MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC
Chambre des représentants **of the Federal Parliament of Belgium**
Brussels, 24 October 2010

PRESENT AT THE MEETING:

CHAIR: Mr Philippe MAHOUX (the *Sénat*, Belgium) and Mr Herman DE CROO (the *Chambre des représentants*, Belgium)
Mr Miguel ARIAS CAÑETE (the *Cortes Generales*, Spain), Mr Lajos MILE (the *Országgyűlés,* Hungary), Mr Miguel Ángel MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ (the European Parliament) and Mr Carlo CASINI (the European Parliament)

AGENDA:

1. Adoption of the agendas for the Presidential Troika meeting and for the XLIV COSAC meeting
2. Fourteenth Bi-annual Report
3. Draft Contribution and Conclusions of the XLIV COSAC
4. Letters received by the Presidency
5. Any other business

PROCEEDINGS:

1. Adoption of the agendas for the Presidential Troika meeting and for the XLIV COSAC meeting

The meeting was chaired by Mr Philippe MAHOUX, Co-Chairman of the Federal Advisory Committee for European Affairs of the Belgian Parliament, and Mr Herman DE CROO, Member of Parliament and a former Speaker of the Belgian *Chambre des représentants*. Both welcomed the Members of the Presidential Troika and presented the draft agendas for the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC and for the XLIV COSAC meeting.

The agendas of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC and of the XLIV COSAC meeting were unanimously approved.

2. Fourteenth Bi-annual Report

Mr DE CROO submitted the Fourteenth Bi-annual Report drafted by the COSAC Secretariat to the attention of the Presidential Troika.

Mr Miguel Ángel MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ, Vice-President of the European Parliament, was delighted that all 41 Chambers/Parliaments had replied to the questionnaire for the Fourteenth Bi-annual Report. He stressed that this constituted a new fact reflecting the political interest of

the report. After this, he congratulated and thanked the COSAC Secretariat for the work done on this report.

The Presidential Troika endorsed the Fourteenth Bi-annual Report.

3. Draft Contribution and Conclusions of the XLIV COSAC

Mr MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ commented on two suggested amendments of the European Parliament on the draft text of the Conclusions. First, regarding paragraph 2 of the draft, the European Parliament suggested that COSAC focused on the exchange of information and best practice, rather than on coordinated subsidiarity checks. Second, Mr MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ stated that the European Parliament felt embarrassed as a result of the questioning of the current language regime of COSAC in paragraph 6 of the draft Conclusions. He stressed that such a measure would be quite unacceptable for the European Parliament. Indeed, changing the language regime of COSAC would mean backtracking on a fundamental principle of democracy itself. Hence, not even the cost of the current language regime, which, by the way, must not be exaggerated, may constitute an argument to question it. Therefore, the European Parliament suggested deleting paragraph 6 of the draft Conclusions.
Mr Miguel ARIAS CAÑETE supported the European Parliament. Moreover, he was of the opinion that COSAC had more important things to do than waging a battle over the language regime.
Mr Herman DE CROO suggested leaving this matter for the Chairpersons debate the following day or for COSAC itself to take into consideration.

As paragraph 4 of the draft Conclusions called on the Hungarian Presidency to open a debate on COSAC's Rules of Procedure, Mr Lajos MILE, Vice Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs of the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, wanted to know the specific time table for this initiative. Mr DE CROO replied that, if the Hungarian Presidency agreed to have this debate during its COSAC meeting, this issue ought to be put on the agenda of the COSAC Chairpersons' meeting of 10 and 11 February 2011 and that, of course, the ensuing procedure would have to be in accordance with COSAC's Rules of Procedure.

4. Letters received by the Presidency

Mr Herman DE CROO informed the Presidential Troika about the letters received by the Belgian Presidency of COSAC. First, he informed about the letter of 30 June 2010 in which Mr Vitalino CANAS, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee of the Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, brought forward a number of suggestions regarding establishing of precise rules on adopting COSAC Contribution and Conclusions as well as regarding the functioning of the conference. Mr Miguel Ángel MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ stated that the European Parliament would endorse the idea of establishing an *ad hoc* working group that would draft the necessary proposals.

Mr DE CROO also presented the replies from Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission, and from Mr Jerzy BUZEK, President of the European Parliament, on the Contribution of XLIII COSAC, as well as the letters from Mr Marko MIHKELSON, Chairman of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Estonian *Riigikogu*, and from the Chairpersons of the Standing Committees on European Affairs of the Dutch *Eerste* and *Tweede Kamer*. The Presidential Troika took note of the above-mentioned letters.

Mr Herman DE CROO informed the Presidential Troika of another letter from Mr CANAS dated 21 September 2010 on the definition of "legislative act in the Treaty of Lisbon". Mr DE CROO stressed its particular importance regarding the consequences of this definition on the scope of the involvement of national Parliaments in the assessment of the principle of subsidiarity.

Regarding the letter received from Mr Česlovas Vytautas STANKEVIČIUS, Deputy Speaker of the Lithuanian *Seimas* and Chairman of its Committee on European Affairs, Mr DE CROO referred to the request of the President of the Assembly of Western European Union (henceforth "WEU") as well as to the debate on the common foreign and security policy and the common security and defense policy during the XLIV COSAC meeting.

Finally, Mr Herman DE CROO presented the letter received from Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA, Chairman of the Grand Committee of the Finnish *Eduskunta*, on the proposed Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the Commission. After an exchange of standpoints, it was decided to refer the debate on this matter to the Chairpersons debate the following day and the XLIV COSAC meeting.

5. Any other business

The request of the President of the Assembly of WEU

Mr MAHOUX informed the Presidential Troika of the request from Mr Robert WALTER, President of the Assembly of WEU, to address the XLIV COSAC meeting.

Mr Miguel Ángel MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ informed that he would not oppose this request as long as the intervention would not exceed three minutes. Mr Miguel ARIAS CAÑETE was of the opinion that an affirmative reply was not possible under the current Rules of Procedure of COSAC and that, moreover, this would set a precedent allowing anybody to ask for the floor during a COSAC meeting. Mr MILE stated that the incoming Hungarian Presidency did not object to this request. Mr MAHOUX said that - without this being seen as a precedent - he was ready to consider Mr WALTER's intervention as a second expert introduction to the item on parliamentary control of the common foreign and security policy and the common security and defense policy. Mr ARIAS CAÑETE suggested giving the floor to the representative of the WEU after the intervention of Prof. Dr. WOUTERS for not more than five minutes.

The Presidential Troika agreed to give the floor to President WALTER after the intervention of Prof. Dr. WOUTERS for not more than five minutes without this being considered as a precedent.

Suggestions of the Presidential Troika to the incoming Hungarian Presidency

Mr Herman DE CROO suggested organizing a debate on Comitology (delegated acts). Mr CASINI expressed the wish to have a debate on the election procedures to the European Parliament, on the one hand, and on the citizens' initiative, on the other.

Mr MILE replied that the Hungarian Presidency program had not been decided yet but that the incoming Presidency would be happy to take the above-mentioned suggestions into consideration.