

SUMMARY OF CHAIRMAN OF DELIBERATIONS IN PREPARATION FOR THE XXIVth COSAC

of the Joint Committee on European Affairs of the
Houses of the Oireachtas
IRELAND

1. The Joint Committee on European Affairs, met on a number of occasions following the COSAC Working Group meeting to discuss the issues to be addressed at the forthcoming XXIVth COSAC. The Joint Committee is of the view that three fundamental issues require to be addressed:
 - (i) whether a second Chamber should be added to the European Parliament;
 - (ii) whether the COSAC Working Group should be established on a permanent basis; and
 - (iii) the manner in which national parliaments should be involved in the post Nice Treaty "Future of Europe" Debate.
2. The Joint Committee recognises the need to reduce the democratic deficit in a meaningful way, but rejects the establishment of a second chamber on the basis that it will not address the issue.
3. The EU Committee believes that the COSAC Working Group should be established on a more permanent basis and with extra resources and responsibility for a more rapid transmission of the concerns expressed by the various EU Affairs Committees throughout the Union. These improvements will more effectively address the concerns expressed at COSAC meetings in the past.
4. A strengthened COSAC, meeting on a more regular basis, can also play a much more meaningful role in the post Nice discussions on the "Future of Europe" and can engage effectively with Civil Society in each member state. The Joint Committee is particularly concerned with the ever increasing democratic deficit where the role of members of the national parliaments is replaced by the Executive in the course of discussions with the institutions of the Union. The Joint Committee (while recognising that this is primarily a matter for each national parliament and its Government) urges a uniform level of power, responsibility and meaningful consultation for the European Affairs Committee in each of the Member States.
5. Following on the argument in favour of strengthening the role of national parliaments and of COSAC, and assuming that this is achieved, the Joint Committee advocates that COSAC itself should play a direct role in the post Nice Treaty "Future of Europe" debate. The Committee believes that discussions with Civil Society should take place at European Affairs Committee level in the first instance, should be carried on through COSAC and hence to the European institutions, thus creating a more democratic reflection of the view of parliament and society in each member state rather than entire reliance on the Convention discussions which took place on the Charter of Fundamental Rights.