

**WELCOME SPEECH BY MRS LORETA GRAUŽINIENĖ, SPEAKER OF THE
SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA, AT THE OPENING OF THE
L COSAC MEETING**

28 October

Vilnius

Dear guests, fellow parliamentarians, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased and proud to have an opportunity to welcome you all to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. It is an immense privilege for Lithuania to organise the historic 50th jubilee COSAC Meeting.

Being the Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, I wish to apologise for the absence of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, as she was scheduled to address you. I am really sorry.

The jubilee COSAC Meeting is taking place on the eve of yet another significant anniversary. 1 November 2013 marks the 20th anniversary of the enforcement of the Maastricht Treaty. The Treaty was a very substantial step leading to a more united Europe. May I congratulate you all on this anniversary which is of utmost importance for the European Union!

Like no parliament before, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania has had the opportunity to organise three interparliamentary conferences of the European Union.

At the beginning of September, the Seimas convened the third Interparliamentary Conference for the Common and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy.

The Conference was held at a particularly sensitive period, in anticipation of a response from the international community to the chemical weapons' attack in Syria and the upcoming important Eastern Partnership Summit to be held in Vilnius at the end of November.

A little more than a week ago, the Seimas hosted an inaugural meeting of the new Interparliamentary Conference on Economic and Financial Governance of the European Union established in line with Article 13 of the Fiscal Compact.

The Conference saw vigorous debate on the aims and the role of the Conference. Although the Conference has not reached a consensus over the final decision regarding important practical and political aspects of the functioning of the Conference, we remain hopeful that it has laid a firm basis for further functioning of the Conference and its successful work in the future.

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Unlike the aforementioned conferences, COSAC has had long traditions and has established itself as the major interparliamentary conference bringing together parliamentarians from the whole Europe.

I deeply appreciate the input of COSAC in enhancing democratic legitimacy and accountability in the European Union, promoting a more active role of **national Parliaments** in the EU decision-making process, and strengthening the cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament. I am utterly convinced, **COSAC** plays a crucial role in ensuring regular and effective inter-institutional dialogue between the **national level** and the **EU level**.

I therefore expect that COASC will further develop and strengthen its position in the EU architecture. I hope that we will succeed in employing the opportunities envisaged in Article 10 of Protocol 1 of the Treaty of Lisbon more efficiently, and in developing more enhanced cooperation among national Parliaments, the European Parliament and other EU institutions.

Incidentally, **tomorrow, women** parliamentarians will gather to discuss the most relevant matters on the EU agenda for the first time in COSAC history. It is of particular **importance**. The plan is to establish the **COSAC Women's Forum** aimed at promoting cooperation among women parliamentarians and encouraging their engagement in making decisions important to the European Union.

I see many women in this hall. I wish to welcome you to Lithuania, to our place; and I think we will have a genuinely good discussion tomorrow.

The idea to establish such a women's forum was conceived during the meeting between Madam Bariza Khiari, Vice-President of the Senate of the French Republic, in Paris last July, and the Seimas delegation, when we, as the representatives of the Presidency Parliament, visited the French Senate and introduced the parliamentary dimension of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Fellow colleagues,

Allow me to welcome you to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania once again and to wish an interesting and forward-leading debate. I hope you will come up with the best solutions for the citizens of your countries and the whole Europe.

Enjoy your stay in Vilnius.

We hope you will visit Lithuania again!

Thank you for your attention.