for the purpose of swift investigation.
- Express concern at the situation in Libya and at the recent developments in Tripoli and the state of fundamental rights throughout the country, as also attested to by the UN Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Recall the importance and urgency of a ceasefire negotiated by the parties and an agreement between them on a demilitarized zone. Stress the centrality of the Berlin process, in synergy with the UN mediation, to this effect and call on the parties to commit to a full and inclusive political process that will meet the aspirations of the Libyan people for representative government to achieve stability and security in Libya.
- Underline that EU-China relations have entered into a new era, especially in the recent context of the COVID-19 crisis. Recall that the past months have highlighted a lack of global leadership in the multilateral fight against COVID-19, where China has shown, once again, aspirations to strengthen its geopolitical position. Believe that recent actions by China in Hong Kong and in the spread of disinformation during the Covid-19 pandemic are even more regrettable because of some positive elements of the strategic partnership with the EU. Are convinced that the EU can no longer ignore the scale of interference by China into our internal affairs. Stress the need to prevent and counter such interference more resolutely, together with our like-minded partners around the world.
- Are greatly concerned about and condemn the attack on the life of Alexei Navalny, which, like previous attacks on the lives of critics of the Russian government, is absolutely unacceptable for the European Union and its Member States, and call upon the EU to respond in a proportionate manner. In addition, call upon the Russian Federation to investigate the circumstances of the poisoning comprehensively and transparently.
- Consider that the treaties' provisions are a solid ground for advancing towards a genuine defence Union. Consider that the orientations developed under the current strategic revision processes must pave the way for a more effective EU - NATO relationship. Consider that Allies participating in relevant EU programmes such as the European Defence Fund contribute to a new era of genuine interoperability, pooling, sharing, and integration of capabilities development and deployment for the benefit of the Union and for the Transatlantic Alliance.
- Consider that where Member States together establish multinational forces as referred to in Article 42 (3) TEU they should make those forces available to the common security and defence policy, including a common Union defence. Consider that the Member States should seek consistent cooperation of such multinational forces with NATO, as well.

- Call on the European Council and on its President to swiftly launch and to drive forward the work towards the European Council decision referred to in Article 42 (2) TEU. Call on the Commission, on the HR/VP and on all Parliaments in the European Union to take part in the debate on the development of EU defence.
- Note with satisfaction the calls from Members of National Parliaments and of the European Parliament for a more ambitious MFF in the external action and defence area, including increased allocations for the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), European Defence Fund, military mobility and for the European Peace Facility.

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Chair of the German delegation

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Chair of the EP Foreign Affairs Committee, Chair of the EP delegation