

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

Lisbon, Portugal, 7 January 2021

(held through videoconference)

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

CHAIR: Mr Luis CAPOULAS SANTOS, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*.

Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs, German *Bundestag*; Mr Marko POGAČNIK, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs, Slovenian *Državni zbor*; Mr Bojan KEKEC, Chair of the Commission for International Relations and European Affairs, Slovenian *Državni svet*; Ms Roberta METSOLA, First Vice-President, European Parliament.

(Mr Guido WOLF, Chairman of the Committee on European Union Questions, German *Bundesrat*; and Mr Antonio TAJANI, Chair of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament, were unable to attend)

AGENDA

- 1. Adoption of the agenda of the Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC**
- 2. Approval of the draft programme of the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC**
- 3. Debate on the draft programme of the LXV COSAC meeting**
- 4. Approval of the outline of the 35th Bi-annual Report of COSAC**
- 5. Letters received by the Presidency**
- 6. Any other business**

PROCEEDINGS

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

Mr Luis CAPOULAS SANTOS, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika") and opened the meeting by reiterating his thanks to the German Presidency during these challenging times. He then referred to the agenda of the meeting of the Troika, which was adopted without amendment.

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

The Chair referred to the programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons, which would be split into two sessions.

The first session would focus on the priorities of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union and would be presented by Mr Augusto SANTOS SILVA, Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of Portugal.

The second session would deal with the European Union's recovery and resilience, with Ms Elisa FERREIRA, European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, as keynote speaker.

Ms Roberta METSOLA, First Vice-President, European Parliament, thanked the German Presidency for its work and thanked the Portuguese Presidency for a bold and ambitious agenda comprising of issues which were also of interest to the European Parliament.

Mr Marko POGAČNIK, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, thanked the German Presidency for its excellent work, and expressed his belief that the agenda was very relevant to the times and wished the Portuguese Presidency the best of luck for the coming six months.

Mr Bojan KEKEC, Chair of the Commission for International Relations and European Affairs, Slovenian *Državni svet*, recalled the difficult situation being faced and expressed his agreement with the priorities set by the Portuguese Presidency.

Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs, German *Bundestag*, said he was looking forward to the Portuguese Presidency and the possibility of having a normal plenary meeting. He stressed the need for a close cooperation within the Troika, especially with regard to the Conference on the Future of Europe.

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

3. Debate on the draft programme of the LXV COSAC meeting

Mr CAPOULAS SANTOS then turned to the draft programme of the LXV COSAC, which the Chair hoped it would be possible to host in Lisbon. He introduced the five thematic sessions which would be covered during the meeting:

The first session would focus on the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union; the second session would deal with Social Europe and the economic, digital and climate transition; the third session would address the implementation of the national recovery and resilience plans and the role of national Parliaments; the fourth session would tackle the Conference on the Future of Europe; whereas the fifth and final session would be dedicated to a debate on a current issue.

Ms METSOLA referred to session II on social Europe and suggested to invite a Member from the European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

Mr KRICHBAUM called for an exchange of views rather than a speaker oriented meeting if the plenary was indeed held in a physical fashion, thus ensuring a lively debate. He added that the “Aktuelle Stunde” should be an issue with an external focus, as all the other issues on the agenda focussed on internal EU issues.

The Chair shared Mr KRICHBAUM’s concerns and said they would be taken on board in relation to the fifth topic, on which the Troika members could formulate suggestions.

4. Approval of the Draft Outline of the 35th Bi-annual Report of COSAC

Mr CAPOULAS SANTOS presented the outline of the 35th Bi-annual Report of COSAC, which would be divided into four parts: the first chapter would seek to analyse the action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights; the second chapter would focus on the EU-Africa Strategy; the third chapter would address the Next Generation EU and the national recovery and resilience plans; while the fourth and final chapter would deal with the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The questionnaire would be circulated in early February, with replies expected by 9 March 2021.

5. Letters received by the Presidency

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

- Letters requesting invitation to attend the COSAC meetings were received from Ms Sigríður Ásthildur ANDERSEN, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Icelandic *Althingi*; Mr Eric NUSSBAUMER, President of the Swiss EFTA-EU delegation, Swiss *Assemblée fédérale*; Mr Tone Wilhelmsen TRØEN, President of the Norwegian *Stortinget*; Lord Charles KINNOULL, Chair of the European Union Committee, UK *House of Lords*; Ms Maka Botchorishvili, Chairperson of the Committee on European Integration, Parliament of Georgia. Mr CAPOULAS SANTOS said that, following consultation with the Presidential Troika, invitations would be sent to all parliaments, with the exception of the Parliament Georgia, whose letter was received late and did not establish any thematic link with the meeting, and whose request for participation in the LXV COSAC would be reassessed closer to the date of the meeting. Furthermore, the invitation sent to the UK would only pertain to the meeting of the Chairpersons: the UK's participation to the LXV COSAC would be reassessed once interparliamentary cooperation between the EU and the UK was better defined.

Mr KRICHBAUM referred to the informal exchanges between the COSAC Chairpersons and the European Commission, stressing their importance and the need to maintain them. He highlighted the need to invite Mr Michel BARNIER, Head of Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom, European Commission, to these exchanges, or, alternatively, Mr David McALLISTER, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament or Mr Bernd LANGE, Chair of the Committee on International Trade, European Parliament.

Ms METSOLA agreed with the possible involvement of Mr McALLISTER. With regard to the requests for participation, she stated that the European Parliament was willing to follow the line decided by the Portuguese Presidency.

Mr KRICHBAUM recalled the revived practice held during the German Presidency and the Troika's agreement to invite observers only in case of a direct connection to an item on the agenda. It was not enough to simply ask for participation. He was reluctant to agree with participation from an observer which would not be directly impacted by the items on the agenda since COSAC was dedicated to the exchange between parliamentarians from Member States of the European Union. Specifically with regard to Georgia, he could not see any direct relevance in the presented draft programme that would justify its participation.

Mr CAPOULAS SANTOS agreed with Mr KRICHBAUM's position, and explained that his point was precisely to wait and see what the fifth topic would be and decide whether or not to invite the country based on whether such a link could be established.

6. Any other business

The Chair referred to discussion forums and expressed the Presidency's willingness to carry out such initiatives, specifically referring to the possibility of having exchanges with Mr BARNIER to discuss the UK withdrawal; Commissioner Věra JOUROVÁ to discuss the European Action Plan on Democracy; Commissioner Stella KYRIAKIDES to discuss Health.

Mr CAPOULAS SANTOS concluded the meeting by thanking colleagues and reminding them of the procedure for co-financing the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat and the costs of running of the office of COSAC, which would be initiated for the coming two years.