

Minutes of the Chairpersons' Meeting.txt

MINUTES OF THE
COSAC CHAIRPERSONS MEETING
HELSINKI,
11 SEPTEMBER 2006

Agenda

- 1) Opening of proceedings and adoption of Agenda
- 2) Debate on the agenda of the XXXVI COSAC (and outcome of the Troika Meeting)
 - a) Special Guests
 - b) The next steps for national parliaments' subsidiarity and proportionality control
 - c) Cofinancing of the COSAC Secretariat
- 3) Cooperation of the Commission and National Parliaments
- 4) European Energy Policy
- 5) Any other business

Proceedings of the sitting

11 September 2006

IN THE CHAIR: Mr Jari VILEN MP, Chairman of the Grand Committee of the Parliament of Finland (Eduskunta)

1. Opening of proceedings and adoption of Agenda
The Chairman, Mr Jari Vilén, welcomed the delegates and presented the draft agenda. The agenda as set out above was adopted by the chairpersons.

2. Debate on the agenda of the XXXVI COSAC
The Chairman presented the draft Agenda for the XXXVI COSAC meeting to be held on 20 and 21 November in Helsinki. The draft Agenda, as annexed to these minutes, was noted.

Additional proposals for the agenda were discussed as follows:

-Accession of the EU to the European Convention of Human Rights (submitted by the Dutch Senate): As the proposed accession would require a change to the existing Treaties and would anticipate elements of the Constitutional Treaty, the issue was considered too sensitive to be examined in detail. Yet, it can be addressed during the COSAC meeting. It may be noted in the conclusions of the XXXVI COSAC meeting.

-Parliamentary Scrutiny of European Regulatory Agencies (submitted by the Dutch Senate):

The topic was considered interesting, but, owing to its complexity and its highly technical nature, it was thought that it would require in-depth preparation. The topic might be taken up by the German and/or Portuguese Presidencies.

-Enlargement of the Schengen Area (submitted by the Estonian Parliament): It was considered that the topic could most usefully be addressed in connection with the proposed discussion on

the Mid-term review of The Hague Programme with Commission Vice President

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Frattoni, tabled
for the XXXVI COSAC.

-Parliaments and the Middle East conflict (submitted by the European Parliament during the troika meeting): It was considered that the topic could be addressed during the Prime Minister's question hour scheduled to take place during the XXXVI COSAC meeting.

a) Special Guests

The Chairman announced that, in view of the draft agenda for the XXXVI COSAC, and pursuant to Article 4.4 of the Rules of Procedure, the Troika had resolved to invite the Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Russian Duma to speak and to invite representatives of the foreign affairs committees of the Icelandic, Norwegian and Ukrainian parliaments' Foreign Affairs Committees to attend the session on "the Northern Dimension of the European Union and Russia", scheduled to take place on 21 November, as special guests.

b) The next steps for national parliaments' subsidiarity control

The Chairman reported on the state of play of the subsidiarity and proportionality check which participating national parliaments are presently conducting on the Commission's Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 2201/2003 as regards jurisdiction and introducing rules concerning applicable law in matrimonial matters. He observed that participating national parliaments were requested to send in their observations on the proposal by the deadline of 27 September, and drew attention to the aide-memoire prepared by the secretariat. The Polish Senate was acknowledged as the first chamber to have sent in a response.

c) Cofinancing of the permanent member of the COSAC Secretariat

The Chairman presented a note on the future funding of the permanent member of the COSAC secretariat, drafted by the Finnish Presidency to follow up the Conclusions of the XXXIV COSAC. He stressed that the situation called for a more sustainable arrangement that would allow all interested parliaments to put forward candidates for the post of permanent member. He explained that the Presidency proposal was based on voluntary co-financing of the ancillary costs of the permanent member of the secretariat.

An exchange of views took place. The Chairpersons agreed that the secretariat had functioned successfully since its inauguration in January 2004, and was necessary for the better functioning of COSAC. The German Bundestag proposed the creation of a reflection group to study the issue further. The chairpersons agreed that a reflection group, composed of officials, should be established which would be open to all interested parliaments and would work via electronic exchange of information. It was agreed that the reflection group would seek to prepare a proposal for a decision to be submitted to the XXXVI COSAC.

3. Cooperation of the Commission and National Parliaments

The COSAC Chairpersons heard an introduction by Mrs Margot WALLSTRÖM, Vice-President of the European Commission, Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy¹.

Her main topic was the Commission's initiative for direct transmission of legislative proposals and working documents to national parliaments, which had been put in place on 1 September 2006. Mrs. Wallström informed the chairmen that the Commission has recently agreed an internal procedure to deal with observations on proposals submitted to the Commission by national parliaments: The Commission Secretariat-General had opened an electronic mailbox to receive observations from national parliaments.. Any Commission response would be prepared largely by the Directorate General responsible for the particular issue. It would be translated into the same language as the original national parliament's observations. The Commission had set itself a deadline of three months from the reception of an observation to the adoption of a response.

An exchange of views took place. A great number of Chairpersons made clear that they would not be satisfied if the Commission merely considered their observations but was not ready to reconsider its legislative proposals accordingly. Mrs Wallström explained that national parliaments' reactions would be duly considered, but that the Constitutional Treaty ought not to be anticipated. She stressed that the success of the initiative lay in the hands of national parliaments. The Commission would evaluate its initiative after the first six months of its operation.

4. European Energy Policy

The COSAC Chairpersons heard an introduction by Mr Mauri PEKKARINEN, Minister of Trade and Industry (with responsibility for Energy policy)², Mr Jean-Baptiste RENARD, President of British Petroleum Europe³ and Professor Peter LUND D.Sc. of the Helsinki University of Technology, Chairman of the EU Advisory Group on Energy Policy⁴. The presentations focused on the current state of energy supply on a global scale as well as within the EU Member States, strategies to enhance energy security EU-wide, the development of new technologies, alternative energy sources and the increase of energy efficiency also with regard to environmental implications of energy consumption. Following a number of questions and statements by delegates an exchange of views took place.

5. Any other business

The Italian Senate made an informal proposal to host an "extraordinary COSAC meeting" in Rome on 23 March 2007 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Rome. The Italian Senate proposed a formula where the Speakers would be invited together with the EU-Affairs Committee chairpersons. It was proposed that the topics for discussion would be the Constitutional Treaty, the Lisbon Strategy and European Security and Defence

Policy. The Chairman asked the German delegation for their initial comments on the initiative,

1 The Speech of Mrs. Wallström is published on the COSAC website:

<http://www.cosac.eu/upload/application/pdf/96a95f75/cosacwallstrom.pdf>

2 The introduction by Mr. Mauri Pekkarinen is published on the COSAC website:

<http://www.cosac.eu/upload/application/pdf/a190c690/cosacpekkarinen.pdf>

3 The introduction by Mr. Jean-Baptiste Renard is published on the COSAC website:

<http://www.cosac.eu/upload/application/pdf/26d4481e/cosacrenard.pdf>

4 The presentation by Mr. Lund is published on the COSAC website:

<http://www.cosac.eu/upload/application/pdf/46720a9c/cosaclund.pdf>

as the proposed event would take place during the German Presidency. The German delegation welcomed the initiative⁵.

The Chairman thanked delegates for their contributions and closed the meeting.

5 Since the Italian proposal was made informally the Chairpersons were unable to take a decision on the proposal at this time (Rules of Procedure, Art. 2.2).