

Video Address by Mr José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, to the L COSAC

Chairman Gediminas Kirkilas,
Honourable Members of Parliaments,

It is with great pleasure that I am at least virtually with you today. Allow me first of all to congratulate you on your 50th meeting. Such milestones are significant in a way. I still vividly remember chairing the 2000th meeting of the European Commission in May last year. Of course, COSAC, compared to the Commission, is still relatively young, but no doubt COSAC has established itself as a valuable, I would say, indispensable player at the European Union level. And anniversaries as this make us reflect and look back. They point at the history, at the development trajectory over many years before we arrived at such landmarks. And the history of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union started in 1989. It took place in an era of new impetus for European integration and of discussions about democratic legitimacy on European affairs. Formally recognised in the Treaty of Amsterdam and included in the first protocol of the Lisbon Treaty, COSAC has developed into a substantial factor in fostering inter-parliamentary cooperation on European Union policies. The European Commission has supported this consistently. I remember very well my commitment, pledge in 2006, which started off the informal dialogue between the European Commission and national Parliaments ahead of the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

Ladies and gentlemen, honourable Members,

Milestones such as this jubilee meeting also invite us to look forward, because although there are some positive signs, many challenges to move Europe beyond the crisis remain. We all know that easy solutions are not an option, and that they need to be bold and comprehensive. Stabilising our economies and restoring confidence is key. That is why completing the architecture of the Economic and Monetary Union, in particular of the Banking Union, is so essential, essential to underpin a return to growth, a new kind of growth, sustainable growth. And for this we also need to steady the course of fiscal consolidation, accelerate the pace of structural reforms and boost investment to help reignite the real economy. With our *Europe 2020* Strategy, I believe we have a broad consensus on policies that are both right for us as the European Union, and right for each Member State. We are stepping up to the fight against unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, we are providing Europe's businesses with new key levers for competitiveness and growth. We have a new approach to innovation and a fresh take on industrial policy reducing red tape, tackling high energy costs, addressing the skills' mismatch and to make sure that business, in particular SMEs can finance themselves. So, *Europe 2020* is about sustainable, smart and inclusive growth. I believe it is important to keep that line. I believe it is important to be determined and not to allow illusions regarding, precisely, our commitment to this process of reforms. At the end, our

competitiveness in this very challenging world, globalised world, depends on our commitment to these reforms. And if you want to keep our social market economy, if you want to keep the most important elements of what we have called the social model, we should understand that in fact we need to reform so that we are able to compete.

Honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased that Vice-President Šefčovič of the European Commission will be with you in person this afternoon to debate implementation of the *Europe 2020* Strategy. Allow me to congratulate you for putting the implementation of the *Europe 2020* so central on your agenda today. Because I really believe it is vital that parliaments contribute to National Reform Plans and their implementation, taking into account specific national and regional economic and social structures based on European-wide objectives and values that we must share. Only by acting and achieving results together, we can expect to live up to the confidence that Europe's citizens place on their political leaders at national and European level. And with that observation, I wish you a fruitful jubilee meeting. I wish you all the best for your work and I remain expecting the results of your work that I am sure will give a contribution to our common project.

I thank you for your attention.