

Minutes of the COSAC Chairpersons Meeting - Lisbon, 10 July 2007

Agenda:

1. Opening session and adoption of the Agenda
2. The priorities of the Portuguese Presidency
3. The Lisbon Strategy
4. IPEX Presentation
5. Debate on the Agenda of the XXXVIII COSAC, Estoril, 14-16 October
6. Debate on the European Programmes approved within the 4th financial framework for 2007-2013 (assessment of the past negotiations and priority setting for after 2013)
7. Closure of the meeting

10 July 2007

Proceedings of the sitting

IN THE CHAIR: Mr. Vitalino Canas, Assembleia da República

1. Opening session and adoption of the Agenda

The Chair welcomed the delegates and presented the draft agenda. The agenda as set out above was adopted by the chairpersons.

Mr. Canas then approached some of the issues discussed in the Troika meeting that was held the day before.

a) Following the letter written to the Presidency by the Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Slovak Republic about the timely availability of the Council meeting agendas to National Parliaments, the Presidency will send a letter to the Council Presidency raising this issue.

b) Concerning the possibility of conducting a subsidiarity and proportionality check in 2007, the Chair recalled the methodology already agreed at the XXXVII COSAC in Berlin and noted that the proposal by the Czech Senate would be an exception to this methodology that would allow National Parliaments to conduct a check still in 2007. The Troika had agreed to support the initiative from the Czech Senate and out of the five proposals mentioned, the one chosen was the Council Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism, since it is the most likely to be adopted in due time (to be published 25.9.2007). The COSAC Secretariat will be asked to prepare the necessary arrangements for this check which shall be conducted within a period of 8 weeks.

c) The German Bundestag presented a proposal to the Troika with the objective of asking the Council Presidency to invite the Chairmen of the Portuguese, German and Slovenian EU Affairs Committees as observers in the IGC. This proposal was distributed to all delegations and will be discussed under the agenda item 5. *"Debate on the Agenda of the XXXVIII COSAC, Estoril"*.

d) As far as the COSAC Secretariat was concerned, the Chair announced that 17 letters of intent of 13 parliaments and one parliamentary chamber had already been sent to the Presidency so that, in principle, the required threshold had been achieved¹. Mr. Canas recalled that the term of office for the current

¹ At the WG about the co-financing of the Secretariat, it was agreed that, for this system to work, there should be a specified minimum number of parliaments participating in the arrangement. The most widely accepted view was that the minimum number should correspond to "one-half-plus-one" of the national parliaments, i.e. 14 at the EU's 2007 membership. The working group noted that the membership of COSAC is by national parliaments not chambers; it follows that it is desirable

permanent member of the Secretariat will expire in the end of 2007. He seized this moment to thank Ms. Sarita Kaukoja for the quality of her work. He added that a new permanent member should be appointed at the XXXVIII COSAC and National Parliaments are invited to put forward suitable candidates for this post.

2. The priorities of the Portuguese Presidency

Minister of State and Foreign Affairs Luís Amado explained that the Programme of the Portuguese Presidency was established jointly within the first ever Trio-Presidency consisting of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia. The top priority for the second half of 2007 would be the negotiations for the Reform Treaty. It was important to come up with a result as soon as possible in order to lead the EU out of the institutional impasse. After enlargement, the EU was faced with a new reality including the diverse historical background and experience of the new Member States. Further, the Minister stressed the numerous challenges for the EU on the international level. Summit meetings scheduled with Russia, China, India, Ukraine and Brazil were already on the agenda for the second half of 2007. In addition, the EU would have to take a more active role in the Balkans and Kosovo, in the Middle East and would follow up on its new Strategy on Central Asia and the Black Sea region. The Portuguese Presidency would work towards establishing European leadership in international questions like climate change, health and food security, nuclear proliferation and the WTO trade negotiations. These were issues which no single EU Member State would be able to tackle on its own and where the EU could help to bring a certain balance to the international system. The Portuguese Presidency was also envisaging a summit meeting between the EU and the African Union with the aim to establish institutional links which would tie the destinies of the two continents together. Internally, it was important to accomplish free movement of persons within the EU; therefore, the Presidency was going to make sure that the new Schengen Information System was running smoothly by the end of the year. The Lisbon Agenda would be carried through in order to foster innovation and competitiveness in the EU, also taking into account its social dimension. Preparations for the Post-Kyoto process would have to take account of the economic reality and globalisation placing high demands on all EU governments.

An exchange of views took place. Chairpersons commended the Portuguese Presidency for enhancing continuity in the EU leadership through the Trio Presidency concept and extended their best wishes to the Portuguese Presidency. Although the loss in transparency and clarity as well as the abolition of the Union's symbols were regretted, the negotiation mandate for the Reform Treaty adopted by the European Council in June 2007 was welcomed as a way to solve the institutional crisis of the European Union. Chairpersons wished for the "Lisbon Treaty" to come into force before the 2009 elections to the European Parliament. The presidency was asked to reserve enough time at the conference in Estoril for discussion on the Intergovernmental Conference due to begin in July 2007 (IGC). Several chairpersons raised the question in which way the National Parliaments could be present at the negotiations. Other issues discussed were legal and illegal migration as well as asylum policy, avoiding overregulation, the European perspective of the Western Balkans, WTO trade negotiations, the future financing of the Galileo Satellite Navigation System and the environmental protection of the seas.

Chairman Vitalino Canas announced that there was a COSAC Troika proposal for a joint declaration of COSAC Chairpersons asking the Portuguese Council Presidency to invite observers from National Parliaments to the IGC.

In his responses, Minister Amado said that the Portuguese Council Presidency was prepared to examine the possibility of inviting National Parliament Observers to the IGC. While acknowledging that any further accession to the EU would have to be accepted by the population within the EU, he underlined the stabilizing force of the accession perspective for the States of the Western Balkans, an effect that Portugal had strongly experienced itself after its revolution in 1974. The Portuguese Presidency would work

that the chambers of bicameral parliaments make a joint commitment to participate in co-financing. Nevertheless, the WG also pointed out that it would be for the two chambers to agree between themselves how to divide the contribution of that national parliament. The working group considers that, if the chambers of bicameral parliaments are unable to make a joint commitment to co-financing the secretariat, there is no objection in principle to a single chamber of a bicameral parliament joining the coalition of the willing.

towards greater convergence of migration and asylum policies and foster cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs. The EU and Brazil could play an important role in finding a rapid solution to the stalled WTO negotiations together. The issues of overregulation, maritime policy and the financing of Galileo were also in the agenda of the Portuguese Presidency.

3. The Lisbon Strategy

Professor Carlos Zorrinho, Portuguese National Coordinator for the Lisbon Strategy, gave an overview of the main objectives, the state of implementation and the future of the Lisbon Strategy. He made clear that the Lisbon Strategy is a European and a national strategy that also has to answer questions of global extent. The revision of the Strategy in 2005 that put the focus on growth and jobs and introduced the system of national reform programmes and their evaluation at national and EU level was a major achievement. As a key to the Strategy's successful implementation, Prof. Zorrinho mentioned the promotion of innovation and competitiveness through inter alia investing in education and knowledge, reducing bureaucracy, strengthening the internal market and creating a good environment for businesses. He briefly outlined the schedule for the setting up of the second three year cycle of the Lisbon Strategy since its reform in 2005, that is to last from 2008 to 2010: The Commission will present a vision paper on the second cycle in September 2007 which will serve as a basis for the debate in the Council that is supposed to adopt a package of guidelines by December 2007. The Portuguese Presidency's priorities for the second cycle are the encouragement of a debate on flexicurity, the intelligent management of migration, the establishment of a technological plan for energy and the launch of the first knowledge community through the European Institute of Technology. The Presidency wanted to make sure that the economic, social and environmental dimension of the Strategy will be fully reflected in the second cycle.

During the general debate, delegations referred to a wide range of topics linked with the Lisbon Strategy reaching from the liberalisation of services and free movement of persons, to sustainable water management and the access to water, energy management, better law-making and the reduction of red tape, investment in research and training, employment, migration, intellectual property and Member States' budgetary deficits. Delegations made clear that the Lisbon Strategy ought to provide more effective approaches to these problems in the future.

In his final statement Professor Zorrinho underlined the important role of EU as well as national institutions including parliaments with regard to the successful continuation of the process. He also stressed the need to better mobilize and involve civil society and its protagonists in order to guarantee an effective implementation of the Strategy.

4. IPEX Presentation

Mrs. Elisabeth Arnold, Chairwoman of the Committee on European Affairs of the Danish Parliament addressed the chairpersons with a speech informing about the possibilities of using IPEX (InterParliamentary EU Information Exchange).

Mrs. Arnold introduced the structure of IPEX and described the current state of development as well as plans for the future. IPEX was a tool for National Parliaments for the general exchange of information on European scrutiny in National Parliaments. In particular it would allow the real-time exchange of information concerning National Parliaments' control of the principle of subsidiarity.

A short film introducing IPEX was shown. Chairpersons were invited to send any possible comments or suggestions about the system to: centralsupport@ipex.eu.

5. Debate on the Agenda of the XXXVIII COSAC, Estoril - 14-16 October

The Chairman presented the draft Agenda for the XXXVIII COSAC meeting to be held on 15 and 16 October in Estoril. The draft Agenda, as annexed to these minutes, was noted.

Concerning the debate about the EU Mediterranean Dimension, the Chairman announced that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt is unable to attend. The Foreign Affairs Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco had been invited and had already confirmed his presence. The Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of Portugal was also invited for this debate.

The Chairman also gave notice of the intention of proceeding with the revision of the Rules of Procedure at the COSAC Estoril on the basis of the proposal put forward by the German Presidency at the COSAC in Berlin that gathered the consensus of all delegations. He thanked all those involved in this process for their constructive approach, including the Italian colleagues. Following a Troika proposal, a short clarification would be added concerning the term of office of the official representing the European Parliament in the Secretariat.

Mr. Canas informed the Troika that 17 letters of intent had been sent by National Parliaments/Chambers that wish to participate in the co-financing of the permanent member of the COSAC Secretariat. The most recent one to arrive was the letter from the Speaker of the Portuguese Assembleia da República. The Chair also recalled that the XXXVIII COSAC should appoint a new permanent member of the Secretariat for the period 2008-2010 and asked National Parliaments to put forward suitable candidates for the post until then.

The Chair then noted that the COSAC meeting will be held in a very important week, since it is only 3 days before the Informal Meeting of Heads of State/Government in Lisboa that might finalize the work of the IGC and proceed with the signature of the Reform Treaty. In this context, Mr. Canas announced the proposal by the German Bundestag according to which COSAC would ask the Council Presidency to admit three observers from National Parliaments to the IGC, namely the Chairmen of the COSAC Presidential Troika. A Working Group, composed of the Troika, would also be convened under rule 2.6 of the COSAC Rules of Procedure with the mandate to follow the work of the IGC and to report to the COSAC meeting in October.

An exchange of views took place. The overwhelming majority of delegations voiced support for the idea contained in this proposal. However several Chairmen pointed out that it needed re-drafting in order to clarify that COSAC would not assume an institutional role as such, and concerning the composition, task and working methods of the Working Group. The delegation of the EP also supported the idea.

Some delegations expressed concerns about the proposal. The Chairman of the Eduskunta Grand Committee pointed out that a key aspect in overcoming Europe's democratic deficit was to enhance the role of National Parliaments. The problem would therefore have to be solved at the national level. It was the duty of each national government to inform and involve their Parliament. The Eduskunta could not support the Proposal because it would not accept to be informed about the IGC by Troika representatives instead. The proposal would create the impression that National Parliaments were acting like an institution; this was an unwelcomed development. Experience from earlier IGCs showed that the more people were around the table, the less was decided. However, Mr. Tuomioja supported the idea of convening a Working Group which could serve as a platform for exchanging information.

Lord Grenfell from the UK House of Lords pointed out that COSAC could not speak on behalf of National Parliaments. The proposal was good idea provided that the wording made clear that it only engaged the European Affairs Committees. Furthermore, it should be up to the Parliament of the Presidency to present the issue to the Council Presidency.

Other delegations pointed out that the aim of the proposal was to establish a new channel of communication. It was not to mandate the observers to represent National Parliaments or to negotiate on their behalf.

Mr. Bodewig recalled the Contribution of the XXXVII COSAC in Berlin according to which "*COSAC expects that national Parliaments and the European Parliament will be kept fully involved and that their*

views will be duly taken into account." by the IGC. As it stood, only the EP had obtained the right to nominate representatives to the IGC. While acknowledging the concerns raised by some delegations, he underlined that not every Parliament was in the same position as far as timely and comprehensive information from its government was concerned. It was not intended to establish a new institutional framework, but to ensure a better access to information for all National Parliaments.

The Chair noted the support of the majority of delegations and asked those Parliaments that spoke against the idea (namely the Eduskunta) to make an effort in order for a consensus to be obtained. He suggested to suspend the discussion until after the lunch break so that the Presidency could draft a new proposal that would incorporate all the suggestions made during the debate.

The debate resumed at 15h45 and the Presidency circulated a new proposal. The Chair highlighted the changes introduced and asked all delegations if a consensus could be obtained.

A number of delegations expressed their support for the re-drafted proposal. The Swedish delegation thanked the Presidency for its effort to gather the necessary consensus. It considered that the re-drafted proposal was more balanced and contained the suggestions of all the delegations that had previously expressed their opposition. Some doubts concerning the working group and its composition remained, but these were details which could be worked out at a later stage.

The Chair explained that the task of the working group would be to gather information about the IGC and to disseminate it to National Parliaments. However, the last paragraph of the proposal served an auxiliary purpose only; the main idea was to obtain National Parliament Observers to the IGC.

The Chair asked all delegations if there were any objections against the proposal presented by the Presidency. No objections were raised. The proposal was thus adopted by consensus. It is attached to these minutes.

6. Debate on the European Programmes approved within the 4th financial framework for 2007-2013 (assessment of the past negotiations and priority setting for after 2013)

Mr. Nunes Correia, Minister for Environment, Territorial Management and Regional Development of the Government of Portugal, introduced the theme by informing the participants that the National Strategic Reference Framework for Portugal (NSRF) was signed in the beginning of July 2007. NSRF is the strategic document that structures, for the period of 2007-2013, the realization in a Member State of the policies of cohesion and economic, social and territorial development, co-financed by the European funds. It is one of the main instruments for reducing the development differences in regions of Europe.

Concerning the activities of the Portuguese Presidency in this field, Mr. Nunes Correia announced the forthcoming Forum on Cohesion Policy with participation of the Prime Minister of Portugal to take place in Brussels on 27 and 28 September 2007. The Portuguese Presidency will also examine the ways in which the National Strategic Reference Frameworks reflect the Lisbon strategy. The informal Council on Territorial Integration will be held on 23 and 24 November in Azores.

The main challenges that should be tackled within the structural policy of the EU are population ageing, desertification of vast areas and immigration. The guiding principles to achieve strategic priority, namely an increase of value of the territories, are inclusion of all entities in the competition for EU funds, financial sustainability of the projects, financial management and monitoring of spending, reduction of administrative costs and examination of efficiency of financing as regards achieving the objectives.

Lord Grenfell presented the parliamentary scrutiny of EU spending programmes as conducted by the EU Committee of the House of Lords. Decisions on the spending of EU funds involve three levels of agreement, set out in three forms of legislation; namely the multi-annual financial framework that fixes the ceilings for spending, the key spending programmes that determine how the money is spent up to the fixed ceiling and the annual budget. Lord Grenfell stressed the importance of proper timing of parliamentary scrutiny of the abovementioned acts and the important role the specialised Sub-Committees

play in the process of scrutiny. National parliaments could thus have the possibility to influence policy makers, who take the decisions in the fast-moving process of the annual Budget cycle.

As regards the budget review and the EU budget in the next financial framework, some of the Sub-Committees of the House of Lords EU Committee were already either conducting inquiries on specific spending programmes or planning for the scrutiny of the 2008-09 Budget Review. An Exchange of the experience with the scrutiny of the EU's spending programmes would lead to a better parliamentary scrutiny at national level.

Annex 1

Presidency Proposal as adopted by the COSAC Chairpersons Meeting in Lisbon 9 and 10 July 2007

10. July 2007

Recalling the Contribution of the XXXVII COSAC in Berlin in May 2007 according to which COSAC expects that National Parliaments and the European Parliament will be kept fully involved and that their views would be duly taken into account (1.3. of the Contribution), the COSAC Chairpersons Meeting in Lisbon on 9 and 10 July 2007 requests the European Council and its Portuguese Presidency in particular to examine the possibility of admitting National Parliament Observers to the negotiations of the 2007 IGC.

In particular, the Chairpersons of the European Affairs Committees from the National Parliaments of Portugal, Germany and Slovenia are asked to take part in the 2007 Intergovernmental Conference on a Reform Treaty for the European Union as observers. They are invited to report back to National Parliaments, in particular to European Affairs Committees, on deliberations about the stipulations concerning the future role National Parliaments in the European Union. The National Parliament Observers will closely cooperate with the European Parliament representatives in the IGC.

Reports to National Parliaments will be sent by the easiest practicable methods, e.g. by e-mail or through IPEX where appropriate. A report will be established for the COSAC Conference in Estoril in October 2007.

The Portuguese Parliament is asked to take up contact with the Council Presidency in order to negotiate the practical arrangements and report back to the COSAC Presidential Troika before the beginning of the IGC.

COSAC will establish a Working Group pursuant to rule 2.6 of the COSAC Rules of Procedure, composed by representatives of 27 National Parliaments, with the mandate to follow the IGC as closely as possible.

Annex 2: Agenda of XXXVIII COSAC

XXXVIII COSAC Estoril Congress Center

14th to 16th of October 2007

Draft Programme

(updated 20th July 2007)

Sunday, 14 October 2007

Arrival of the delegations and registration for the COSAC meeting at the hotels

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 15.00 | Sightseeing Tour |
| 17.30-18.30 | COSAC Troika meeting (Assembleia da República) |
| 18.15 | Departure from the hotel to Assembleia da República |
| 19.00 | Guided tour of the São Bento Palace (Assembleia da República) |
| 20.00 | Welcoming dinner offered by MP Vitalino Canas, Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs of the Assembleia da República (<i>Salão Nobre e Passos Perdidos</i> , Assembleia da Republica) |
| 22.00 | Return to the hotels |

Monday, 15 October 2007

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 08.20 | Departure from the hotels to the Estoril Congress Centre |
| 08.30 | Registration for the COSAC meeting (for those who have not registered) |
| 08.35 | Political Groups Meetings |
| 09.15 | Opening Session of the XXXVIII COSAC, Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs, MP Vitalino Canas

Adoption of the Agenda of the XXXVIII COSAC |
| 09.30 | Guest speaker: José Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission (to be confirmed)

Debate |
| 11.00 | Coffee break |
| 11.15 | The Portuguese Presidency and the Future of Europe
Guest speaker: José Sócrates, Prime-Minister of the Portuguese Republic

Debate |
| 12.45 | Group Photo |
| 13.00 | Buffet-lunch at the Estoril Congress Centre |
| 15.00 | Revision of the COSAC Rules of Procedure |

15.15	Presentation of the 8th Bianual Report - Overview of the EU scrutiny systems of the National Parliaments of EU 27 - National parliament's expectations from the IGC - Parliamentary monitoring of the Lisbon Strategy - The EU Mediterranean Dimension - National Parliaments' monitoring of EU Financial programmes: priority setting and allocation of funds
16.15	Coffee break
16.30	COSAC Secretariat – Appointment and co-financing of the Permanent Member for the Period 2008-2010
17.00	Debate on Future Topics for COSAC (Article 7 of the Rules of Procedure)
17.45	Return to the hotels for those not attending the meeting of the chairpersons
17.45	Meeting of the Chairpersons for the Preparation of the Contribution and Conclusions of the XXXVIII COSAC
19.15	Departure from the hotels
19.30	Official dinner at the <i>Palácio de Queluz</i> , hosted by H.E. the Speaker of Assembleia da República, MP Jaime Gama
21.30	Return to the hotels

Tuesday, 16 October 2007

08.45	Departure from the hotels
09.00	The EU Mediterranean Dimension Guest Speakers: Luís Amado, Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of Portugal; Mohamed Benaïssa, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco; Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain
11.00	Coffee break
11.15	Adoption of the Contribution and Conclusions of the XXXVIII COSAC
12.30	End of XXXVIII COSAC
13.00	Buffet-Lunch at the Estoril Congress Centre, hosted by the Chairman of the European Affairs Committee, MP Vitalino Canas
15.00	Return to the hotels and departure