

Welcoming Address by the Polish Senate Marshal  
opening the meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons ,  
Senate Meeting Room, 11 July, 2011, 9:00

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to be able to greet you here at one of the first meetings held within the parliamentary dimension of the Polish Presidency of the EU Council. You are chairing the most important committees in the national parliaments. Although your main task is to prepare the next plenary meeting of COSAC,, you are also going to debate essential problems absorbing Europe's attention today. As I know, the European Affairs Committees chaired by you respond to the most important developments as they arise, and this meeting will enable us to share our experience.

The launch of the Polish Presidency offers an opportunity to present and discuss the priorities by which our government shall be guided through its chairmanship of the EU Council in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of this year. You will be invited to share your comments and opinions on it after the address delivered by Mr Mikołaj Dowgielewicz, the Secretary of State for European Affairs in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Without infringing upon the competencies of Mr Minister, I will refer to the three pivotal problem areas by which our priorities are grouped. These are:

- European integration as a source of economic growth;
- Secure Europe; and
- Europe benefiting from openness.

It is in this last area, "Europe benefiting from openness", that our special interest in the activities for the Eastern Partnership lies, as well as our willingness to join in restructuring the EU's relations with its southern neighbours from the Mediterranean Basin. Europe will be open

and safe as long as it maintains good relationships with the countries both on its eastern and southern borders.

In the light of the current developments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and other countries of that region it is essential that the European Union joins in the process of democratic transformation for which the citizens of those countries are calling, as well as in the creation of their modern government structures.

One of the main challenges faced by the European Union is to provide the Arab countries with support in developing a democratic civil society. I had a possibility to convince myself of it during my visit to Tunisia in the middle of May this year. We went there together with the Chairman of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Polish Senate, Senator Edmund Wittbrodt, at the invitation of Tunisian non-government organisations. We met with the Acting President of Tunisia, Fuad Mebaza, with the representatives of Tunisian civic and political organisations, and with university teachers and students. All my interlocutors were, first and foremost, interested in our experience of democratic transformation, development of a civil society, as well as transformation of our economic and government systems. During such discussions I highlighted the fact that all the operations need to be done quickly. I also ensured that during the Polish EU Presidency Poland would take steps to further the cause of the surging democratisation movement in North Africa.

Tomorrow, on 12 July, I'm flying to Egypt on a similar visit, and I am convinced beyond any doubt that my Egyptian interlocutors will be interested to hear about the same, i.e. about the Polish way to democracy. I shall meet with Prime Minister Esam Sharaf, Deputy Prime Minister Jahja al-Gamal, Minister of Foreign Affairs M. al-Urabi, Great Sheikh Al-Azharu A. at-Tajjib, Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church Shenouda III, and others.

The most powerful instruments at the disposal of the EU include the unquestionable efficiency of democracy and of a liberal model of development, and an offer of free access to the EU Internal Market. Our neighbours wish to follow our best and time-honoured standards. Moreover, they rely on us to help develop democratic institutions.

The new dynamic situation on the borders of the European Union makes us redefine our attitude to the issues of the European Neighbourhood Policy, migration, and asylum. This is reflected in the recent communications published by the European Commission. You will be updated on the particulars of those proposals by Ms Cecilia Malmstrom, the EU Commissioner for Internal Affairs who will join you after the break. On my part, I would like to bring to your notice that the situation on the EU eastern border may prove to be equally unstable as the state of things on the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. In Belarus, the democratic deficit has overlapped with a financial and economic crisis. That is why we need a reasonably speedy agreement of all our member states on the common European asylum policy.

I am also of an opinion that today's meeting will be an opportunity to discuss the most current issues. This refers to the future prospects for inter-parliamentary cooperation within the areas of the foreign, security, and defence policies as well. It will be still another proof of COSAC's responding on a current basis to new developments which have a direct impact on the situation in Europe and around its borders. We must realise that no economic well-being or democracy will be possible in Europe without transformation and democratisation in the neighbouring countries.

In conclusion, I would like to wish you, to wish us all, inspirational experiences to share today which could enrich our further work on behalf of our citizens, our European society and our neighbours.

Thank you for your attention.