

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LXII COSAC
Helsinki, 2-3 December 2019**

IN THE CHAIR: Ms Satu HASSI, Chairperson of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

AGENDA:

1. Opening of the meeting of the LXII COSAC

- Welcome address by Mr Matti VANHANEN, Speaker of the Finnish *Eduskunta*
- Introductory remarks by Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN, Member of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*
- Adoption of the agenda of the meeting of the LXII COSAC

2. Procedural issues and miscellaneous matters

- Briefing on the results of the meeting of COSAC's Presidential Troika
- Co-financing of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat
- Presentation of the 32nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC
- Letters received by the Presidency
- Procedural issues
- Exchange of views on the Conference on the Future of Europe

3. Session I – ‘The Finnish Presidency of the EU Council’

Speaker: Mr Antti RINNE, Prime Minister of Finland

Chair: Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN, Member of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

4. Session II – ‘Promoting the Rule of Law in the EU and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights’

Speakers: Ms Tytti TUPPURAINEN, Minister for European Affairs, Government of Finland; Mr Michael O’FLAHERTY, Director, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights

Chair: Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN, Member of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

5. Session III – ‘Intervention by Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission’

Moderator: Ms Mairéad McGUINNESS, First Vice-President, European Parliament

6. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

- Appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat
- Discussion on the draft Contribution and draft Conclusions of the LXII COSAC

7. Session IV – ‘A Winning Climate Strategy for Europe’

Speakers: Ms Mari PANTSAR, Director, Carbon Neutral Circular Economy, the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra; Professor Markku OLLIKAINEN, Chair of the Finnish Climate Change Panel; Mr Pekka TIMONEN, Mayor of the City of Lahti (European Green Capital 2021)

Chair: Ms Satu HASSI, Chairperson of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

8. Session V – ‘Intervention by Mr Michel BARNIER, Head of the Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom’

Chair: Ms Satu HASSI, Chairperson of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

9. Adoption of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LXII COSAC

PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening of the meeting of the LXII COSAC

Welcome address by Mr Matti VANHANEN, Speaker of the Finnish *Eduskunta* and introductory remarks by Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN, Member of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

Mr Matti VANHANEN, Speaker of the Finnish *Eduskunta*, began his welcome address by expressing his satisfaction for the fact that a new European Commission, led by Ms Ursula von der LEYEN, had begun its work the previous day. Mr VANHANEN stated that the political guidelines of President von der LEYEN provided a good basis for the development of the Union, and for promoting the wellbeing and safety of European citizens in the coming years.

Mr VANHANEN referred to the Conference on the Future of Europe and noted that he had participated in the convention that had drafted the Constitution for Europe. He stressed that the results of the conference could only lead to decisions if the mandate of the conference was firmly founded in democratic principles. Mr VANHANEN underlined that in order for the conference to bring added value, it should be politically representative, considering also gender parity and participation of minorities. Furthermore, in order for it to be credible, it should be transparent and democratic.

When it came to the way the EU appoints its leaders, Mr VANHANEN stated it was appropriate for the conference to reflect also on institutional questions, but these questions should be dealt with care and consideration. Mr VANHANEN said it was not good that the results of elections were slowly and uncertainly reflected in administration and EU legislative programmes, nor was it healthy for any democracy that less than half of its voters cast their votes. He underlined that the resources and commitment to be allocated to this work should not come about at the expense of managing the substance of policymaking. Mr VANHANEN stressed that, in the end, the political legitimacy of the Union was founded on the benefits and added value it brought to its citizens, namely those of security, wellbeing and stability. Mr VANHANEN declared the meeting open.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chair presented the draft agenda of the LXII COSAC, which was adopted without amendment.

2. Procedural issues and miscellaneous matters

Mr KILJUNEN, Member of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*, welcomed the participants, especially new Chairs participating at the COSAC plenary for the first time, namely Mr Stanislaw TYSZKA, Chairperson of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Polish *Sejm*; Mr Luís Capoulas SANTOS, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee of the Portuguese *Assembleia da Republica*; Ms Karin BROUWERS, Chair of the Federal Advisory Committee on European Affairs of the Belgian *Sénat*.

Mr KILJUNEN further referred to the letter from Mr Marc ANGEL, former Chairman of the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs, on Defense, Cooperation and Immigration of the Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* who had resigned his post as Chairman to take up new responsibilities at the European Parliament. Mr KILJUNEN wished him well.

- Briefing on the results of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC

The Chair informed participants of the results of the Troika meeting held the day before, during which the Troika had agreed on a compromised text for the Draft Contribution and Draft Conclusions. This had been circulated to delegations the previous evening.

The Chair informed the delegations that they could submit additional amendments to the Troika compromise text by 12.00 on Monday, 2 December.

- **Co-financing of the Permanent Member of the COSAC secretariat**

Mr KILJUNEN announced that the letters of intent had been received from all the Parliaments and Chambers with the exception of the UK Parliament.

- **Presentation of the 32nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC**

Mr KILJUNEN invited the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, Mr Kenneth CURMI, to present the 32nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC, which was based on Parliaments' replies to the related questionnaire circulated to delegations on 31 July 2019 with a deadline of 20 September 2019 for submitting replies.

Mr CURMI briefly referred to the three chapters of the Report: the first one concentrated on the overview of parliamentary activities, the second one dealt with interparliamentary cooperation in the 2020s and the third one addressed the evaluation of Bi-annual Reports.

- **Letters received by the Presidency**

The Chair referred to the following letters received by the Presidency:

- Letter from Mr Hayke VELDMAN, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, asking the LXII COSAC to put legislative transparency on the agenda.
- Letter from Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chair of the Committee on European Union Affairs, German *Bundestag*, requesting the LXII COSAC to put an item relating to the future trade relations of the EU on the agenda. The Presidency replied that whereas a separate session on trade policy could not be accommodated, there would be time to deal with issues related to trade policy under other existing agenda topics.
- Letter from Lord KINNOULL, Chair of the European Union Committee, UK *House of Lords*, introducing himself in his new role.
- A second letter from Lord KINNOULL informing the Presidency that the Members of the European Union Committee would be unable to attend the LXII COSAC following the announcement that a General Election would take place in the United Kingdom on 12 December 2019.
- Letter from Mr Jean BIZET, French *Sénat*, proposing to update colleagues with developments concerning the subject of voluntary civil security work since the last COSAC in Bucharest.
- Letter from Mr Nikitas KAKLAMANIS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, suggesting the issue of migration, in particular the establishment of the Common European Asylum System, to be included in the agenda of the LXIII COSAC to be held in Zagreb. The Presidency replied to this letter, with a message from the incoming Croatian Presidency.
- Letter from Mr Marc ANGEL, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, informing the Presidency of his resignation as a member of the Luxembourg Parliament and his upcoming role as Member of the European Parliament.
- Letter from Mr Richárd HÖRCSIK, Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs of the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, informing the Presidency of the conclusions adopted during the meeting of the Committees on European Affairs of the Visegrád Group held in Sárospatak, Hungary on 8-10 September 2019.
- Letters from the Speaker of the Maltese *Kamra tad-deputati* and the Chairman of the European Affairs Committee of the Italian *Camera dei deputati* in connection with the appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2020-2021.

- **Procedural issues**

The draft text of the Contribution and Conclusions was circulated to delegations on 11 November 2019. Amendments received from delegations by the stipulated deadline were, together with the initial text and a number of compromise proposals elaborated by the Presidency, included in a table and submitted to the Troika.

Following a detailed examination of each proposed amendment, and based on the Presidency's compromise proposals, the Troika drafted a modified text of the Contribution and distributed it among delegations.

The Chair informed delegations that the Chairpersons would meet from 16.30 until 17.30 to discuss the draft Contribution and Conclusions, as well as the appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat.

The Chair then gave the floor to Mr Jean BIZET, President of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Sénat*, who updated the delegations on the subject of voluntary civil security work. Mr BIZET noted that this subject was particularly relevant in France, but also in Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands.

The Chair finally gave the floor to Mr Domagoj Ivan MILOŠEVIĆ, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee of the Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, who informed delegations about the upcoming meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons, to be held in Zagreb on 19-20 January 2020, as well as the LXIII COSAC, to be held on 24-26 May 2020.

4. Exchange of views on the Conference on the Future of Europe

Since the exchange of views with Mr Antti RINNE, Prime Minister of Finland, had to be cancelled due to unforeseen events, Mr KILJUNEN proposed having a discussion on the Conference on the Future of Europe. In his opening remarks, he highlighted the importance of national Parliaments' involvement in the Conference. Referring to an earlier debate on the future of Europe held in the context of the Constitutional Treaty, he pointed out that national Parliaments had been included in the Convention responsible for drafting the Constitution for Europe.

Thirty-five speakers took the floor in the ensuing debate, during which parliamentarians stressed the importance of involving national Parliaments in the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Ms Eva Kjer HANSEN, Danish *Folketing*, stressed that it was essential to involve national Parliaments directly, arguing that it was through this participation the conference could achieve broad acceptance to its results and ensure ownership of the process. She proposed three items on the agenda of the conference: rule of law and fundamental rights; transparency and better lawmaking; and improving national ownership of EU policies through better involvement of national Parliaments in the EU legislative process.

Mr Daniel FREUND, European Parliament, underlined that the conference should lead to tangible outcomes and stated that he had proposed to include national Parliaments in the resolution prepared in the European Parliament on the matter. Mr Jaak MADISON, European Parliament, recalled he had participated in the task force on subsidiarity, proportionality and doing less more efficiently noting that despite lengthy discussions, the process had not led to a consensus on the future of the EU. He underlined that the question is not whether national Parliaments should be included in the process, rather the question was how to achieve that in practical terms. A similar sentiment was echoed by Mr Marcin BOSACKI, Polish *Senat*, who argued that the main question was which topics should be included in the agenda of the conference. Mr BOSACKI also spoke in favour of strengthening European foreign policy and assuming a clear strategic direction for the EU.

Mr Ľuboš BLAHA, Slovak *Národná rada*, emphasised the need to bring the EU closer to its citizens, arguing that national politicians should assume a leading role in setting the agenda for EU policymaking.

Mr Angelos VOTSIS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, made similar remarks emphasising the role of national Parliaments in inducing greater ownership of EU policies.

Mr Georgios KYRTSOS, European Parliament, argued that the main challenge ahead was how the EU could strengthen its role in the world, as the geopolitical dimension and its challenges was a very important topic in discussions about the future of Europe. He stressed that national Parliaments should be involved in such a discussion, and ensure democratic legitimacy. Mr Jorge BUXADÉ VILLALBA, European Parliament, called for a European Union which would best address the challenges European citizens were facing and thus provide them with real benefits.

Several parliamentarians called for extending the debate on the Future of Europe beyond the upcoming Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU (Mr Václav HAMPL, Czech *Sénat*, Mr Domagoj HAJDUKOVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski Sabor*, Mr Gerard CRAUGHWELL, Irish *Houses of Oireachtas*, Ms Marina BERLINGHIERI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*).

Ms Karin BROUWERS, Belgian *Sénat*, spoke in favour of including regions in the debate on the future of Europe. Similarly, Mr Alessandro GIGLIO VIGNA, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, suggested that the role of the regions should be strengthened, including in the legislative process, arguing that it was through regions that citizens could assume a greater sense of belonging to Europe.

Ms Ursula GRODEN-KRANICH, German *Bundestag*, called for representative parity between national Parliaments and the European Parliament in the conference.

Several parliamentarians called for a renewed commitment to EU enlargement policy. Mr Jan DZIEDZICZAK, Polish *Sejm*, argued in favour of making EU enlargement one of the main elements in the new vision for Europe. Ms Elvira KOVACS, Serbian *Narodna skupština*, regretted the decision not to open negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, stating that it was a step back for the entire region. She stated that Serbia was working diligently to implement reforms in order to ensure its full membership in the Union, adding that seventeen negotiating chapters had been opened, with one or two more expected to be opened by the end of the Finnish Presidency. Mr Slaven RADUNOVIC, Montenegrin *Skupština*, expressed his hope that the new European Commission would define a clear agenda for the enlargement policy. Mr İsmail Emrah KARAYEL, Turkish *Büyük Millet Meclisi*, affirmed that the membership of the EU was a strategic priority for Turkey and underlined that there was no future for Europe without Turkey. Ms Sibel ÖZDEMİR, Turkish *Büyük Millet Meclisi*, recalled the 2006 Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU, noting that it was during that term that Turkey was granted candidate status, and stressed the need to maintain dialogue and promote understanding.

Mr Dimitris KAIRIDIS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, underlined migration as a fundamental policy challenge to Europe, arguing that without solidarity the Union risked division.

Mr Siegbert DROESE, German *Bundestag*, emphasised the importance of respecting the subsidiarity principle, arguing that more decisions should be taken at national level while national Parliaments should also be granted a veto right in European legislation.

Several parliamentarians stressed the need to include citizens in the debate on the future of Europe. Ms Gabriela CREȚU, Romanian *Senat*, said a thorough analysis of citizens' discontent was needed before any solution or vision could be offered. She emphasised the need for broad representation, accounting gender parity, differences between Member States and the diversity of European regions. Mr Ettore Antonio LICHERI, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, noted there was a need to give a new impetus to European democracy and to promote active citizen participation through digital platforms, for without citizen involvement the conference risked ending up as no more than a talking shop. Mr Bernard DURKAN, Irish *Houses of Oireachtas*, underscored the importance of corresponding to the needs of the citizens, listening

to them and delivering on such issues as responding to climate change and migration. Ms Mairéad McGUINNESS, European Parliament, referred to the Irish Citizens' Assembly as an example of how citizens could be better heard in European policymaking. Ms Sabine THILLAYE, French *Assemblée nationale*, stressed the need for involving citizens and ensuring transparency and solidarity throughout the process. Ms Ellen SAMYN, Belgian *Chambre des Représentants*, emphasised pensions, social security, migration and safety as the primary concerns for citizens.

Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, German *Bundestag*, stressed that it was urgent to think of national Parliaments' participation in the conference in practical terms, and expressed his support for including migration and solidarity in the agenda of the conference.

Mr Domagoj Ivan MILOŠEVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, noted how enlargement policy and the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) were divisive subjects and called for further parliamentary debate on these matters, adding that finding solutions would benefit the entire Union.

3. Session I: The Finnish Presidency of the EU Council

Speaker: Mr Antti RINNE, Prime Minister of Finland

Chair: Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN, Member of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

Mr Antti RINNE, Prime Minister of Finland, began his intervention by stressing the importance of open, active and constructive dialogue with national Parliaments and the European Parliament. Noting that the Grand Committee of the Finnish *Eduskunta* (the Finnish EU Affairs Committee) had considerable influence on Finland's EU policy, he underlined that parliamentary oversight strengthened the common view of Finland's EU policies and increased the legitimacy of decision-making.

Mr RINNE explained that the principle of sustainability had been a guiding principle during Finland's Presidency of the Council of the EU and focus had been placed on areas in which the EU was best able to bring European added value, namely the rule of law, climate action, competitiveness and social inclusiveness, and protecting the security of citizens comprehensively. Mr RINNE stressed that common values were the foundation of European freedom, security and prosperity. He explained that undermining the rule of law in one Member State could hamper the functioning of the EU as a whole. The Finnish Presidency had focussed on prevention and improving and strengthening rule of law toolbox and cooperation between different actors. He noted that there was wide support for a stronger and more result-oriented dialogue. Protecting the EU budget in cases of rule of law deficiencies would be a crucial element in the next MFF and in this regard the European Commission intended to start a new rule of law review cycle.

Mr RINNE stated that during Finland's Presidency, the Council had discussed the means to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, a target on which a decision should be made by the end of the year. He emphasised that the European Green Deal would offer an opportunity for the EU to move towards a more sustainable future. Key policy actions had been identified to this end, including on strengthening the Single Market for clean technologies and services while safeguarding the functioning of the Single Market from challenges to the EU's external competitiveness and the risk of losing level playing field. He furthermore stressed that more emphasis had been placed on the social dimension, with modern employment and social standards, and that the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights was a key factor in this.

Mr RINNE underlined that security was a key concern to European citizens. In the past years, significant progress in the field of security and defense cooperation had been achieved in the EU. During the Finnish Presidency, strategic discussion had been promoted and importance of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence had been highlighted. Awareness of hybrid threats had been increased and relevant EU tools

had been assessed through several scenario-based policy discussions. The Council was due to adopt conclusions outlining the next steps in countering hybrid threats by the end of year.

Mr RINNE noted that one of the main tasks during the Finnish Presidency had been to find a realistic middle ground and to produce a balanced basis for the final stages of the negotiations on the next MFF. To this end, an updated Negotiating Box with figures would be submitted ahead of the December European Council. In closing, he underlined the importance of efficient decision-making, transparency and dialogue with citizens, civil society and social partners as means to enhancing trust in the EU.

4. Session II: Promoting the Rule of Law in the EU and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

Speakers: Ms Tytti TUPPURAINEN, Minister for European Affairs, Finnish Government, and Mr Michael O'FLAHERTY, Director, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights

Chair: Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN, Member of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

Ms Tytti TUPPURAINEN, Minister for European Affairs of the Finnish Government, opened her address by highlighting the EU as a community of values and stressing that shared efforts were needed to enhance democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law amidst an increasingly complex European and global environment. Ms TUPPURAINEN recalled the Tampere European Council, held during Finland's first Council presidency 20 years earlier, which marked the beginning of a new era in EU Justice and Home Affairs cooperation and affirmed a shared commitment to the common values that would prove necessary in securing security and prosperity in the EU and beyond. The Summit also agreed on the procedure for drafting the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights which would later become a principal legal instrument in the protection of fundamental rights in the EU and enhancing the EU's credibility in the world.

Ms TUPPURAINEN stressed that those common values were interlinked, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Ms TUPPURAINEN further pointed out that the priorities of the Finnish Presidency were closely linked with the objective of sustainability which was dependent on the tripod of democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law. She said that the Finnish Presidency had endeavoured to promote the EU's common values in a horizontal, integrated and comprehensive manner in order to ensure respect for the rule of law, develop the EU's rule of law instruments and strengthen their synergies. Ms TUPPURAINEN also stressed the need to ensure transparency and access to information and referred to measures the Council had implemented during the Finnish Presidency, including the proactive publication of legal documents and holding Council discussions in public. Ms TUPPURAINEN underlined that transparency should be combined with clear communication, which could together help counter disinformation.

In closing, Ms TUPPURAINEN stressed that preserving common values was a common endeavour and called upon the EU Member States, national Parliaments, EU institutions, EU agencies as well as civil society to act together in order to protect the foundations of European societies and European integration, such as peace, security, stability, democracy and prosperity. Ms TUPPURAINEN highlighted the rights of young people in voicing their concerns and said they should be better informed and involved in discussing matters that concerned them, including the rule of law, fundamental rights and questions relating to respect of these values in the context of climate change. Finally, Ms TUPPURAINEN underlined the need to foster cooperation with the Council of Europe and other regional and international organisations and referred to the EU's reaffirmed commitment to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights as one of the most important achievements of Finland's Presidency of the Council.

Mr Michael O'FLAHERTY, Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), began his address by acclaiming the strong architecture for the protection of human and fundamental rights that had been created in Europe and the way it bound together respect for fundamental rights and quality of a society based on the rule of law. Notwithstanding the existing tools, Mr O'FLAHERTY noted grave problems related to delivering on human rights commitments remained and referred to child poverty and racism as alarming examples. Mr O'FLAHERTY emphasised the role of parliamentarians in delivering on the

objectives and obligations and building a fairer Europe with the available tools, especially the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union ('the Charter').

Mr O'FLAHERTY stressed that applying the Charter was an important pathway to a state which respected the rule of law and assured human dignity and freedoms. He pointed out that the Charter was larger in scope than other international human rights treaties and gave equal focus to civil, political, economic, social as well as cultural rights. He underlined that the Charter, unlike other international human rights commitments, had direct national legal effect in issues falling under the EU competence and its guarantees often went beyond those found in national constitutions of the Member States. Despite this transformative power, Mr O'FLAHERTY underscored that significant underuse of the Charter had been identified when it came to awareness and references to legislation, particularly on a national level. Mr O'FLAHERTY explained that the underuse of the Charter was related to its relative novelty as a legally binding instrument and therefore more awareness and training was needed. He noted there was confusion about the use of the Charter, originating from difficulties in interpreting whether a matter fell under EU or national competency and from lack of accuracy when it came to the content of the Charter itself and identifying whether specific parts constituted rights or principles.

Mr O'FLAHERTY proposed concrete measures in order to reinvigorate interest in the Charter by Parliaments in particular. He invited parliamentarians to focus their attention to the Charter in their work and include assessing Charter compliance in the mandate of relevant parliamentary committees. He further called on Parliaments to consider convening an annual fundamental rights debate, invest in training for staff and parliamentarians in the use of the Charter and put in place a formal scrutiny procedure for Charter compliance in relevant legislation. He also invited Parliaments to encourage governments to adopt national action plans for promotion, awareness and use of the Charter. Finally, Mr O'FLAHERTY assured the support of the Agency to Parliaments in terms of both resources and expertise.

During the debate which followed, 35 speakers took the floor. In their interventions, many parliamentarians explicitly expressed their support for strengthening respect of the rule of law and common values (Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*; Ms Stieneke van der GRAAF, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*; Ms Anneli OTT, Estonian *Riigikogu*; Mr Tibor BANA, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*; Mr Neale RICHMOND, Irish *Houses of Oireachtas*; Ms Liliane TANGUY, French *Assemblée nationale*; Ms Marina BERLINGHIERI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*; Ms Vita Anda TĒRAUDA, Latvian *Saeima*; Mr Marcin BOSACKI, Polish *Senat*; Mr Gabi IONASCU, Romanian *Senat*).

Speakers referred to different measures in order to enhance respect for common values. A mechanism for protecting the EU budget in cases of breaches of rule of law was referred to as a useful instrument by a number of participants (Mr Andreas PASIOURTIDIS, Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*; Ms Liliane TANGUY, French *Assemblée nationale*; Mr Tibor BANA, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*; Ms BERLINGHIERI and Mr IONASCU). Ms BERLINGHIERI called for a preventative approach similar to the macro-economic approach under the European Semester. Mr IONASCU said that budgetary sanctions should only be used as a last resort and recommended measures such as awareness raising, debates in national Parliaments and exchange of good practices. The Belgo-German initiative to create a peer review mechanism on the rule of law was explicitly welcomed by Ms TĒRAUDA, Ms van der GRAAF and Ms TANGUY, while Mr Philippe BONNECARRÈRE, French *Sénat*, asked how such a mechanism would be put in place in practice.

Many speakers encouraged the view that dialogue or cooperation were important in enhancing democracy and rule of law in the EU (Mr Václav HAMPL, Czech *Sénat*; Ms TĒRAUDA; Ms van der GRAAF; Mr Luboš BLAHA, Slovak *Národná rada*; Mr Jan DZIEDZICZAK, Polish *Sejm*; Mr IONASCU).

Some speakers stressed respect for the sovereignty of the Member States (Mr BLAHA; Mr Jaak MADISON, European Parliament; Mr BANA; Mr DZIEDZICZAK).

Mr Ludvig ASPLING, Swedish *Riksdag*, and Mr MADISON said that they considered the current proceedings under Article 7 a political game and were critical of interfering in Member States' internal decisions and actions. Mr GIGLIO VIGNA argued that Europe needed to respect its inherent diversity and

not judge individual states on their internal work and politics. He further argued that suspending or cutting EU funding based on a political judgement was dangerous and could undermine Europe. Mr Richárd HÖRCSIK, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, said that rule of law was increasingly used as a tool for political leverage and warned against creating further division between Member States.

Mr Luca JAHIER, European Economic and Social Committee, said that a permanent mechanism at EU level concerning all Member States was needed to assure consistency with the agenda of fundamental rights and rule of law and it would also avoid a shaming game between Member States. In this regard, he further emphasised the role of the civil society. Similarly, Mr IONASCU argued that evaluation mechanisms should equally apply to all Member States in order to avoid susceptibilities of political motivation behind the mechanisms.

Mr BOSACKI said that the Polish *Senat*, being controlled by the political opposition, as well as the majority of Polish citizens, were committed to the common values and standards of democracy.

Mr BANA appealed that common values should be kept as priorities while at the same time respecting national sovereignty. Mr Vladimir ĐURIĆ, Serbian *Narodna skupština*, commented on the relation between protecting rule of law on one hand, and regional stability on the other hand, emphasising that long-term stability could not exist without democracy.

The need to continue work in order to strengthen fundamental rights was referred to by many speakers, including Ms Kerstin-Oudekki LOONE, Estonian *Riigikogu* and Mr PASIOURTIDIS. Ms OTT argued that citizens' awareness of fundamental rights should be raised and called for the European Commission's annual report on the implementation of the Charter to be translated in all EU languages. Mr Bernard DURKAN, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, referred to the need to refer more often to the Charter in the work of a parliamentarian.

Workers' rights and the need to fight unemployment were advocated by Ms LOONE, Mr BLAHA and Ms Beatriz DIAS, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, while Mr Gerard CRAUGHWELL, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, drew attention to the fact that pay equality had still not been achieved.

As regards migration, protection of refugees and migrants' rights was advocated by Ms Mairead McGUINNESS, European Parliament, and Ms DIAS who drew attention to the discrimination that migrants faced. Mr Smari McCARTHY, Icelandic *Alþingi*, proposed that tackling global inequality that increasingly caused issues with migration required tackling global corruption. Ms Eleni STAVROU, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, said that a proper framework should be created so as to manage external borders of the EU, migration and security.

Ms Riina SIKKUT, Estonian *Riigikogu*, stressed the EU's role in delivering on human centred digital economy. Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, German *Bundestag*, and Mr Georgios KYRTSOS, European Parliament, emphasised the need to safeguard key technologies against foreign interference while Mr CRAUGHWELL referred to attacks in social media and stressed the importance of protecting personal data.

Ms OOMEN-RUIJTEN stressed that combatting corruption was necessary in order to achieve economic and social stability.

Ms BERLINGHIERI urged the EU to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on prevention and combatting violence against women and domestic violence ('Istanbul Convention') and stressed that violence against women should also be discussed in the Conference on the future of the EU.

In her closing remarks, Ms TUPPURAINEN emphasised that rule of law was a legal fact enshrined in the EU Treaties and thus could not be taken as a political opinion or a moral idea. She invited everyone to follow the path towards a sustainable future for Europe tackling climate change, inequalities and poverty and committing to fundamental and human rights.

Mr O'FLAHERTY emphasised in his closing remarks that rule of law is not an entirely subjective concept as there existed a strong working definition of it given by the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. He further emphasised the indivisibility of social and economic human rights on one hand, and civil and political human rights on the other. He also drew attention to the need for gender approaches when protecting human rights, safeguarding human rights online and in the digital world as well as delivering better on the protection of migrants and refugees' human rights. He invited Parliaments to make use of the Agency's data in their dialogues and offered also a possibility to direct cooperation between individual national Parliaments and the Agency. Mr O'FLAHERTY concluded that human rights concern everyone in the society, not only the minorities, and urged therefore to reinvigorate and mainstream attention to the Charter instead of seeing it as a controversial agenda.

5. Session III: Intervention by Mr Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission

Speaker: Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission

Moderator: Ms Mairéad McGUINNESS, First Vice-President, European Parliament

Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission, referred to the present day as a special day, not only because this meeting marked the 30th anniversary of the first meeting of COSAC that took place in France, but also because it was the first working day in office of the new Commission.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ underlined that the choices to be made ahead would fundamentally shape the role and position of the EU in the decades to come. He subsequently referred to the von der LEYEN Commission Political Guidelines for the coming five years: the European Green Deal, an economy that works for people, a Europe fit for the digital age, the promotion of the European way of life, a stronger Europe in the world and a new push for our European democracy. He also made mention of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

As Vice-President for interinstitutional relations and foresight, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated that he would assist the President von der LEYEN in developing the Commission Work Programme and, as responsible for annual and multiannual programming, he would facilitate a consistent approach between the EU institutions in legislative planning.

In the context of foresight, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ referred to his plan to set up an EU Strategic Foresight Network that would bring together the best of the EU institutions and Member States to create synergies and asked those Parliaments with foresight capacity to join this network. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ cited the example of the European Battery Alliance, where the common work of European institutions, industry and Member States would allow building a value chain of the greenest batteries in Europe.

Concerning national Parliaments, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated that they were and would remain an important partner for the Commission, in particular through the subsidiarity control of Commission proposals, a rich political dialogue, and fruitful direct contacts with Commissioners.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated the new Commission would prepare aggregated responses in cases where a Commission legislative proposal raised subsidiarity concerns from a significant number of national Parliaments, without reaching the formal threshold for triggering a yellow card. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ added that the Commission was already this year discounting the period between 20 December and 10 January of the following year when determining the deadline of eight weeks for the national Parliaments' subsidiarity control.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ cited the concept of "active subsidiarity" as very attractive, meaning that all relevant actors, be they institutional, national or sub-national, would constructively contribute to developing the added value of EU legislation throughout the policymaking process.

Concerning the Conference on the Future of Europe, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated that the Commission was looking forward to receiving a collective contribution from the part of national Parliaments. For the new Commission, the Conference was a way for citizens and civil society to make their voice heard and expose their policy priorities.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated that the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission should agree on a well-defined structure of the Conference that respects democratic and institutional balance and underlined that its starting and end points were the citizens and their interests and concerns. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ expressed the wish of the Commission for broad participation in the Conference from all relevant actors, including national Parliaments.

Concerning the ongoing negotiations of the MFF for 2021-2027, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated that they were in a difficult phase and the EU budget would need to evolve according to the challenges of the present and incoming times. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ however regretted that until present, progress was limited, with some countries asking for a budget that would even be smaller than today's budget as a share of EU gross national income.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ warned that reducing the EU budget further would not allow the Union to adequately address the challenges it faced. It would also make funding the priorities already agreed by the Leaders like climate change, innovation, digital, migration, security and defence, as well as the EU's external actions, difficult. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated that others insisted to maintain the allocations to agriculture and/or to cohesion, depending on which they benefited the most, and were ready to sacrifice the support to research or climate change, where common actions proved to be very effective.

To reduce the burden on national budgets, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated that the Commission had made a deliberate effort to diversify sources of revenue while creating a link to policy objectives, in particular the proposal to create new EU resources linked to the proportion of non-recycled plastic and to the level of greenhouse gas emissions. Concluding, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ encouraged all to support the necessary compromises back home.

Twenty-nine parliamentarians took the floor in the ensuing debate. In their interventions, parliamentarians welcomed the new Commission and expressed their support for the next five years.

Mr Luís CAPOULAS SANTOS, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, underlined the need for an MFF agreement in line with the ambitions, and disagreed with the proposal made by the Finnish Presidency (i.e. an EU budget of EUR 1 087 billion for 2021-2027, equal to 1.07% of the gross national income of the EU Member States).

Mr Christian BUCHMANN, Austrian *Bundesrat*, stressed the need to merge economy and ecology in the New Green Deal, of budgetary discipline and administrative efficiency in the MFF, and of the enlargement perspective to the Western Balkans.

Mr Richárd HÖRCSIK, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, was of the view that the voices of national Parliaments had to be heard on EU matters including in the Conference on the Future of Europe, and supported the stance on MFF by the Friends of Cohesion. Similar views were expressed by Mr Domagoj HAJDUKOVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, who underlined the importance of EU cohesion and of the Conference of the Future of Europe. Ms Agnieszka POMASKA, Polish *Sejm*, asked for a better involvement of citizens in EU matters, and to refrain linking infringements on rule of law to EU fund cuts.

Mr Marcin BOSACKI, Polish *Senat*, agreed with the ambitions of the new Commission and encouraged it to be brave but also a good communicator, and invited the Commission to the Polish Parliament, in the frame of a public hearing, for instance.

Ms Gabriela CREȚU, Romanian *Senat*, referred to the link between the Single Market and wealth creation, technology and democracy, and climate change and multilateralism.

Mr Georgios KYRTSOS, European Parliament, asked why the EU was lagging behind on electric vehicles and stated that without ambition, no goal could be accomplished.

Mr Bernard DURKAN, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, asked to act as a community when facing and solving issues such as climate change and migration.

Mr Ettore Antonio LICHERI, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, expressed support for the CAP and cohesion policies and referred to the delicate situation of steel in Europe, in particular in the southern Italian city of Taranto. Mr Alessandro GIGLIO VIGNA, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, referred to the need to reform the Dublin convention and his support to the CAP and cohesion policies. Ms H el ene RYCKMANS, Belgian *S enat*, also supported the CAP and its administrative simplification, while Lech KOŁAKOWSKI, Polish *Sejm*, raised the issue of direct payments in CAP. Mr Jean BIZET, French *S enat*, also expressed his support to the CAP and asked for a more reactive EU.

Mr Bastiaan VAN APELDOORN, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, called the Commission to play a more modest role and asked for full involvement of national Parliaments in the Conference of the Future of Europe, and more transparency and democratic accountability in the EU. Mr Hayke VELDMAN, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, asked for transparency in the Council, more active subsidiarity and called COSAC to achieve better results through working groups. Mr Gerard CRAUGHWELL, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, asked for honesty in carbon footprint in the frame of the Green Deal, and was of the view that COSAC would improve by working in smaller working groups. Ms Sabine THILLAYE, French *Assemblée nationale*, was open about having thematic COSAC working groups but enquired about possible implementation.

Mr Evangelos SYRIGOS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, asked for solidarity to help share the burden of 4,000 unaccompanied minor refugees on Greek islands, deplored the unauthorized oil drilling by Turkey in Cypriot waters and complained about the recent Libya-Turkey maritime boundaries agreement as a violation of maritime law. Mr Elias MYRIANTHOUS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, welcomed the new Commission's emphasis on citizens and social rights and, together with Mr Angelos VOTSIS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, deplored the ongoing infringement of Cyprus sovereign rights by Turkey. Mr İsmail Emrah KARAYEL and Mr Selman  ZBOYACI, Turkish *B y k Millet Meclisi*, reacted to the Greek and Cypriot interventions by stating that Turkey's offshore activities in the Eastern Mediterranean were carried out in compliance with international law, as was also the recent accord signed between Libya and Turkey on sea boundaries between the two countries. Mr Dimitris KAIRIDIS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, proposed not to discuss the differences between Turkey, Greece and Cyprus any further and asked Turkey to agree to settle the disputes by international law, and in an international court.

Ms Sibel  ZDEMİR, Turkish *B y k Millet Meclisi*, referred that Turkey obtained candidate status in Helsinki in December 1999, and to the 2016 EU-Turkey statement agreement concerning migration

Mr Žygimantas PAVILIONIS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, warned of the safety threats posed by the new Russian-made nuclear power plant in Astravets, in neighbouring Belarus.

Mr Mark DEMESMAEKER, Belgian *S enat*, asked not to turn a blind eye to the imprisonment of Catalan politicians and called for political dialogue, not repression.

The moderator, Ms Mairead McGUINNESS, European Parliament, referred to the importance of dialogue when debating issues, and gave the floor to Mr ŠEFČOVIČ for reactions. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ replied to the questions by blocks on MFF, on the Conference of the Future of Europe, on foresight and on enlargement.

On MFF, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ said that this was a difficult task for the Commission whose initial proposal was an EU budget at 1.114 % of the GNP, knowing that the EU needed more, that the cost of non-Europe was higher, and that unanimity was needed to reach a decision. Concerning cohesion funds, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated that the divide in EU was not only GNP but also on wages and that cohesion was needed to fill the gap. Concerning the Green Deal, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated that there would be financial support if there were good projects.

On the Conference on the Future of Europe, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated that it was natural to have national Parliaments on board and underlined President von der LEYEN's aspiration that the debate on the future was as much as possible outside of Brussels. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ added that it was still to be defined how to organise it, when and with whom, and welcomed COSAC's willingness of involvement, and expressed his wish that the conference would be a success and a citizen platform for the European project.

On foresight, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ although there were some missed opportunities for Europe on electric vehicles, there was new technology around the corner, and the EU could level up in the incoming future.

On enlargement, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stated, citing former Commissioner for Enlargement, Johannes HAHN, that if we stopped exporting stability, we would import insecurity.

6. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

Appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat

The COSAC Chairpersons in Helsinki had noted that the term of office of the current Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, Mr Kenneth CURMI, would expire by the end of the year. The Presidency had then received one nomination from the Maltese *Kamra tad-deputati* in September 2019 wherein it recommended the renewal of the term of office of Mr CURMI for 2020 and 2021.

In line with the proposal of the Troika, the Chairpersons agreed on Mr CURMI's reappointment for the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021.

Discussion on the draft Contribution and draft Conclusions of the LXII COSAC

Mr KILJUNEN informed participants that the draft Conclusions and Contribution had been circulated on 11 November 2019. Since then, the Presidency had received amendments from national Parliaments and, following the discussion during the Troika meeting on the day before, delegations had received a modified document, as well as the amendments tabled until the deadline of noon, that day.

Mr KILJUNEN explained the voting system, reminding participants that each parliament had two votes with the vote split for bi-cameral parliaments.

Following some debate, including a number of votes, the draft Conclusions and an amended text of the draft Contribution of the LXII COSAC were agreed upon.¹

¹ Declaration concerning the vote on the Contribution of the LXII COSAC in accordance with article 7.5 of the COSAC rules of procedure from the Swedish, Dutch (both chambers) and Danish delegations.

Our delegations voted in favour of the final COSAC contribution. However, we want to express our disappointment with how the vote on the amendment drafted by the Austrian, Dutch (Tweede Kamer), Danish and Swedish delegations was handled. To our understanding, the Chair initially clearly stated that the amendments would be adopted by majority vote, and that the final

7. Session IV: A Winning Climate Strategy for Europe

Speakers: Ms Mari PANTSAR, Director, Carbon Neutral Circular Economy, the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra; Professor Markku OLLIKAINEN, Chair of the Finnish Climate Change Panel and Mr Pekka TIMONEN, Mayor of the City of Lahti (European Green Capital 2021)

Chair: Ms Satu HASSI, Chairperson of the Grand Committee of the Finnish *Eduskunta*

Ms Satu HASSI, Chairperson of the Grand Committee of the Finnish *Eduskunta*, introduced the session, presented the panellists and gave the floor to the first speaker, Ms Mari PANTSAR, Director, Carbon Neutral Circular Economy, the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra.

Ms PANTSAR outlined the three steps that should be taken to strengthen Europe's climate leadership, namely aligning Europe's emission targets with the Paris Agreement; strengthening Europe's emission trading; and seizing the full potential in the circular economy. She then briefly introduced the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, a self-financed organisation established in 1967. Sitra coordinated the preparation of Finland's roadmap towards circular economy in 2016, which is the first such national circular economy action plan in the world. Sitra also organised World Circular Economy Fora - leading arenas for circular economy decision-makers. Ms PANTSAR underlined that while Europe has been the global leader in climate change mitigation and emissions reduction, its emission targets are yet to be aligned with the Paris Agreement long-term temperature goals of limiting global heating to under 2 degrees Celsius, and pointed out the need to adapt Europe's vision, including by adopting a target for carbon neutrality and increasing the ambition of the 2030 target. Secondly, in terms of strengthening Europe's emission trading, Ms PANTSAR underlined the need for these measures to be both efficient and cost-effective. Thirdly, in terms of seizing the full potential in the circular economy, she explained the importance of better use of materials that are already available, instead of extraction of more natural resources, which causes more green-gas emissions and kills off more species. Ms PANTSAR concluded that climate change represents the greatest challenge human kind has ever met and that Europe, already the leader in climate change mitigation, must do even more.

Professor Markku OLLIKAINEN, Chair of the Finnish Climate Change Panel, announced he would be focussing on the Green Deal that is currently prepared by the European Commission, aimed at strengthening the EU's climate policy, and on the sources of green gas emissions, notably fossil fuels, coal and gas, that can be replaced by non-carbon, renewable, sources of energy. He underlined the fact that the EU Emissions Targeting System (EU ETS) is well-suited for reducing these emissions, and added the cap on emissions needs to be tighter, allowing coal to be phased out by 2030, and even represent the most important part of the Green Deal. Mr OLLIKAINEN presented the results on the EU ETS 2021-2030 trading phase that, *inter alia*, predict a surplus of allowances of 3 000 Mt by 2030. He continued by explaining that cement and steel industries represent large emitters, and that the EU ETS does not fit well to process-based emissions, as there are currently no substitute technologies. Mr OLLIKAINEN stressed the importance of innovation policy and pointed out the EU can provide its industries with a large number of business possibilities that would result in reduced emissions, and further elaborated on the need for actions that would reduce the primary demand for crude oil; oil would have to be left in the ground in the mid-term, and eventually replaced it by introducing electric vehicles, synthetic recyclable fuels for heavy-duty vehicles and aviation, and hydrogen itself. The Green Deal should clarify how synthetic recyclable fuels would be treated in the

contribution would be adopted by a qualified majority. A vote was carried out in which the amendment was accepted 25 in favour and 18 against. After a debate, following the vote, the chair decided to once again call for a vote on the same subject with new rules. This time, the amendment was not adopted. A lengthy discussion during the voting process created uncertainty. As we see it, a vote cast under rules set out and agreed upon ahead of the vote should not be cancelled and done again with different rules. This highlights the need to clarify the voting procedure in order to avoid this kind of situation in the future. We urgently invite COSAC to address the issue to avoid such situations during upcoming meetings.

EU's climate policy, and create a tighter policy towards plastics while promoting its recycling. In the context of the Green Deal he added the time might be right for a new policy initiative promoting negative emissions, as while there was now a price for emissions, there were no rewards for negative emissions. Mr OLLIKAINEN concluded that the Green Deal brought benefits for most stakeholders by introducing tighter caps on emissions in the EU ETS, a stronger innovation policy and a more determined policy to gradually outphase oil. Mr OLLIKAINEN also provided a comment on the border adjustment tax, expressing his belief the technical challenge to determine the carbon content of goods can be resolved, and the EU-wide emissions would eventually decrease as the prices of goods with high carbon content would increase, thus promoting a shift to cleaner goods, despite the fact the cost might increase in the industries using imported goods as intermediary goods in their production.

Ms HASSI pointed out the climate policy in Finland was not just national, but also local. A number of cities - such as Helsinki, Tampere and Turku - had set their own climate-neutrality targets with deadlines that were the same (i.e. by 2035), or shorter than the national one, and the city of Lahti had set an even more ambitious target. She gave the floor to Mr Pekka TIMONEN, Mayor of the City of Lahti.

Mr TIMONEN presented the results of the City of Lahti in their work on climate issues and fight against climate change. He pointed out the European Commission had awarded Lahti the title of the European Green Capital for 2021. Mr TIMONEN shortly presented his city and pointed out that most Europeans lived in mid-sized cities like Lahti. He underscored the fact environmentally sustainable urban life represented a solution to the challenges brought by climate change. To do so, cities needed to undergo a full green transformation, rethink the way they function and learn from each other in that process. Lahti had set its emission targets in 2009 and its carbon emissions have dropped significantly - despite the fact the city itself had grown - and was set to be climate-neutral by 2025. In order to do that, the city was abandoning the use of coal, had invested over 200 million euros in its energy systems over the last five years, and relied on biofuel, renewable materials and energy waste. The city also improved its waste management and recycling, to the point it did not require a landfill anymore, but was reusing almost all of its municipal waste. These changes resulted in green growth and the creation of new jobs. The community, including schools and children, have been involved in the environmental efforts, and Lahti was the first city in the world to have launched the personal emissions trading scheme, conducted by a smart phone application that exchanged emissions for benefits.

Ms HASSI opened the debate and 24 speakers took the floor. There was general support expressed in favour of the idea of a Green Deal and tackling the issues caused by climate change.

A number of speakers made links between the consequences of climate change and the EU's Cohesion Policy. Mr Paulo MONIZ, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, pointed out that the outermost regions had their particularities and represented an important element of the Cohesion Policy, underlined the relevance of climate change for the outermost regions and stressed that circular economy provided an opportunity for local employment, especially for the youth. Ms Anneli OTT, Estonian *Riigikogu*, pointed out that Estonia was conducting a national discussion on climate-neutrality that it aimed to achieve by 2050, a goal which, according to her, could only be achieved with the help of transitional mechanisms - while cuts in Cohesion Policy and rural developments would undermine the achievement of climate goals. Ms Isabel RODRIGUES, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, underlined the importance of achieving a sustainable economy. She pointed to the high level of indigenously sourced energy in her native Azores, stressed the importance of agriculture and fisheries, and the need to take into consideration the differences between European regions.

Mr Björn WIECHEL, Swedish *Riksdag*, pointed out that the issue of protecting the environment was not just a question of moral responsibility or a matter of protecting our society, but also a way to create new jobs and an opportunity that needed to be seized. A similar view regarding the creation of green jobs was

expressed by Mr Tibor BANA, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, who also stressed the goals of the Paris Agreement were ambitious but necessary, and said drastic measures needed to be taken. He also pointed out the need for major polluters, such as the United States and China, to meet the Paris Agreement criteria. Mr Elias MYRIANTOUS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, also referred to the global context, pointing out environmental problems were partly caused by third countries that, unlike European Union countries, were not bound by international agreements, and asked whether the European Union should introduce economic measures against such countries.

Ms Erika BENKŐ, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, explained how Romania supported the climate neutrality goals and the implementation of the Paris Agreement, adding that a broad list of stakeholders should be involved in that effort, and the EU mechanism adjusted to Member States' possibilities. The view was shared by Mr Simon SUTOUR, French *Sénat*, who pointed out the need for financial solidarity with developing countries and island states, and explained France was closing its coal power stations, largely due to the use of nuclear power, and expressed his view that climate policy should be included in all European Union policies, including its trade policy. Mr Zoltán TESSELY, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, also underlined that achieving climate neutrality would be very difficult without relying on carbon-neutral nuclear energy, and pointed out the Hungarian commitment to climate protection and achievements in cutting its greenhouse gas emissions while achieving GDP growth, and the fact that it had been the first country to ratify the Paris Agreement. Mr TESSELY welcomed the European Commission's transition fund that had been announced by Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, and underlined that the transformation of the economy required funds, which should be taken into account while designing the next MFF.

Ms Kerstin-Oudekki LOONE, Estonian *Riigikogu*, underlined the wide differences between minorities and majorities in society, underlining the unacceptable situation where only the affluent few can afford the environmentally-friendly choices, and provided a positive example from Estonia - free public transport.

Mr Angelos VOTSIS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, stressed the complex global circumstances, as well as the complex position of Cyprus, and underlined the need to move towards a carbon-neutral economy by 2050. Furthermore, he stressed that both companies and citizens have to be aware of the need for change that would not reduce companies' competitiveness. Similarly, Ms Sabrina RICCIARDI, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, expressed her support for the Green Deal, adding that the economy would have to change to adjust to the new circumstances and to enable Europe to be the front-runner in the field.

Ms Amanda PALMSTIERNA, Swedish *Riksdag*, focused on the youth, and the need to listen to their opinions, as well as to listen and proactively act in accordance with the scientists' advice. She stressed the need of meeting climate challenges on time, and stressed the importance of investment and best practices that would make Europe a strong global climate leader. Mr Gerhardt ZICKENHEINER, German *Bundestag*, warned that no Member States of the European Union were reaching the Paris Agreement goals. He also pointed that the warnings scientists provided were ignored. He expressed his cautious optimism that the Green Deal represented the last hope, with a small window of opportunity open, and stressed the importance of cooperation in achieving the climate goals.

Mr Jorge BUXADÉ VILLALBA, European Parliament, while considering the protection of the environment to be a worthy goal, expressed his concern over how to achieve it and what would be the effects on the economy, and stated there was no unequivocal scientific proof of what was actually happening with the climate. He warned people should not be left out, pointing out all European countries are not on the same footing, and reminded of the thousands of jobs in industries that would be hurt as result of climate-related policies, such as the car industry.

Mr Bernard DURKAN, Irish *Houses of Oireachtas*, pointed out that Ireland heavily relies on food production and food exports, and admitted Ireland started late with addressing the carbon issue but believes

they would achieve the results planned. He underlined the importance of making the climate measures palatable to citizens and making it clear what was their individual contribution to reducing the carbon footprint.

Mr Ivan ČELIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, pointed out Croatia did not have a decisive influence on climate change, but was nevertheless interested in a global agreement that would prevent further global warming and its repercussions on air, sea and land, and was taking necessary steps in that direction.

Mr Vladimir ĐURIĆ, Serbian *Narodna skupština*, expressed his view that politicians focusing on environmental issues were not in focus during accession negotiations with candidate countries. He pointed out citizens were aware of environmental issues and existing pollution in their countries, and that environmental issues represented an important element of enlargement policies, as pollution could not be contained by national borders. Candidate countries should, he concluded, be an important part of the European Green Deal.

Ms Virginija VINGIENĖ, Lithuanian *Seimas*, expressed support for the European Commission's Green Deal. She opposed concessions to polluting industries, obsolete technologies and the use of nuclear or imported energy, and instead urged the EU to uphold its ambitious standards in trade deals, seize the opportunity for new-generation economy and growth, and show by example that lofty ideas can be turned into reality.

Ms Sabine THILLAYE, French *Assemblée nationale*, underlined the fact the world is faced with a climate emergency and urged that a number of comprehensive measures be put in place. Such policies should not put the economy and the environment in collision but rather be part of a broad transition of our economy towards a circular model. In conclusion, Ms THILLAYE congratulated Mr TIMONEN and expressed her belief that results were achieved where there was political will. Mr Gerard CRAUGHWELL, Irish *Houses of Oireachtas*, also commended the example of Lahti and the actions taken by that community. He pointed out that the focus should be put on the future of the youth who would inherit the environment. Mr Domagoj HAJDUKOVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, also pointed out the importance of action, and commended the achievements of the City of Lahti that shows the importance of local communities in achieving results. He also inquired about traffic solutions that might have been introduced in Lahti.

Ms Mairéad McGUINNESS, European Parliament, asked whether it was feasible to achieve the ambitious target of a 70 % emission reduction by 2030, while the European Parliament's target is 55 %; she inquired about the technology that would be used in food production instead of soybean, about the ways to motivate citizens, about the impact of aviation, and the financial incentives, or penalties, that could be used to achieve results. Mr Georgios KYRSTOS, European Parliament, pointed out that per capita emissions might provide a different perspective of pollution. He also inquired about the prospects of scientific progress and about the negative balance for emissions.

In her closing remarks, Ms PANTSAR pointed out the importance of exporting European solutions globally. She explained it is possible for Europe to reduce the emissions by 70% by 2030 and that many relevant solutions are already being applied. She also suggested the dissemination of best practices and their implementation on a broader scale. She raised the issue of who would be the leader after Europe and challenged the importance of competitiveness.

Mr OLLIKAINEN reminded the audience of the Porter hypothesis that claims that strict environmental regulations can induce efficiency and encourage innovations that help improve commercial competitiveness, elaborating on the new technology that could be used in food production. He provided the requested insight on the per capita emissions, explaining the emissions in the European Union were still higher than in China and significantly higher than in India. He mentioned potential technological solutions that could be applied in aviation and shipping, and tackled various possibilities for taxation in aviation.

Mr TIMONEN thanked the audience for their positive reaction to the measures taken in Lahti. He explained that Lahti has the world's first carbon-free professional sports team, the ice hockey team, which promotes environmentally friendly practices to its supporters. Mr TIMONEN pointed out the relevance of action taken at local level, described the events that led to the high level of citizen awareness and involvement in Lahti, and underlined the importance of collaboration between various stakeholders - citizens, decision-makers, businesses and academia.

Ms HASSI thanked the speakers and underlined the importance of our actions for the future of our children.

8. Session V – ‘Intervention by Mr Michel BARNIER, Head of the Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom’

Chair: Ms Satu HASSI, Chairperson of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

Ms HASSI introduced and gave the floor to Mr Michel BARNIER, Head of the Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom, who started his address by underlining COSAC's added value, which had continuously grown since its first meeting, in Paris, in 1989. He then recalled his participation to the COSAC held in Malta, in 2017, as Brexit negotiations were about to start, and the invitation he made on that occasion to national Parliaments to stay involved in that process. In supporting his invitation, the Chief Negotiator highlighted the visits he had paid to national Parliaments in order to listen to their specific concerns, to explain the European Commission's proposals and to share negotiation positions; he also reiterated his commitment to continue this dialogue in the future, which he considered a democratic necessity.

Regarding Brexit negotiations, Mr BARNIER said they were difficult, but he relied on the strong unity of the remaining 27 Member States. He then pointed out the four major objectives followed during these negotiations: placing people first; protecting the Single Market; ensuring an orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) as a step, not as an end; and preserving a good base for the future of the EU.

With respect to the people, Mr BARNIER first referred to the EU citizens living in the UK and the UK citizens living in the EU (4.5 million citizens, in total), and stated that a long-term protection of their rights would only be possible if the withdrawal agreement was ratified. Then he mentioned the need to defend prosperity, peace and stability for the people in Ireland and Northern Ireland. In this sense, he mentioned having managed to reach a solution to avoid a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, to preserve the all-island economy, to protect the Single Market's integrity, and to ensure that Northern Ireland remained in the UK's customs territory. On this last point, the Chief Negotiator recalled the limited set of EU rules, notably on goods, that would still be applicable in Northern Ireland; the EU custom duties, which would still be applicable on goods entering Northern Ireland, destined to reach the Single Market; and the EU's long-term support for the application of these rules by the UK authorities.

As to the Single Market, Mr BARNIER stressed it was more than a free trade zone; it was the EU's first economic asset, a source of opportunities and protection for citizens, consumers and businesses, and therefore needed protection. The Chief Negotiator referred to the Single Market as an ecosystem of common rules, supervision and jurisdiction, and pointed out that no compromise has ever been agreed during the Brexit negotiations and no compromise will ever be agreed during the future partnership negotiations with respect to its integrity.

On the orderly withdrawal of the UK, Mr BARNIER said it was only a step towards a new partnership with this country, the framework of which was laid in the political Declaration, covering fields such as trade, investments, data protection, transports, energy, fishery, police and judicial cooperation, foreign policy or defence. He then referred to the European Commission's commitment to engage in demanding and difficult

negotiations for this partnership, led in full transparency, in close link with the European Parliament and national Parliaments, and in an exceptionally short period: 11 months.

Mr BARNIER furthermore stressed that the first pillar of this new partnership with the UK should rely on solid level playing field guarantees, take into account matters of competitiveness for businesses, peoples' rights and life standards, and aim at "zero tariff, zero quota, zero dumping". He then stated that the second pillar of this partnership should relate to internal and external security and to foreign affairs. In this respect, the Chief Negotiator recalled the EU's ambitions in terms of defence, as well as the UK's commitment to remain engaged for the security of Europe.

As to the future of the EU, Mr BARNIER pointed out that this was more important than Brexit. On this occasion, he once again underlined the strong unity of the 27 remaining Member States, which was built not only to defend the European common interest, solidarity with Member States most affected by Brexit and citizens, but the EU future projects, too. For this purpose, the Chief Negotiator highlighted the need to manage ecological transition and digital revolution, to serve citizens and businesses, to ensure defence in close cooperation with NATO, and to improve the European democracy.

Finally, Mr BARNIER referred to the British elections and to the EU's neutrality on this matter. He reminded nonetheless that the EU was ready for all scenarios resulting from these elections, and prepared to start negotiations for the new partnership with the UK.

In the ensuing debate, 22 speakers took the floor and many of them, such as Ms Gabriela CREȚU, Romanian *Senat*; Mr Richárd HÖRCSIK Hungarian *Országgyűlés*; Mr Domagoj HAJDUKOVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*; Ms Barbara MASINI, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*; Mr Bernard DURKAN Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*; Mr Pål JONSON, Swedish *Riksdag*; Mr Gerard CRAUGHWELL, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*; Mr Angelos VOTSIS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*; Ms Mairéad McGUINNESS, European Parliament; and Mr Philippe BONNECARRÈRE, French *Sénat*; explicitly thanked the Chief Negotiator for the way he had performed his duties.

A number of speakers echoed Mr BARNIER's words about the need to put people first. In this respect, Mr HAJDUKOVIĆ and Ms MASINI showed concerns as to the European citizens living in the UK, Ms Isabel MEIRELES, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, pointed out that 500,000 Portuguese nationals were in this situation, whereas Mr Pedro CEGONHO, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, said the rights of these people needed to be protected. Mr Jorge BUXADÉ VILLALBA, European Parliament, also referred to the need to place citizens in the frontline and to solve their interests first, while highlighting that 180,000 Spanish people were living in the UK and 300,000 British nationals lived in Spain. From a functional perspective, Ms McGUINNESS wondered about the impact of Brexit on the EU institutions and, from an economic one, Mr Mark DEMESMAEKER, Belgian *Sénat* pleaded for the European citizens' protection by extending the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund to companies having up to 500 employees.

Economic concerns made their way through the debate, too. Ms MEIRELES reminded the UK was an important commercial partner to Portugal and Ms Ines STRENJA, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, referred to the threat of economic recession brought by the country's withdrawal from the EU. In this respect, she pointed out the business sector's uncertainties, which made it easier for states like the USA, China or Russia to profit, while Mr DEMESMAEKER stated that the UK was the fourth commercial partner for Flanders and asked for reduced trading barriers in the post-Brexit era. As to this particular trade era, Mr Pierre-Henri DUMONT, French *Assemblée nationale*, underlined the EU should ensure the integrity of the Single Market and a level playing field and Mr BUXADÉ VILLALBA showed preoccupations as to possible dumping practices in the field of farming. Ms MASINI emphasised that exports towards the UK needed protection, especially with regard to geographical indications, Mr HÖRCSIK said commerce was an important component of the future partnership with the UK, and Mr Jean BIZET, French *Sénat*, wondered if the future

free trade agreement with the UK would be a mixed one. Mr BONNECARRÈRE echoed this concern and furthermore questioned the possibility to combine a free trade agreement with all necessary guarantees to preserve the Single Market.

Many speakers referred to the UK's orderly withdrawal, too. Ms Erika BENKŐ, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*, said her country was committed to stay aligned to the European position for such orderly withdrawal and highlighted the fairness of the last compromise reached with the UK. Mr Neale RICHMOND, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, showed the Union was, once again, waiting for the UK's move, while Mr CEGONHO pleaded for patience, stressing a hard Brexit would cause disturbance. Mr HÖRCSIK went even further, describing the "no deal" scenario as a real disaster and pointing out that decision was in the hands of the British. In this respect, Mr BIZET said the elections in the UK would bring more clarifications. Mr Alessandro GIGLIO VIGNA, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, argued that the EU should respect Member States' sovereignty, but Ms CREȚU congratulated the Chief Negotiator for having avoided contagion and for having preserved unity across the EU.

Looking ahead, Ms MASINI underscored that the work had not ended especially with regard to protecting citizens' rights. Mr CEGONHO expressed hope that the future agreement would result in a balanced outcome and that the EU and the UK would remain good neighbours. Mr DUMONT pleaded for preserving unity during the negotiations on the future relationship. Ms McGUINNESS wondered if 11 months was a sufficient time period to negotiate this partnership with the UK, while Ms BENKŐ, and Mr RICHMOND placed high hopes in fruitful negotiations and in a good new partnership. Ms MEIRELES showed concerns about the situation in Ireland, whereas Mr BIZET spoke about bilateral agreements with the UK on defence, intelligence and energy. Mr JONSON referred to internal and external security, making three suggestions: UK to have full access to the EU's military management crisis operations, British defence industrial base to have access to the intra-EU cooperation enabled by PESCO and Defence Fund, and the European Security Council to take the UK on board. Mr HÖRCSIK confirmed that security, defence and data protection should make the scope of the future partnership with the UK, too.

Mr DUMONT highlighted the importance of fishery, warning that a shift of fishing activities from the territorial waters of the UK to the waters of France and Belgium could lead into overfishing in the latter. Mr BONNECARRÈRE asked about the compatibility of the future trade agreement with the internal market, Mr BUXADÉ VILLALBA expected answers about negotiations paving the way for Gibraltar's decolonisation, while Ms CREȚU and Mr KAIRIDIS asked to learn from the EU's mistakes throughout the whole Brexit process. In this respect, Mr Georgios KYRTSOS, European Parliament, underlined that, before talking about dumping from the UK, the EU should focus more on the intra-European fiscal dumping and asked the Chief Negotiator if the EU was ready for a scenario where the Labour Party would win the British elections.

Taking the floor for his final remarks, Mr BARNIER thanked the speakers for their support, but warned Brexit was not over and that, in any case, there was no room for congratulations on a divorce. Looking forward, the Chief Negotiator referred to the geopolitical context of Brexit and stressed the fact that no Member State could cope with the future challenges alone; he therefore urged to stay European and united.

With respect to the lessons learnt from Brexit, Mr BARNIER pointed out that the EU had to listen to popular concerns, to address real challenges and to show the EU's added value. On this occasion, he said people in the UK were victims of fake news, having the feeling the EU did not protect them nor did anything to avoid deindustrialisation.

Concerning the 4.5 million citizens concerned by Brexit, Mr BARNIER reiterated that their best protection was to ratify and implement the withdrawal agreement, observing, however, that it was protective until 2020 and underlining he could not anticipate on the post-2020 British immigration policy. As to a hard

Brexit, he stressed the EU had done everything to avoid it and reminded the withdrawal agreement was reached with the British Government already in November 2018.

As to the future partnership with the UK, the Chief Negotiator said it should be economic and strategic. On defence, he referred to the Political Declaration, which revealed the areas where a strategic partnership could be built: cooperation in external actions, cooperation between intelligence services, combating cyber-attacks and political cooperation. On economy, he said the future free trade agreement would also include provisions on fishery and a level playing field. Regarding fishery, Mr BARNIER highlighted the idea of providing access for European vessels in British waters in exchange for correct access of the British fishery products to the Single Market. Regarding the level playing field, he said it would concern taxation matters, environment or even social rights. In any case, the Chief Negotiator stressed that the level of access of the British products to the Single Market would depend on the long-term obligations undertaken by the UK.

Furthermore, Mr BARNIER mentioned that the future partnership with the UK would be complex and comprise not only matters of shared competences, but also matters where the EU had exclusive competence. Moreover, he stressed that 11 months to negotiate it were not enough and that, as a result, he might not be able to conduct negotiations in all areas of interest during these 11 months. In this respect, he warned that some of such areas might be negotiated at a later stage and took the opportunity to remark that there would be many negotiations, including on agriculture, governance or dispute settlements, but the negotiating speeds would be different. He stressed that if the transition period could not be extended as of the end of 2020, the negotiations during the 11 months had to guarantee the minimum basis for future relations in order to avoid a precarious end of the transition period at the end of 2020.

On Gibraltar, Mr BARNIER underlined that there was a separate protocol on the matter in the withdrawal agreement and that, in the future, this will be the subject of different and specific negotiations.

As to the outcome of the British elections and their impact, the Chief Negotiator reiterated that the EU was ready for the Brexit to take place on 31 January 2020 and reassured it was fully aware of all sensitivities of the different Member States and regions with respect to Brexit and its implications. On this occasion, he stressed the EU would do as much as it could to express solidarity for the exposed regions and Member States after Brexit with all instruments available to it even though all measures could not be taken during the first 11 months after Brexit. He also mentioned he would continue to work in a transparent way and urged to continue to have faith in the EU and its Single Market.

Finally, Mr BARNIER said the Brexit was a lose-lose case after which the UK would no longer have the status of a Member State. He assured his commitment to continue negotiating in good faith and transparency and maintaining dialogue.

9. Adoption of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LXII COSAC

The texts of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LXII COSAC were unanimously adopted with no amendment.

Ms HASSI then thanked everyone involved in ensuring the meeting a success and closed the conference.