

**MINUTES OF THE
XXXVII COSAC MEETING
BERLIN,
14-15 MAY 2007**

Agenda

1. Welcome remarks by the Chairmen and adoption of the agenda of the XXXVII COSAC

2. COSAC procedural issues

- Report on the state of affairs as regards the establishment of the COSAC Secretariat in the rules of procedure and co-financing of a permanent member
- Presentation and adoption of the 7th biannual report

3. Examination of the way ahead as regards the evaluation of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality

4. Climate Change and Climate Protection – The Role of the EU

Guest speaker: Mr. Michael Müller, State Secretary of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

5. Speech on the future of Europe by the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and President of the European Council Mrs. Angela Merkel

6. Evaluation of the Commission Initiative on the Direct Transmission of Documents to the national parliaments

7. “The EU and its Eastern Neighbours – Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia”

Guest speaker: Mr Günter Gloser, Minister of State for Europe, Federal Foreign Office

8. Discussion on the European Commission’s Annual Policy Strategy for 2008

Presentation by the Vice-president of the European Commission Mrs. Margot Wallström

9. Adoption of the Conclusions and Contribution

Proceedings of the sitting

14 May 2007

IN THE CHAIR: Mr Matthias Wissmann (Bundestag), Mr Willi Stächele (Bundesrat)

1. Opening of proceedings and adoption of Agenda

The Chair welcomed the delegates and presented the draft agenda. A special welcome was extended to the delegation from the Ukrainian and Moldovan parliaments, which took part in the COSAC meeting as Special Guests. The agenda as shown above was adopted.

2. COSAC procedural matters

2.1. Report on the status of efforts to enshrine the COSAC Secretariat in the Rules of Procedure and the co-financing of a permanent member.

The Troika had discussed the issue in February 2007 and had resolved that, during the German presidency, signed letters of intent for the co-financing of the permanent member of the COSAC secretariat would be collected, in order to ensure the smooth running of the Secretariat in case there was no agreement on an

amendment to the Rules of Procedure before the end of 2007. The chair welcomed receipt of 13¹ letters of intent where the parliament or parliamentary chambers stated their willingness to contribute towards the co-financing of the permanent member of the COSAC secretariat and the cost of running COSAC's office and website. A further nine² COSAC delegations announced during the debate their willingness to sign and submit similar letters in the near future. As concluded in the report of the working group which reported to the XXXVI COSAC in Helsinki, the commitment to participate in the co-financing arrangements will take effect if national parliaments of at least 14 Member States participate.

The Chair drew attention to a proposed compromise amendment to the Rules of Procedure which had been cleared with the troika as proposal for a compromise text to be included in the COSAC Rules of Procedure. There were no objections to the proposed text from the floor. The Troika was encouraged to continue its efforts to prepare the ground for a final decision during the Portuguese presidency.

2.2. Presentation and adoption of the 7th biannual report

The Chair introduced the 7th bi-annual report as approved by the Troika. The biannual report was approved without further discussion.

3. Examination of the way ahead as regards the evaluation of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality

The Chair presented the findings of the 7th bi-annual report regarding this matter, stressing two main ideas: a significant majority of Parliaments had found the two checks conducted within the framework of COSAC a very useful experience, in particular as an instrument to test their internal procedures; it was however essential that those mechanisms were adapted to respond within the six week period foreseen in the Amsterdam Treaty.

As to the way ahead, there was a consensus among national parliaments to continue with a limited number of checks conducted within the framework of COSAC. The Chair proposed a following procedure: The selection mechanism should be similar to the one chosen for the first two subsidiarity and proportionality checks. Accordingly, the selection should be based on the European Commission's Legislative and Work Programme. National parliaments which wished to participate should check the European Commission's annual work programme for 2008 after its presentation in autumn 2007, making use of their own practices. After that they should inform the COSAC Presidency of the proposals they wished to be subject to the subsidiarity and proportionality checks, in November 2007 if possible. They would be able, however, to make additional proposals at any time. The Presidential Troika should designate the proposals most frequently mentioned as subject to the check and submit a corresponding proposal to the national parliaments. If there were no objections raised by a deadline to be defined, the Presidential Troika should state that the designated proposals have been selected. The Presidential Troika would then request the COSAC Secretariat to start the procedure.

An exchange of views took place. Some delegations pointed out that besides sharing the findings of the checks, it was also important to understand how national parliaments worked in practical terms, with regard namely to the administrative structures each parliament had to perform this work. It was also important to have a closer look at what the concepts of subsidiarity and proportionality actually meant in practice. The Dutch Parliament and the Czech Senate proposed that five checks each year should occur each year instead of

¹ These were from the Luxembourg House of Representatives, the Belgian Senate and House of Representatives, the Irish Oireachtas, the Malta House of Representatives, the Polish Sejm and Senate, the French Senate, the Parliament of Romania, the National Council of the Slovak Republic, the Swedish Riksdag, the Lithuanian Seimas and the Austrian Parliament.

² These were the Portuguese Assembleia da Republica, the German Bundestag, the German Bundesrat, the UK House of Commons, the Slovenian National Assembly, the Danish Folketing, the Finnish Eduskunta, the Bulgarian National Assembly, the Czech Senate and the Parliament of Spain.

only two, and that new checks should be performed during the autumn of 2007³. It was also mentioned that the Commission should provide more in depth explanatory notes on subsidiarity and proportionality in its proposals. Among other issues discussed were the possible establishment of a “traffic light” system of parliamentary scrutiny of EU proposals, and the question of whether the legal basis of the proposals should also be scrutinised as the essential element of this exercise.

4. Climate Change and Climate Protection – The Role of the EU

Mr. Michael Müller, State Secretary of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, gave an overview of EU climate change policy. He stressed that Europe should take a leading role in the field of climate protection and pointed out the results of the Spring European Council of March 2007 where EU leaders had *inter alia* agreed on cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 20% until 2020 compared to 1990 levels. These reduction targets could be reached through the improvement of energy efficiency, the enhanced use of renewable energies as well as the establishment of an improved emissions trading scheme. Mr. Müller referred to the three latest reports of the International Panel for Climate Change in order to underline the seriousness of climate change and the necessity of taking immediate and effective action. He also pointed out the EU’s efforts to reach a post-Kyoto climate protection regime aiming at a reduction of greenhouse gases by 30 % until 2020.

During the debate, delegations welcomed the comprehensive agreement on energy and climate protection reached at the Spring European Council and made clear that Europe should take a pioneering role in the field of sustainability of energy supply and efficient energy use. A number of delegates expressed their support for nuclear energy as a climate friendly energy source and claimed that the EU energy policy should put a stronger focus on it. In response to this, many delegates underlined the safety risk of nuclear energy as well as the inefficiency of its production. Delegations also expressed their scepticism towards biofuels as a competitor to food production and called for the use of alternative technologies as well as an increase in energy efficiency, e.g. by improving construction methods. It was also suggested to include a chapter on climate protection in a new constitutional treaty or to conclude a European climate treaty modelled after the European Coal and Steel Community. Delegations also stressed the importance of getting the world’s biggest polluters - China, India and the USA - on board for an international post-2012 climate protection framework.

State Secretary Müller pointed out that nuclear energy could not be seen as a solution to the climate change problem, owing to its disadvantages in terms of safety and efficiency of supply. He made clear that the only solution lay in enhancing energy efficiency, for which there would be great potential in the EU. He stressed once more that action should also focus on the international level where an agreement for the post-Kyoto period was needed.

The Chair concluded with the remark that the Federal Ministry for the Environment would be informed about all other statements by delegations made in the discussion.

5. Speech on the Future of Europe by the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

The President of the European Council, Chancellor Angela Merkel, reminded delegates in her speech⁴ that peace, liberty, responsibility, justice, respect and tolerance were the basic values of the European Union. These would have to be the guiding principles for the future as well. Merkel recalled the origins of the European Community. The desire to prevent more wars fought over coal and iron ore had been the beginning of the European Coal and Steel Community. Today energy was again an important issue within Europe -

³ The letter addressed to the presidency is published on the COSAC website: <http://www.cosac.eu/en/meetings/Berlin2007/plenary/>

⁴ The speech (in German) is published on the COSAC website: <http://www.cosac.eu/en/meetings/Berlin2007/plenary/>

from security of supply to climate protection and solidarity among member states in the energy sector. The Chancellor believed that Europe would have an important role to play in this context in future.

The central question for the future of Europe was the EU's capacity to act as a community. For a community of 27 members, this capacity to act could no longer be ensured by the reforms of the Treaty of Nice. Merkel warned that accepting new members to the EU was also impossible on the basis of the current Treaty. It was equally important to take the fears of citizens seriously. The Constitutional Treaty offered answers to these fears, also thanks to its provision for the stronger participation of national parliaments and the stronger involvement of regions. She stressed that it was not the task of the German presidency to solve the issue of the content of the Constitutional Treaty, but to prepare a timetable for the future process. Substantial decisions had to be taken under the French Presidency in the second half-year 2008, and any settlement had to enter into force before the 2009 elections to the European Parliament.

The Chancellor welcomed the fact that the national parliaments of Member States were deeply involved in the process of European unification. This helped to win the people over to the European vision. If the EU began to move away from its citizens, it would automatically see defeats in referendums and resistance emerging.

6. Evaluation of the Commission Initiative on the Direct Transmission of Documents to the national parliaments

The Chair highlighted that the majority of national parliaments saw an added value in this new mechanism of dialogue with the Commission, not only because it established a direct channel of communication with the Commission, but also because it enhanced their influence in dealing with European affairs. Nevertheless it was acknowledged that it was too early to have a definite assessment of the real value of this mechanism, as far as the Commission's record in taking the comments of national parliaments into consideration was concerned. National parliaments had so far sent 85 comments to the Commission, which had sent 39 replies. The effectiveness of this new procedure with regard to possible changes in the policy formulation process by the Commission remained unclear.

An exchange of views took place. The majority of delegations, although welcoming the establishment and development of this procedure, did agree that it was still to be demonstrated whether this dialogue would have a real effect on the Commission's proposals. Several delegations noted that policy proposals should be analysed at the earliest stage possible, namely at the non-legislative phase (Green and White Papers) so that the influence of national parliaments could be more effective. All correspondence should be uploaded to IPEX on a more systematic basis, so that parliaments could easily access the comments other parliaments had made and the Commission's reactions to them.

15 May 2007

7. The EU and its Eastern Neighbours – Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Mr. Günter Gloser, German Minister of State for Europe, outlined the three components of the EU's Eastern Policy in his speech⁵: intensifying the European Neighbourhood Policy; developing the strategic partnership with Russia, and creating a Central Asia policy. These components complemented each other and formed a coherent beginning for the reinforcement of the EU's relations to the East. "If we do not export stability, we will import instability in the long term", Mr. Gloser stated.

⁵ The speech (in German) is published on the COSAC website: <http://www.cosac.eu/en/meetings/Berlin2007/plenary/>

Stabilisation of the European Neighbourhood Policy was a central priority for the German Presidency. One of the leading projects was a new Enhanced Agreement with Ukraine, which would replace the existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. In the core of the agreement was the objective of a comprehensive free trade agreement. Negotiations over a free trade zone could begin as soon as Ukraine had joined the World Trade Organisation. Other central priorities in the deepened European Neighbourhood Policy included internal security, deepening cooperation with regard to migration and strengthening the EU commitment in and with the Black Sea region. The presidency wanted to obtain a clear political commitment for intensifying the European Neighbourhood Policy at the June European Council.

The EU and Russia were in a strategic partnership to which there was no alternative on either side. The common interests and interdependencies were by far larger than what separated them. Referring to the objectives of the EU-Russia Summit to be held on 18 May in Samara, Mr. Gloser said that the start of negotiations over a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement would be an important political signal of working together despite present irritations in the relationship. One common perspective could be the creation of an energy partnership between the EU and Russia, which would lay down the basis for reliable rules and basic conditions for cooperation.

Mr. Gloser said that the presidency dedicated special attention to the Central Asia region, which was a transit area between Europe and Asia. Even if the area was not a direct neighbour to the EU, the Union had a substantial interest in operating a farsighted security policy there. Energy was also an important issue. The June European Council was expected to adopt political guidelines for cooperation in the form of an EU Central Asia Strategy.

An exchange of views took place. Attention was drawn on the importance of the New Enhanced Agreement with Ukraine. The Ukrainian delegation expressed its hope that the new agreement would bring Ukraine closer to the EU. This would give an important impetus for the country's democratic development. Several parliaments also took up the need to clarify that the European Neighbourhood Policy was neither a "waiting room" for, nor an alternative to EU membership. The Moldovan delegation noted that with the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU, Moldova was now in the immediate neighbourhood of the EU. The European Neighbourhood Policy should be adapted accordingly. As regards Russia, the need for a holistic approach was stressed. However, several parliaments underlined the necessity of caution in the next steps, owing to the complex situation in the country. Concern over recent events with Estonia was raised.

8. Discussion on the European Commission's Annual Policy Strategy for 2008

In her introductory address⁶ Mrs. Wallström, Vice-President for Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy of the European Commission, gave an overview of the priorities and main objectives of the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy (APS) for 2008. Mrs. Wallström stressed the positive development of the relations between the Commission and national parliaments. She made clear that parliaments had an important role to play with regard to the improvement of European policy formulation as well as better involvement of citizens in EU affairs. She also underlined the necessity of an institutional reform to make Europe more democratic and efficient and called for a positive signal to be sent out to European citizens before the European elections in 2009. Ms Wallström explained that the Commission would launch a number of initiatives following the Single Market Review and the Social Reality Check. In this context she referred to the cross-cutting priorities - climate change, Lisbon Strategy and migration - and the strategic objectives of the Commission laid down in the APS, namely prosperity, solidarity, security and freedom and a strong and open Europe in the world.

Mrs. Wallström underlined that the Commission would exercise its responsibility in the field of legislation to the highest possible standards. Proposals should, for example, only be made after full consultation and detailed impact assessment. She finally stressed that she would appreciate parliaments' input in the process of

⁶ The speech is published on the COSAC website: <http://www.cosac.eu/en/meetings/Berlin2007/plenary/>

policy formulation, especially with regard to the shaping of the Commission's Legislative and Work Programme based on the APS.

An exchange of views took place. Most delegations stated that the APS for 2008 had been or was still to be considered in their parliament and pointed out topics of particular interest. The discussion of the APS in the framework of COSAC was welcomed. Some parliaments doubted that the APS reflected the concerns of European citizens and asked what the actual objective of the APS was. It was underlined that more information was needed on specific issues, which could, for example, be provided through a presentation of the APS to national parliaments by a member of the Commission. Some delegations questioned the practicality of the large number of objectives as laid down in the APS, especially with regard to the budget.

Mrs. Wallström explained that the Commission would have to work on all the objectives at the same time in order to guarantee their realisation. She made clear that the Commission had to be general in describing its objectives since the APS is a political document. Mrs. Wallström also said that the Commission envisioned a better connection between the budget and political priorities. She underlined once more that the Commission would welcome parliaments' views on the APS.

The Chair closed the discussion expressing his hope that Commissioner Wallström would in the future be the key bridge between national parliaments and the European Commission.

9. Adoption of the Contribution to the EU institutions and Conclusions of the XXXVII COSAC

The Presidency proposed a draft Contribution to the EU Institutions as well as draft conclusions of the conference: both had been revised during the meeting of the Chairpersons the previous day. Consideration focused on the issues of whether to make a specific reference to a particular desired outcome of the expected Intergovernmental Conference on the future of the Constitutional Treaty signed in 2004. A related item of lively discussion was whether it was desirable to demand an improvement of the rights of national parliaments provided for in the Protocol to the Treaty.

The Contribution was adopted with one dissenting opinion from the French delegation which announced its intention to table a declaration explaining its position, pursuant to Rule 10.4 of the Rules of Procedure.

The conclusions were adopted unanimously.

The Contribution and the conclusions are attached to these minutes, together with the letter from the French Senate.

Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC)

Contribution adopted by the XXXVII COSAC Berlin, 13-15 May 2007

1. The Future of Europe

1.1 COSAC recognizes the effort made by the presidency to gather the governments of all Member States of the European Union and representatives of the European Institutions in Berlin at the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Rome Treaties. COSAC notes the significance of the Berlin Declaration and hopes that it will create a lasting positive impetus for European Integration. COSAC calls on national parliaments to contribute towards awareness of this document.

1.2 COSAC welcomes the endeavours of the German presidency to put the issue of the Constitutional Treaty on the European agenda again. The debate on this issue will enter a decisive phase with the report by the German presidency to the June European Council. COSAC appreciates the firm stance taken by the presidency in favour of reaching an institutional settlement before the European elections in 2009.

1.3 COSAC supports the idea of convening a conference of representatives of the governments of the Member States in the second half of the year with a clear mandate and timetable in order to reach a solution which, possibly with a different presentation, strongly respects the substance and objectives of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. Such a solution should take account of and give an answer to the concerns which have been expressed in some Member States and enhance democracy, transparency and the efficiency of decision making and the protection of rights of the citizens. It should furthermore address the challenges connected with climate change and energy security. COSAC expects that national parliaments and the European Parliament will be kept fully involved and that their views will be duly taken into account. COSAC insists that any institutional settlement must take into account the important role national parliaments play in the European integration and the process of European policy formulation. Their future role must be at least equal in strength to that foreseen in the Constitutional Treaty. The Protocol on the role of national parliaments in the European Union and the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality as annexed to the Constitutional Treaty must be maintained and better and more effectively implemented, as must the new system by which the Commission transmits all proposals directly to national parliaments, invites them to react so as to improve the process of policy formulation, and responds in writing to those reactions.

1.4. COSAC notes that the European Parliament is planning and organizing a meeting with representatives of the civil society (Agora) and proposes joint parliamentary meetings between national parliaments and the European Parliament to exchange views and to evaluate the outcome of the European Council and the perspectives for treaty reform during the expected Intergovernmental Conference.

2. Cooperation with the European Commission and the Council

2.1 The new mechanism through which the Commission transmits directly all new proposals and consultation papers to national parliaments is welcomed by national parliaments as an added value. With a view to improving this arrangement, COSAC calls for a standardised procedure for the presentation of the Commission's consultation documents. COSAC welcomes the efforts of the Commission to provide national parliaments with reasoned replies to their remarks and to further explain its proposals. COSAC calls on the Commission to respond to statements of national parliaments within two months and to react visibly if a significant number of national parliaments raise concern over a specific proposal on comparable grounds. COSAC would appreciate further clarification of the system under which the Commission intends to handle the statements of national parliaments. Moreover, COSAC stresses the importance of Commission consultation documents being translated into all official languages.

2.2 COSAC calls on the Commission to maintain its efforts to better explain its proposals with regard to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality in accordance with the guidelines of the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality of the Amsterdam Treaty. Explanations regarding the choice of legal base would equally be welcomed by national parliaments.

2.3 COSAC encourages national parliaments to upload their findings on specific proposals of EU measures on the IPEX website in order to foster an exchange of views between national parliaments. The Commission's replies to statements of national parliaments should also be accessible to other national parliaments. COSAC calls upon the Commission to assess the possibility of uploading its correspondence with national parliaments on the IPEX website.

2.4. COSAC calls on the Council to assess the possibility of uploading on the IPEX website proposals made by Member States within the framework of the second and third pillar, especially any legislative proposal or initiative in relation to the establishment of an area of freedom, security and justice which might have a direct impact on the rights and freedoms of individuals.

3. The European Commission Annual Policy Strategy for 2008

COSAC stresses the importance for national parliaments of being informed at an early stage about the Commission's policy projects. COSAC expects that the Commission's announcement to enter into a critical dialogue with national parliaments on its political priorities will be followed by concrete action, also within the framework of COSAC. COSAC wishes for the positions of national parliaments to be taken into account by the Commission in the formulation of its Legislative and Work Programme for 2008.

4. Climate Change and Climate Protection - The Role of the EU

4.1 Climate Change has become a major public concern in Europe. COSAC supports the need for devising an integrated climate and energy policy of the European Union which should ensure environmental sustainability, encourage EU economic growth and support its competitiveness in the world.

4.2 COSAC underlines the EU's determination to take a leading role in the fight against climate change. It welcomes the agreement reached at the European Spring

Council 2007 on the Union's comprehensive policy in the field of climate protection and energy. COSAC endorses the EU's commitment to a 20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and welcomes its willingness to raise this goal to 30% provided other developed countries commit themselves to comparable emission reductions and economically more advanced developing countries contribute adequately according to their responsibilities and respective capabilities. COSAC welcomes EU institutions to take a pro-active stance in the negotiations of an international climate regime that will succeed the Kyoto Protocol.

5. The Eastern Dimension – Russia, Eastern Europe, Central Asia

5.1 COSAC stresses the importance of expanding the European area of security, stability and prosperity. COSAC therefore welcomes efforts to devote particular attention to the EU's relations with its neighbours to the East and with Central Asia in order to achieve prosperity and democracy in these regions.

5.2 COSAC encourages the Members States of the European Union to manage the European Neighbourhood Policy in a more coherent and united way making full use of the instruments and experience of the Council of Europe. COSAC underlines the need to strengthen the European Neighbourhood Policy in order to gradually bring the EU's eastern neighbours to a level which is politically and economically comparable with that of the EU.

5.3 COSAC emphasises the importance of stability and security in Ukraine for the entire region and underlines the necessity for a strong and long-term engagement of the EU in co-operation with Ukraine. COSAC calls on all politicians involved in the recent political crisis to undertake all possible endeavours to reach a joint solution.

5.4 COSAC recognizes the need to improve regional cooperation in particular in the Black Sea region with which since the accession of Romania and Bulgaria the EU has common borders. The region offers great potential for economic cooperation and growth.

5.5 COSAC stresses the strategic importance of Central Asia and calls for an EU strategy for Central Asia aimed at bringing stability, peace and prosperity in the whole region around the Caspian Sea.

5.6 Desirous of giving a real impetus to the dialogue between the European Union and Russia, COSAC expresses the hope that all obstacles to negotiations about a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between European Union and Russia will be removed at the Summit of Samara on 18 May 2007. COSAC has followed events in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Nizhny Novgorod during the last few weeks with deep concern. COSAC however welcomes the fifth Round of Human Rights Consultations between the European Union and the Russian Federation on 3 May, 2007. COSAC calls for a united European policy towards Russia based on solidarity among EU member states in their relations with Russia, whereby a robust defence of human rights and democratic values provides the core basis for the EU – Russia dialogue.

Conclusion adopted by the XXXVII COSAC Berlin, 13-15 May 2007

1. Subsidiarity and proportionality checks

1.1 The subsidiarity and proportionality checks initiated by COSAC have brought added value to the way EU affairs in most national parliaments are treated. COSAC therefore resolves to conduct at least two further subsidiarity and proportionality checks per year.

1.2 The selection mechanism should be similar to the one chosen for the first two subsidiarity and proportionality checks. Accordingly, the selection should be based on the European Commission's Legislative and Work Programme.

COSAC agreed that the selection procedure should work as follows:

- i. National parliaments, which wish to participate, should check the European Commission's annual work programme 2008 after following its presentation in autumn 2007 making use of their own practices.
- ii. National parliaments should inform the COSAC Presidency of the proposals they wish to subject to the subsidiarity and proportionality check if possible in November 2007. They may, however, make additional proposals at any time.
- iii. The Presidential Troika should designate the proposals most frequently mentioned as subject to the check and submit a corresponding suggestion to the national parliaments. If there are no objections raised by a deadline to be defined, the Presidential Troika shall state that the designated proposals have been selected. The Presidential Troika will then request the COSAC-Secretariat to start the procedure.

1.3 COSAC calls upon incoming presidencies to consider holding a discussion of subsidiarity and proportionality during one of the coming COSAC meetings, aiming at a better understanding of the two principles on the one hand, and the procedure to be followed between national parliaments and the European Institutions on the other. The effectiveness of future subsidiarity and proportionality checks could be enhanced if conducted on the basis of commonly agreed criteria.

1.4 The Commission has responded to national parliaments with regard to subsidiarity and proportionality. Should a significant number of COSAC delegations raise serious concerns over a specific proposal, COSAC could, on the initiative of the presidency, be called upon to deliberate on further action to be taken.

1.5 In accordance with the recommendation of the 7th biannual report of COSAC, the coordinated scrutiny of European legislative proposals should continue. To this end, the following COSAC meetings are requested to approve a list of legislative proposals which are to be subjected to a coordinated subsidiarity and proportionality check.

1.6 COSAC calls upon the national parliaments and the European Parliament to contribute actively to the reduction of bureaucratic burden and overregulation.

2. Interparliamentary Cooperation

2.1 COSAC recalls the commitment in the conclusion of the XXXVI COSAC Helsinki, 20–21 November 2006, para 6, namely to communicate the statements which they have addressed to the Commission to each other as soon as possible. In order to achieve this, parliaments are encouraged to make more intensive use of the interparliamentary information exchange website IPEX.

2.2 COSAC welcomes parliamentary meetings between the European Parliament and national parliaments; it values the efforts of the European Parliament in this regard. However, the number of such meetings should not exceed the current level in order not to affect the core work of national parliaments. Being aware of the discussion going on in the EU Speakers' Conference, COSAC underlines the need for more coordination of joint meetings with other interparliamentary fora and encourages incoming presidencies to hold a debate on the possible structure of interparliamentary cooperation in the future.

3. Co-Financing the COSAC Secretariat

3.1 COSAC welcomes 13 letters of intent of COSAC parliaments or parliamentary chambers stating the willingness to contribute towards the co-financing of the permanent member of the COSAC secretariat and the cost of running COSAC's office and website. A further nine COSAC delegations announced during the XXXVII COSAC their readiness to sign and submit similar letters in the near future. COSAC expresses its gratitude towards the European Parliament for its continued willingness to provide the secretariat with the necessary office space on its premises in Brussels.

3.2 COSAC calls upon the German presidency and the incoming Portuguese presidency to proceed with the collection of these letters with a view to reaching the minimum participation of the national parliaments of fourteen Member States before the XXXVIII COSAC in Lisbon.

4. Possible Amendments to COSAC Rules of Procedure

4.1 COSAC welcomes the endeavours of the German presidency to work towards a draft amendment to COSAC's Rules of Procedure with a view to including provisions on the COSAC secretariat and its permanent member.

4.2 The conference has taken note of the progress of talks on the political level. The Presidential Troika is encouraged to continue its efforts which should prepare the ground for a final decision during the Portuguese presidency.

4.3 COSAC reiterates its invitation to the parliaments of each Member State to identify and put forward suitable candidates for the post of permanent member of the secretariat, with a view to taking up the post in January 2008.