

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

Rome, 17 July 2014

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

CO-CHAIRS: Mr Vannino CHITI, Chair of the Committee on European Union Policies, Italian *Senato della Repubblica* and Mr Michele BORDO, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*.

Mr Ioannis TRAGAKIS, Deputy Speaker, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Ms Zanda KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Latvian *Saeima*; Mr Antonio TAJANI, Vice-President, European Parliament, and Ms Danuta Maria HÜBNER, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, 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 for the LII COSAC**
- 4. Approval of the outline of the 22th Bi-annual Report of COSAC**
- 5. Letters received by the Presidency**
- 6. Any other business**

PROCEEDINGS

Mr CHITI welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika") and made some introductory remarks. Recalling the results of the European elections, he underlined that citizens were asking for more focus on growth and employment. These requests had to be guaranteed in compliance with budgetary rules. He mentioned the Conclusions of the European Council on 26-27 June, which highlighted the need for balancing the fiscal discipline with measures aimed at growth, using the flexibility margins provided for in the Stability and Growth Pact. The European Council noted the important steps taken in order to achieve fiscal balance, but, at the same time, stressed the need of safeguarding the Member States' economies from a new period of recession. After focusing on the topic of the role of the EU in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe, he mentioned the migration emergency; he underlined that it was both a humanitarian matter and a common political issue, according to the Lisbon Treaty. He stressed the need for a common policy approach, based on the principles of solidarity and a fair burden-sharing. Mr CHITI welcomed the election of Mr Jean-Claude Juncker as President of the European Commission, expressing his surprise that the European Council, the previous night, had not taken a decision on the leading positions in the EU and his hope that the appointments would be decided by the end of August.

Mr BORDO, after welcoming the delegations, pointed out that the European integration process had to be strengthened and built on the positive results of the European elections. He stressed that 70% of votes went to parties believing in Europe. It was necessary to strengthen this support and offset the positive results obtained by Eurosceptic parties. He added that the incoming decisions should lead to more shared responsibilities and a greater relevance of European interests rather than of individual Member States' interests, which unfortunately had recently prevailed.

Mr CHITI took the floor to inform of some breaking news, reporting a crash of a Malaysia Airlines plane, allegedly hit by a missile, which was flying over the Russia-Ukraine border. He expressed sympathy for this terrible tragedy, which could further exacerbate the relations between Russia and Ukraine. He also expressed concerns for the current situation in the Gaza Strip.

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

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 CHITI presented the agenda of the COSAC Chairpersons meeting. It would be opened by Mr Pietro GRASSO, President of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, followed by introductory remarks by himself and Mr BORDO. After some procedural items, two sessions would take place. The first session, focusing on the priorities of the Italian Presidency and prospects for the European Union after the European elections, would be addressed by Mr Sandro GOZI, Under-Secretary of State to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in charge of European Affairs, and Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration Union; the second session would deal with European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 and would be addressed by Mr Graziano DELRIO, Under-Secretary of State to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in charge of regional cohesion policies and sport, and Mr Johannes HAHN, Commissioner for Regional Policy.

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

3. Debate on the draft programme of the LII COSAC

Mr CHITI presented the draft programme of the LII COSAC to be held in Rome on 30 November-2 December 2014.

The agenda, including a topic on the state of play of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU, would focus on the following 4 topics, linked to specific subjects of the 22nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC: 1. The future of supranational democracy five years after Lisbon: What role for European institutions and national Parliaments; 2. Review of the Europe 2020 Strategy: growth, employment, competitiveness; European integration prospects; 3. Global role of the European Union and projection of its policies in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe; 4. Democratic control of European agencies.

As regards the third item, Mr CHITI pointed out that, during a previous meeting in Rome, there had been an invitation by Ms KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA to make specific mention in the programme of the role of the EU in Eastern Europe. Mr CHITI pointed out that this specific insertion would be in line with a principle of thematic continuity in COSAC programmes and added that, instead, the Bi-annual Report would address more specifically the projection of EU policies in the Mediterranean area.

Mr TAJANI recalled previous COSAC Plenary meetings, in which two keynote speakers from the European Parliament were invited. Given the importance of the subject of growth in the EU and the current international situation, he proposed to involve the European Parliament also in the sessions on the Review of the Europe 2020 Strategy and on Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. He stressed

that a stronger presence of the European Parliament could be a useful way to bring the European institutions closer to citizens.

Mr CHITI considered the remark pertinent and in line with previous COSAC programmes.

Mr Ioannis TRAGAKIS agreed with the proposal.

4. Approval of the outline of the 22nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC

Mr CHITI briefly presented the outline of the 22nd Bi-annual Report. The report would examine four themes: 1. The mid-term review of Europe 2020; 2. The impact on the EU Parliaments of the developments of the European integration process five years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty; 3. The Mediterranean and the role of EU Parliaments; 4. The EU agencies and national Parliaments.

Mr Ioannis TRAGAKIS expressed satisfaction regarding the outline, which represented a follow-up of the Greek Presidency priorities, and stressed the importance of continuity between Presidencies. He also mentioned the issue of external relations of the EU, focusing on the situation in the South-East Mediterranean area and on its impact on migratory flows towards Europe. He welcomed the declaration agreed in the meeting of the Chairpersons of Committees of European Union Affairs of EU South European Parliaments, which stressed the humanitarian aspects of migration. He mentioned also the topic of enlargement towards the Western Balkans and Turkey, which had to be put in the right dimension and had to respect the principles and conditions of enlargement set by the EU.

The draft outline of the 22nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC was approved without amendments.

5. Letters received by the Presidency

The Italian Presidency had received two formal letters.

The first letter, received by the Presidency from the Chair of the EU Consultative Committee of the Norwegian *Storting*, related to the participation of its delegation both in the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC and the LII COSAC meeting. After prior consultation with the Troika, an invitation had been sent to the Norwegian *Storting*. The Troika formally approved this invitation for a special guest.

The second letter, received by the Presidency from the Chair of the Standing Committee on European Affairs of the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, called upon EU national Parliaments to deliver a common message to the members of the European Parliament elected in their respective Member State designating a number of questions on the role of national Parliaments that Parliaments could ask during the Commissioners' hearings in the competent Committees of the European Parliament.

Mr CHITI, in agreement with Mr BORDO, proposed to inform the delegations about the letter during the Chairpersons meeting and to give the floor to the Dutch delegation to present the proposal.

Mr TAJANI emphasised that questioning the autonomy of members of the European Parliament should be avoided, stressing that the letter in question should be formulated as an invitation. A letter from the Dutch Parliament or other national Parliaments, to members of the European Parliament, with questions that could be asked during the hearings underlining the role of national Parliaments in the framework of the Treaty, could be acceptable.

Mr BORDO added that it would be preferable to have letters from national Parliaments addressed to members elected in their respective countries, rather than a letter sent by the Dutch Parliament to all members.

Mr CHITI noted that the Dutch Parliament was free to send the letter also to non-Dutch members and that other national Parliaments, also jointly, could decide to forward the same questions. He agreed on Mr. TAJANI's remarks on the formulation of the letter and on the need to safeguard the European Parliament members' independence.

Mr CHITI informed also that the officials of national Parliaments following COSAC had received by email an administrative communication from the Secretariat of the European Affairs Committee of the UK House of Commons, containing a draft letter on procedures and practices. The draft had been signed, until that moment, by the Chairs of the EU Affairs Committees of the Danish *Folketing*, German *Bundestag*, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Swedish *Riksdag*, UK *House of Commons* and *House of Lords*. The formal letter was expected to be sent at a later time to national Parliaments of the Troika. Mr. CHITI pointed out that, if the letter was intended to be sent to the Troika, it had to be also addressed and sent to the European Parliament, which according to Article 2.5 of the Rules of Procedure of COSAC formed part of the Presidential Troika. In the letter, it was requested that an informal debate on issues concerning the contribution and conclusions, the "troika" proposal, the submission deadlines, the order and the vote of amendments, the programme of speakers, the video messages, the official meetings took place during the Chairpersons meeting. Mr CHITI emphasised that some of those topics, such as video messages, speakers and officials meetings, needed to be considered by each Presidency. Concerning the voting system on the contribution and conclusions, instead, he pointed out that the practices followed during the COSAC meetings had been subject to different interpretations and sometimes misunderstandings. He mentioned a document on practices regarding the voting system drafted by the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat in 2012. He proposed that, after an analysis by the Presidency, with the assistance of the Secretariat, the document in question could be updated in view of the Plenary meeting. He proposed keeping the letter informal in order to avoid negative debates at political level. To this end, and if needed, Mr CHITI suggested organising a specific meeting of the Troika, perhaps in October, with a view to preparing a positive contribution addressed to the COSAC Plenary.

Mr BORDO stressed the need to make a distinction between, on one hand, the procedures in relation to debating and voting COSAC's contributions and conclusions and, on the other hand, the substantial aspects of those documents, the selection of the speakers and the informal and officials' sessions. On the procedures, he agreed with the proposal made by Mr CHITI. On substance, he pointed out that a specific debate was not necessary, as the issues in question were connected with political choices of the Presidency and the Troika. He added that the 21st Bi-annual report reflected that some issues raised in the letter were strongly controversial and, in some cases, expressed minority positions.

Mr Ioannis TRAGAKIS stressed the fact that the letter was not formalised and that the European Parliament was neglected. He agreed with Mr. BORDO on the fact that several areas of the letter were disputed and that it was up to the Presidency to take into consideration some relevant items. He added that the COSAC conclusions should not be underestimated, because, even if not binding, were approved by an institutionalised body. Concerning the voting procedure, he said that, according to the COSAC spirit, the aim was to reach consensus rather than proceed with voting. He stressed that, in the Plenary in Athens, a consensual agreement was reached, even if there had been some misunderstanding during the Chairpersons meeting caused by the discussion of the amendments in the order they were received. He emphasised the quantity of amendments and the

delay in their submission. He considered that an analysis of these aspects would be useful, supporting consideration of amendments on an article by article basis and incorporation by the Troika of similar amendments, without preventing delegations from taking the floor and explaining their position on these. In conclusion, he agreed on the fact that some issues, such as video messages, were under the exclusive responsibility of the Presidency.

Mr TAJANI agreed with Mr CHITI on the bureaucratic nature of some questions raised by the letter and supported the proposal of a possible Troika meeting before the COSAC Plenary depending on the complexity that might arise.

6. Any other business

No other business.