

Mr Fabius tabled his proposal to increase the role of national parliaments in the European decision-making process at the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments in Madrid in May 1989. The Speakers adopted a number of initiatives to strengthen the role of national parliaments in the EC. One of them was to create what was called the Inter-parliamentary Conference of bodies specialised in European Affairs (the Conference was renamed COSAC during its 4th meeting). The Speakers proposed that this Conference should meet on a regular basis in order to debate topics of common interest, which would be decided in advance. The Conference should in principle be organised biannually by the national parliament of the Member State holding the Presidency of the EC.

The first meeting of this inter-parliamentary conference, was convened by the French National Assembly on 16 and 17 November 1989. Parliamentarians from ten of the twelve Member States participated, even though at that time not all national parliaments had specialised European Affairs Committees. (Parliamentarians did not attend from the other two Member States because of recent elections.) The meeting was co-chaired by the Chairmen of the European delegations of the French National Assembly and Senate, Mr Charles Josselin and Mr Jacques Genton.

The agenda focused on an issue which is still valid today: how to increase parliamentary control of EU affairs. The main focus was on how to reinforce the involvement of national parliaments in EU affairs. The parliaments discussed different options: strengthening parliamentary control at the national level, enhancing inter-parliamentary co-operation between parliaments, or strengthening the role of the European Parliament. The proposal of Mr Poher, Speaker of the French Senate, to create "European Senate" composed of representatives of national parliaments provoked a particularly lively debate.

In the conclusions from the 1st conference, however, the parliaments limited themselves to agreeing to improve their "reciprocal information through systematic exchange of texts concerning European affairs adopted by the Parliaments".

In addition, a discussion took place on how to develop relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments. The parliaments also discussed a proposal from the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments about organising a simultaneous annual debate in all parliaments on a subject of common interest. Finally, the Conference approved a message addressed to the meeting of the Heads of States and Governments (taking place in Paris the following day) on the process of democratisation in Eastern Europe and the need to cooperate with those countries.