



EUROPEAN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HOUSE OF COMMONS

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11 June 2002

Mr. Platts

Reform of COSAC

As you know, the meeting of COSAC in Madrid mandated the Presidential Troika to produce a detailed proposal for a more effective COSAC, focusing its activity more on the role of national parliaments.

We believe the need to reform COSAC has been highlighted by the involvement of national parliamentarians in the Convention, where the fact that national parliamentarians have rarely discussed the sort of issues raised in the Laeken Declaration and have rarely acted together has quickly emerged as a weakness. COSAC has spent too much time listening to speeches from Ministers and far too little discussing the role of national parliaments and the scrutiny of EU legislation.

We are therefore writing to you with our two Committees' proposals for reform, as follows:

- COSAC's main role should be defined as assisting national parliaments to improve their effectiveness in EU matters, especially their scrutiny of government activities in the EU, by sharing best practice and information and acting as a strategic body on behalf of national parliaments.
- COSAC's agenda should therefore focus on the role of national parliaments rather than general issues.
- COSAC should have a small secretariat to facilitate the exchange of information (e.g. on scrutiny problems both generally and in relation to particular documents), to monitor activities relevant to national scrutiny (e.g. compliance by the Council with the protocol on the role

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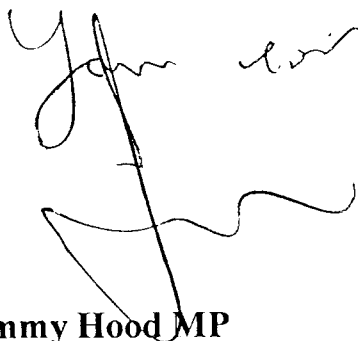


of national parliaments), and to take up procedural matters of concern with the Council secretariat and the Commission.

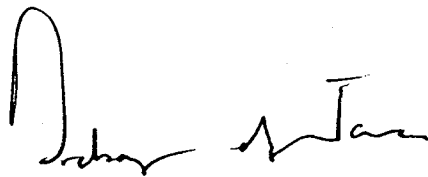
- Draft agendas should be circulated for consultation before COSAC meets.
- One of COSAC's tasks should be to draw up minimum standards of parliamentary scrutiny which national parliaments could use to put pressure on their governments. ENIG
- The status of MEPs in COSAC, and especially in the Presidential Troika, should be re-examined in the light of the principles above, while actively exploring ways of increasing dialogue and co-operation with MEPs and the European Parliament.
- Changes to COSAC's rules should no longer require unanimity.

The last point is crucial, and should be determined first, since it is unlikely that any reform can be achieved while unanimity on rule changes is required.

We look forward to hearing your views on these proposals, and would also be interested in views from other European Affairs Committees, to whom we are sending copies of this letter.



Jimmy Hood MP
Chairman
European Scrutiny Committee
House of Commons



The Lord Brabazon of Tara
Chairman
Select Committee on the EU
House of Lords

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From: Jimmy Hood MP



EUROPEAN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HOUSE OF COMMONS

7 MILLBANK, LONDON SW1P 3JA

22 July 2002

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Let Claus

Thank you for sending me a copy of your proposals for reform of COSAC. There is a great deal in them which I strongly agree with, and I look forward to discussing the proposals on 16 September.

However, it seems to me that the proposals may be too ambitious for agreement all at once, particularly in view of the current requirement for unanimity on rule changes. My suggestion would be to tackle the reform at the October meeting in three stages: first, to abolish the requirement for unanimity for rule changes, without which no reforms are likely to be agreed at all; secondly to make the detailed changes to COSAC's organisation (e.g. creation of a secretariat, replacement of the troika) which would make COSAC capable of taking on new tasks; and thirdly to discuss what new roles COSAC and national parliaments might take on. Detailed proposals for changes to COSAC's rules on matters such as voting and how the secretariat would be appointed and paid for would therefore be needed by the October meeting, and I assume you plan to draw these up following 16 September.

There is also likely to be a major debate about whether COSAC itself should carry out tasks such as monitoring and enforcing subsidiarity, giving views on draft proposals and being the Forum of Parliaments, or whether it should act as a more strategic body, organising activities such as those in the Forum of Parliaments, rather than conducting such activities itself.

It will be a pleasure to meet you again and discuss these matters in September.

CHAIRMAN

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