

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

Athens, Greece, 26 January 2014

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

CHAIR: Mr Ioannis TRAGAKIS, Deputy Speaker, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*.

Mr Gediminas KIRKILAS, Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Lithuanian *Seimas*, Mr Michele BORDO, Chair of the European Union Policy Committee, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, Ms Nadia GINETTI, member of the EU Affairs Committee, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Mr Miguel Ángel MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ, Vice-President, European Parliament; and Mr Carlo CASINI, Chair of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, European Parliament.

AGENDA

- 1. Adoption of the agenda of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC**
- 2. Approval of the draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC**
- 3. Debate on the draft programme of the LI COSAC**
- 4. Approval of the outline of the 21st Bi-annual Report**
- 5. Letters addressed to the Presidency**
- 6. Any other business**

PROCEEDINGS

1. Adoption of the agenda of the Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC

The meeting was chaired by Mr Ioannis TRAGAKIS who welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika"), and in particular Mr Michele BORDO, Chair of the European Union Policy Committee of the Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, and Ms Nadia GINETTI, member of the EU Affairs Committee of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, who were attending the Troika for the first time.

In the absence of any objection, the agenda of the meeting of the Troika was adopted without amendment.

2. Approval of the draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

Mr TRAGAKIS said that the meeting would deal with some procedural items including the approval of the outline of the 21st Bi-annual Report and then referred to the topics that would be discussed the next day. The first one would be re-connecting Europe with its citizens: the role of the institutions and would be addressed by Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Inter-institutional Relations and Administration. The second one would focus on the priorities of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union and would be addressed by Mr Evangelos VENIZELOS, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic.

Mr TRAGAKIS said that on the first topic, particularly on what concerned the role of the institutions, Mr Carlo CASINI, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament (EP) and rapporteur for relations between the EP and national Parliaments, would make a short intervention. Mr CASINI took the floor and explained that, in his capacity as rapporteur of the EP on relations between the EP and national Parliaments, he would give a brief presentation aimed at collecting ideas and suggestions from national Parliaments' colleagues in view of his report prepared prior to the next meeting of COSAC.

The draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC was approved without amendment.

The Chair referred briefly to the letter by Mr Vannino CHITI, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, on the clash of dates of the COSAC Chairpersons meeting with the winter plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. He underlined that, as he had mentioned during the L COSAC in Vilnius, the Hellenic Presidency's choice of available dates was limited in view of the European elections due to take place in the middle of the Presidency.

3. Debate on the draft programme of the LI COSAC

Mr TRAGAKIS informed that the meeting of the LI COSAC to be held on 15-17 June 2014 in Divani Apollon Palace in Kavouri, Athens, would start with the approval of the meeting's agenda, the presentation of the 21st Bi-Annual Report and some procedural issues. He then presented the topics on the draft programme, which included the following: 1. State of play of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union; 2. Sharing a vision on Europe 2025; 3. Democratic legitimacy and European leadership: the day after the European elections; 4. Rethinking the European employment Strategy; 5. Youth Guarantee Scheme: Best Practices; and 6. Encouraging Creativity and Young Entrepreneurship.

Mr TRAGAKIS said that the Speaker of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* would address the meeting, expressing hope that both Mr Antonis SAMARAS, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, and Mr José Manuel BARROSO, President of the European Commission, would be keynote speakers. He added that the final agenda with the confirmed speakers would be sent to all delegations in due time.

He also mentioned that the next morning a second meeting of the Women's Forum, the establishment of which had been an initiative of the Lithuanian Presidency, would take place.

In relation to the letters received by the Presidency, Mr TRAGAKIS referred specifically to the letter by Mr Edmund WITTBRODT, Chair of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Polish *Senat*, requesting to add the topic of the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine on the agenda. He referred to the reply by the Presidency, underlining the fluidity of the situation in the country and proposing to come back to the topic and assess the current developments closer to the date of the COSAC meeting. Furthermore, he mentioned the draft resolution proposed by the Lithuanian *Seimas* on the current events in Ukraine and suggested including in the text some of the points of the decision taken by the Foreign Affairs Council on 20th January 2014.

Mr Gediminas KIRKILAS, Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the Lithuanian *Seimas*, welcomed the ambitious programme of the LI COSAC and referred

more specifically to the Women's Forum inaugurated in Vilnius, expressing the hope that its meetings would become a tradition. He requested that Prof Marija Aušrinė PAVILIONIENĖ, Lithuanian *Seimas*, who had been appointed as coordinator of the COSAC Women's Forum in Vilnius, be given the opportunity to deliver a speech at the second meeting of the Forum in Athens. The Troika accepted the request.

Mr TRAGAKIS then referred to the letter by Mr René LEEGTE, Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on European Affairs, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, with which Mr LEEGTE proposed himself as keynote speaker on democratic legitimacy and European leadership: the day after the European elections. Mr TRAGAKIS said that the Presidency had intended to invite a member of the EP and a member of a national Parliament as keynote speakers. The Dutch colleague could potentially be a speaker, he said, however, the letter had arrived late and communication with a colleague from a national Parliament had already been pursued.

Mr CASINI proposed Mr Iñigo MÉNDEZ DE VIGO, Minister for European Affairs of Spain, former member of the EP and member of the European Convention, as a possible keynote speaker on the topic of democratic legitimacy and European leadership: the day after the European elections.

Mr Michele BORDO, Chair of the European Union Policy Committee of the Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, said that the Dutch colleague had specific views on topics such as the role of national Parliaments and the integration process, while the Italian *Camera dei Deputati* had slightly different ones. In this context, he expressed the opinion that balance between different views should be maintained.

Mr Miguel Ángel MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ, Vice-President, European Parliament, underlined that there were two issues to be looked at in relation to the keynote speakers invited. Firstly, he noted that there was consensus regarding the fact that an invitation should be extended to a personality from the EP and a personality linked to national Parliaments. In this respect, he supported the choice of Mr MÉNDEZ DE VIGO and Mr BORDO's stance. He expressed the view that Mr LEEGTE had neither the profile nor the background that was sought. Secondly, Mr MARTÍNEZ added, in his letter Mr LEEGTE was presenting theses with which a substantial number of national Parliaments and the EP did not agree. According to Mr MARTÍNEZ, those theses are challenging the Treaties as they currently stand and, while acknowledging their legitimacy or relevance to national Parliaments, he deemed them suitable to be discussed in a more appropriate forum. The specific issue of the card procedures dealt with in the letter, he said, was not a question relating to the discussion on the functioning of the democratic legitimacy of the EU. He supported inviting a speaker from national Parliaments, expressing the conviction that his Italian colleagues and the Hellenic Presidency could suggest prominent personalities from their respective countries.

Mr TRAGAKIS acknowledged the unanimous disagreement in the Troika regarding the proposal of the Vice-Chair of the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* and said that he himself would propose Mr Konstantinos TASOULAS, former Deputy Minister of Defence of the Hellenic Republic, current member of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* and Chair of the Institute for Democracy "Konstantinos Karamanlis". The issue of the keynote speakers would be looked at by the Presidency.

4. Approval of the outline of the 21st Bi-annual Report

Mr TRAGAKIS briefly presented the outline of the 21st Bi-annual Report. He reported that the first chapter would tackle the subject of the future of COSAC and would examine the effectiveness of the tools used by COSAC to stimulate the exchange of information and practice between national Parliaments and with the EP. It would further seek the ideas of Parliaments on how COSAC could contribute to enhancing the role of Parliaments in the EU. The second chapter would deal with the cooperation between national Parliaments and the EP and would seek ways to strengthen interparliamentary cooperation. It would further aim to present Parliaments'/Chambers' views on whether there was a need to update the Lisbon guidelines for interparliamentary cooperation. The third chapter would tackle the topic of developing the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the role of Parliaments and would seek ways for better monitoring and coordinating employment and social policies. The fourth chapter would look at democratic legitimacy and accountability in the budget process, concentrating on the European Semester process implementation and on the issue of parliamentary scrutiny over the "Troika's" (European Central Bank, European Commission and International Monetary Fund) working methods in cases of countries subject to economic reform programmes.

Mr MARTÍNEZ appealed to the Presidency to provide specific and short questions to the questionnaire in order to avoid ambiguity. At the same time, he stressed the particular importance of Chapters 3 and 4. He pointed out that, in relation to Chapter 4, points already agreed at recently held Conferences should be respected. In relation to Chapter 1, he urged to overcome the almost constant temptation to change the nature of COSAC at its detriment; he also urged to avoid speculation on what this instrument should be and to take full advantage of its current constitutional nature. Regarding interparliamentary cooperation he suggested listing all the meetings already held and their outcome.

Mr TRAGAKIS responded that Parliaments were guardians of COSAC and, in this spirit, the Report would examine the effectiveness of the tools used by COSAC and would seek ways for deepening interparliamentary cooperation based on the experience acquired in meetings held. He emphasised the topic of the social dimension of the EMU and the accountability of the "Troika", informing the members of the Troika about the discussion on the EP's relevant report in the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* in the upcoming days.

5. Letters addressed to the Presidency

The Presidency had received the letter by Mr Vannino CHITI, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, the letter by Mr Edmund WITTBRODT, Chair of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Polish *Senat*, and the letter by Mr René LEEGTE, Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on European Affairs, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, all of which had already been discussed. In addition, the Presidency had received a letter from Ms Anniken HUITFELD, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Norwegian *Storting*, regarding participation at COSAC. He noted that a letter of invitation had already been sent to the Norwegian *Storting*. The Troika formally approved this invitation for a special guest.

6. Any other business

Mr TRAGAKIS informed the Troika that on 24-25 January 2014 a meeting of Chairpersons of Committees of European Union Affairs of Parliaments of the EU South was held in Nicosia, Cyprus, and that Mr Averof NEOFYTOU, Chair of the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs of the House of Representatives of Cyprus, had asked to take the floor at the COSAC Chairpersons meeting the following day to briefly present the outcome. The Troika accepted the request.