

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHAIRPERSONS OF COSAC
Warsaw, 11 July 2011

AGENDA:

- 1. Opening address by Mr Bogdan BORUSEWICZ, Marshal of the *Senat* of the Republic of Poland**
- 2. Briefing on the decisions of the Presidential Troika of COSAC and preparation for the XLVI COSAC**
- 3. Priorities of the Polish Presidency – guest speaker: Mr Mikołaj DOWGIELEWICZ, Secretary of State for European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland**
- 4. EU institutions vis-à-vis conflicts at the EU's external borders - guest speaker: Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM, Commissioner responsible for Home Affairs**

PROCEEDINGS

IN THE CHAIR: Mr Edmund WITTBRODT, Chairman of the EU Affairs Committee of the *Senat* of the Republic of Poland, and Mr Stanisław RAKOCZY, Chairman of the EU Affairs Committee of the *Sejm* of the Republic of Poland.

Mr Edmund WITTBRODT welcomed two new chairpersons of the Committees on European Affairs: Mr Joe COSTELLO of the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas* and Mr Paulo MOTA PINTO of the Portuguese *Assembleia da República*. He then gave the floor to Mr Bogdan BORUSEWICZ, Marshal of the *Senat* of the Republic of Poland, for the opening address.

1. Opening address by Mr Bogdan BORUSEWICZ, Marshal of the *Senat* of the Republic of Poland

Mr BORUSEWICZ welcomed this meeting as one of the first within the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the Polish Presidency and underlined that parliamentary EU Affairs Committees were especially important as they covered all EU policy areas. Chairpersons were here, in Warsaw, to discuss major issues that the EU faces and to exchange views and experiences.

Touching on some of the priorities of the Polish Presidency he gave particular attention to the Eastern Partnership and relations with southern neighbours. The EU should play an active role there in order to help develop modern government structures and a democratic civil society. In this context, Mr BORUSEWICZ highlighted the visit he and Mr WITTBRODT had paid to Tunisia in May 2011 as well as his visit to Egypt the next day (12 July), both of which aimed at making these countries benefit from the Polish experience of transition to democracy. The most powerful EU instruments included the efficiency of democracy and of a liberal model of development as well as the offer of access to the EU internal market.

According to Mr BORUSEWICZ the situation on the eastern borders of the EU might prove to be equally unstable. He mentioned Belarus, a country plagued by both a democratic deficit

and the financial and economic crisis. The EU therefore needed to agree as quickly as possible on, *inter alia*, a common asylum policy.

This meeting would also be an opportunity to discuss further interparliamentary cooperation on foreign, security and defence policies. Mr BORUSEWICZ concluded that economic prosperity and democracy would not be possible in Europe without transformation and democratisation in the neighbouring countries.

2. Briefing on the decisions of the Presidential Troika of COSAC and preparation for the XLVI COSAC

Mr Edmund WITTBRODT informed the participants that the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika") had approved the draft agenda for the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC, the draft programme for the XLVI COSAC meeting and the draft outline of the 16th Bi-annual Report. It had also approved the procedure for the nomination of the next Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat.

The agenda for the meeting of the Chairpersons was adopted as set out above.

On the preparation of the XLVI COSAC, Mr RAKOCZY informed that the meeting would take place on 2-4 October 2011. Topics would include the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020 (hereinafter referred to as "the MFF") that would be examined both from the budget and the cohesion policy perspectives, the State of play of the Polish Presidency and a review of parliamentary experiences during the two years since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.

Mr RAKOCZY went on to say that the European Parliament delegation had proposed to invite Mr Jerzy BUZEK, President of the European Parliament, to speak on "Two years after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon". It had also suggested inviting Mr Salvador GARRIGA POLLEDO, Member of the European Parliament and rapporteur on the MFF, as one of the keynote speakers on this topic. Both proposals had been accepted by the Troika.

Mr RAKOCZY then briefly presented the outline of the 16th Bi-annual Report of COSAC that consisted of two chapters. Regarding the first one, the MFF for Europe 2020 Strategy, Mr RAKOCZY indicated that the debate had started and that the 16th Bi-annual Report should show the role of national Parliaments in this debate. The second chapter would deal with reasoned opinions, the informal political dialogue and delegated acts.

Mr WITTBRODT explained the proposed procedure for the nomination of the next Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat. The term of the current Permanent Member, Ms Loreta RAULINAITYTĖ, would expire on 31 December 2011. Letters of intent to contribute to the cofinancing scheme for 2012-2013 had been received from sufficient number of Parliaments. The procedure could therefore be launched and a decision on the nomination of the new Permanent Member should be taken during the XLVI COSAC meeting. On 12 July 2011 the Polish Presidency would send a letter to all national Parliaments inviting them to propose candidates for the post. Candidacies should include a CV and a cover letter (a motivation letter). The 2 October Troika meeting would then conduct interviews with all candidates and select a single candidate for nomination. Subsequently, the 3 October meeting

of the Chairpersons of COSAC would formally appoint the selected candidate, whose tenure would begin on 1 January 2012.

Following this briefing by the Chairman several participants took the floor.

Mr Luděk SEFZIG (the Czech *Senát*) stressed the importance of focussing more on future relations and dialogue with the European Commission, e.g. on its work programme and on the European Semester. On these issues COSAC could have an input debate and - following publication of EU draft legislative acts - an exchange of views. Mr Herman DE CROO (the Belgian *Chambre des Représentants*) agreed and argued that there was a clear tendency towards "semesterisation". The economic crisis had changed the whole picture and one should rather focus on topical debates instead of sticking to the "archaic" approach of having long debates on subsidiarity and proportionality. Mr Pierre LEQUILLER (the French *Assemblée nationale*), too, insisted that Parliaments should reflect on their powers in the aftermath of the economic crisis. It was significant that national Parliaments had not stated that the European Semester was an intrusion on their powers. He added that citizens were not bothered by debates on subsidiarity. Finally, Mr Fernand BODEN (the Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*) underlined the crucial importance of the debate on the MFF, including EU own resources and the common agricultural policy, as there was a clear role for national Parliaments to play. He called for an end to debates on net contributors, insisting on the principle of solidarity.

In his reply Mr RAKOCZY said that the aim of reviewing the two-year period since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon was precisely to draw conclusions for the future. It was all about highlighting best practices and avoiding mistakes in the future. He added that the common agricultural policy would anyhow be discussed as part of the debate on the MFF, as it constituted a very substantial percentage of the EU budget.

In the absence of any proposals for modification Mr WITTBRODT concluded that the Chairpersons approved the draft programme for the XLVI COSAC, the outline of the 16th Bi-annual Report and the procedure for the nomination of the next Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat.

3. Priorities of the Polish Presidency – guest speaker: Mr Mikołaj DOWGIELEWICZ, Secretary of State for European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

Secretary of State for European Affairs, Mr Mikołaj DOWGIELEWICZ, started by reiterating the Polish support for the involvement of national Parliaments in European debates which is beneficial to the democratic legitimisation of the European Union. Mr DOWGIELEWICZ added that one of the goals of a rotating Presidency was to cooperate with national Parliaments and to restore confidence in the European project.

With this challenge comes the first priority of the Polish Presidency, Secure Europe, which should be treated as multidimensional, in particular in the context of defence security, energy security and food security. In this context, Mr DOWGIELEWICZ mentioned also the Schengen agreement.

Mr DOWGIELEWICZ presented the initiative of the Polish Presidency to organise at the end of October 2011 a conference on the MFF with the participation of representatives from the European Commission, the European Parliament and national Parliaments.

Concerning the second priority, European Integration as a Source of Growth, he underscored that the debate on economic issues should be about the development of a long-term strategy, fostering economic growth and jobs creation. One of the main goals of the Council in the coming six months will be the deepening of the internal market. According to Mr DOWGIELEWICZ, the current situation is conducive to the conclusion of several trade agreements between the European Union and third countries (e.g. Ukraine, India, Singapore and Canada) and commencing negotiations with Moldova and Georgia.

Turning to the third priority, Europe Benefiting from Openness, Mr DOWGIELEWICZ emphasized that openness had been a great asset of the European Union and therefore the EU should be able to present benefits coming from it. In this context, he brought up the accession negotiations with Croatia, completed during the Hungarian Presidency at the end of June 2011, and announced the acceleration of the accession negotiations with Iceland, further dialogue concerning the candidature of Serbia and steps towards a decision on starting accession negotiations with Montenegro.

Finally, Mr DOWGIELEWICZ highlighted the most important issue for the weeks and months to come, i.e. crisis in the eurozone, which is a challenge both for the Presidency and for the EU institutions. He stressed that it was important to help and support countries facing difficulties and reminded that Poland once had been able to tackle the transition challenges thanks to support from European countries.

Following the presentation, 20 Members of national Parliaments and the European Parliament took the floor. They welcomed the priorities of the Polish Presidency and discussed questions raised during the presentation. The main topics of the debate were: the MFF, the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Schengen related issues, in particular the Danish Customs Control Agreement and accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the Schengen area. Many Members stressed the need for a comprehensive approach to economic issues, which include not only the MFF but also cohesion policy and a reform of the common agricultural policy. Mr Richard HÖRCSIK from the Hungarian *Országgyűlés* underscored that national Parliaments, as the *vox populi*, should take care of the appropriate funds for cohesion policy in the MFF. Ms Anne-Marie MELDGAARD from the Danish *Folketing*, presented factual information about the Danish Customs Control Agreement. Mr Carlo CASINI from the European Parliament noted that the Schengen agreement should not be compromised and underlined his support for the enlargement policy - in his opinion, the example of Croatia would give hope to other countries. Mr Miguel Angel MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ, Vice-President of the European Parliament, congratulated the visual identification of the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency and expressed satisfaction with priorities which he described as close to the priorities of the European Parliament. Other topics raised during the debate included the role of FRONTEX, the Polish-Franco-German "Weimar Battle Group", the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base Directive (hereinafter referred to as "the CCCTB") and energy security.

In his reply Mr DOWGIELEWICZ stressed that the debate on the MFF and the EU own resources had just started and first compromises were expected to be found during the Danish Presidency in the first half of 2012. He noted that of the discussion on the CCCTB Directive

continued and that it had been a sensitive issue for a number of national Parliaments (nine of which adopted reasoned opinions amounting to 13 votes). He also pointed out that the specific questions on the Schengen area should be addressed to Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM, Commissioner responsible for Home Affairs, who was to take the floor on the next point of the agenda.

3. EU institutions vis-à-vis conflicts at the EU's external borders - guest speaker: Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM, Commissioner responsible for Home Affairs

Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM, Commissioner responsible for Home Affairs, in her speech, noted that human mobility had always been a source of economic, cultural and technical development. She underlined the four fundamental principles of the European Union, i.e. the free movement of capital, goods, services and people. Admitting that increased mobility posed challenges both for countries of destination and countries of origin, the Commissioner said they did not, however, outweigh the benefits. In the context of recent developments in North Africa and the Arab world, Ms MALMSTRÖM noted that there was a clear need to increase the external dimension of the EU migration policy, as Europe faced serious demographic challenges, resulting in ageing societies, and needed labour immigration to be able to sustain its way of life. The Commissioner went on to say that although Member States could decide on the volumes of admission of migrant workers. To attract talented migrants, the EU needed a common framework with clear admission rules and rights of the workers. So far, two directives concerning the issue are in place: Blue Card and Single Permit, while another two regarding intra-corporate transferees and seasonal workers are being negotiated.

Referring to the migration from the eastern neighbourhood countries, Ms MALMSTRÖM stressed the importance of good relations with eastern neighbours that resulted in a number of initiatives such as e.g. the Söderköping process, the Prague process and the Budapest process. Nevertheless, the Commissioner warned against creating too many structures with a view to ensuring synergies and streamlining.

Ms MALMSTRÖM informed the audience that migration profiles were being prepared for all the states of the Eastern Partnership within the context of the EU financed project "Building Migration Partnerships". Having in mind the EU's commitment to promote the mobility of citizens of the Eastern Partnership countries, the Commissioner emphasized the importance of good cooperation on readmission, and visa facilitation agreements that may lead to visa liberalisation. So far there were readmission and visa facilitation agreements with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. Visa-free travel was a goal for all six countries of the Eastern Partnership. Moreover, Action Plans on visa liberalisation in Moldova and Ukraine have turned out to be important for reforms in the migration management area in those countries. Furthermore, the EU supports the countries of the Eastern Partnership in their capacity building to prevent irregular migration.

Ms MALMSTRÖM specified that the Mobility Partnerships EU-Georgia, and EU-Moldova were at an advanced stage and consisted of more than 100 projects and initiatives. Finally, a Mobility Partnership with Armenia was under way. The Commissioner concluded by saying that the Eastern Partnership Summit to be held in Warsaw on 29-30 September 2011 would be an opportunity to review the progress of the Eastern Partnership and to outline the actions to be taken over the next two years.

As regards the southern neighbourhood, Ms MALMSTRÖM underscored that the latest developments in North Africa and in the Arab world might have far-reaching effects for Europe. With this in mind she stressed that the EU supported the democratisation movements and was ready to do more to foster democracy in the region. The Commissioner noted that the EU had made more than 100 million EUR available for humanitarian assistance to migrants fleeing North Africa. However, stressed that the Commission believed that a mid-term strategy was required. In order to address these needs, on 24 May 2011 the Commission presented a Communication "A dialogue for migration, mobility and security with the southern Mediterranean countries"¹ in which it proposed a number of measures with the aim of reinforcing long-term relations between the EU and the countries of North Africa by supporting the democratic and economic transition in the region and thus preventing irregular migration. Ms MALMSTRÖM recalled that the Communication had been endorsed by the European Council on 24 June 2011 which paved the way for the conclusion of Mobility Partnerships with southern Mediterranean countries starting with Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco.

During the ensuing debate 14 speakers took the floor. Ms Tineke STRIK from the Dutch *Eerste Kamer* said that FRONTEX should not prevent migrants from arriving to Europe and deplored the fact that some 16 000 drowned while trying to reach the shores of Europe. Moreover, she called for support for those countries and regions outside the EU which accept most refugees from Libya. She also drew attention to the need - in addition to supporting economic reforms - of strengthening civil society in the countries of North Africa. Mr Enrico FARINONE from the Italian *Camera dei Deputati* stated that the EU institutions had not been prepared for the developments in North Africa and that the High Representative of the Union Foreign Affairs and Security Policy had been unable to coordinate their activities. Mr Angel TILVAR from the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* stressed that poverty in Eastern and Southern Europe must be reduced, otherwise sustainable development would not be possible and migration would always be a problem. Mr Andrzej GAŁAŻEWSKI from the *Sejm* of the Republic of Poland stated that the situation in North Africa revealed weaknesses in the European Neighbourhood Policy and added that in future it should focus on civil societies rather than authorities of the partner countries. He also said that all the neighbours of the European Union were equally important. Mr Miguel Ángel MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ from the European Parliament stressed the need for more European solidarity and underlined that Europeans also used to emigrate in hope of a better life. The objective should be that no one should ever be forced to emigrate. Several other speakers called for visa liberalisation for the countries of the Western Balkans. Mr Luděk SEFZIG from the Czech *Senát* asked about a proposed EU-Venezuela agreement in the context of Venezuela recognising the independence of Georgia's breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Some members stressed the need to support the neighbouring countries while maintaining the freedom of movement and the achievements of the Schengen Agreement. They also raised questions on visa and asylum regulation.

Ms MALMSTRÖM responding to the questions said that FRONTEX had helped save many lives and could not be held responsible for the activities of people engaged in human-trafficking or those selling tickets to overloaded boats. As regards the EU reaction to the developments in North Africa, the Commissioner noted that everybody had been surprised by the domino effect of the events, but now the EU could help immigrants. She also noted that the EU could be stronger if individual ministers of its Member States would send a coherent

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/intro/docs/110524/292/1_EN_ACT_part1_v12.pdf

message. She admitted that the neighbourhood policy in the Southern Mediterranean could have been better managed in the past, and emphasized that the EU must take responsibility for its neighbours. She noted that the EU could not offer a perspective of membership to such countries as Morocco and Tunisia, and thus had to differentiate the tools of its neighbourhood policy towards individual countries of the region. Finally, Commissioner MALMSTRÖM advocated the liberalisation of the EU's visa regime. However, she stated that all the interested parties should be informed that obtaining a visa should not be a method for seeking asylum in the EU.