

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

Ljubljana, Slovenia, 16 July 2021

(held through videoconference)

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

CHAIR: 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*.

Mr Luis CAPOULAS SANTOS, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*; Ms Sabine THILLAYE, French Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the *Assemblée nationale*; Mr Jean-François RAPIN, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Sénat*; Ms Roberta METSOLA, First Vice-President, European Parliament.

(Mr Antonio TAJANI, Chair of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament, was 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 LXVI COSAC meeting**
- 4. Approval of the outline of the 36th Bi-annual Report of COSAC**
- 5. Debate on the Appointment Process of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2022-2023**
- 6. Letters received by the Presidency**
- 7. Any other business**

PROCEEDINGS

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

Mr Marko POGAČNIK, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika") and opened the meeting by referring to a meeting held with Ms Roberta METSOLA, First Vice-President, European Parliament, a few days prior. He thanked his colleague, Mr Luis CAPOULAS SANTOS, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, for the work done under the Portuguese Presidency, not least for paving the way in relation to the Conference on the Future of Europe, and welcomed the Ms Sabine THILLAYE, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*, and Mr Jean-François RAPIN, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Sénat*. Mr Bojan KEKEC, Chair of the Commission for International Relations and European Affairs, Slovenian *Državni svet*, congratulated Mr CAPOULAS SANTOS on the excellent work of the

Portuguese Presidency and welcomed the new members of the Troika, Ms THILLAYE and Mr RAPIN.

Mr POGAČNIK 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 Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and would be presented by Mr Anže LOGAR, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.

The second session would deal with cybersecurity in the EU, with Mr Thierry BRETON, European Commissioner for the Internal Market; Mr Matej TONIN, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia; and Mr Juhan LEPASSAAR, Executive Director of the Union Agency for Cybersecurity, as keynote speakers, as well as a short intervention by Mr Uroš SVETE, Director of the Information Security Administration of the Republic of Slovenia.

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

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

Mr POGAČNIK then turned to the draft programme of the LXVI COSAC, and expressed the hope to host it live, but at the same time assured colleagues that preparations for the possibility of a videoconference were in place in case of such an eventuality. He introduced the four thematic sessions which would be covered during the meeting:

The first session would report on the achievements of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union; the second session would deal with the future role of young people in decision-making processes and beyond; the third session would address the European Perspective for the Western Balkans; and the fourth and final session would be dedicated to the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Mr POGAČNIK informed colleagues that both Ms Mariya GABRIEL, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, as well as Ms Simona KUSTEC, Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia, would be attending the Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council to be held on the same day of the COSAC plenary meeting, and would therefore not be physically attending the meeting, though the possibility of a recorded video message or remote participation was not excluded. He further noted that while the decision on additional invited speakers for this panel had not yet been taken, the panel would include a youth representative to represent the views of their generation.

Ms METSOLA expressed full support for the events that the Slovenian Presidency was planning on hosting. She confirmed the presence of the European Parliament co-Chairs at the COSAC Plenary and proposed a speaker on behalf of the European Parliament to provide the Institution's perspective under the third session.

4. Approval of the Outline of the 36th Bi-annual Report of COSAC

Mr POGAČNIK presented the outline of the 36th Bi-annual Report of COSAC, which would be divided into three parts: the first chapter would explore the digitalisation of Parliaments during the digital transition and the COVID-19 pandemic; the second chapter would focus on the future role of young people in decision-making processes and beyond; and the third chapter would address the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The questionnaire would be circulated on 26 July 2021, with replies expected by 21 September.

5. Debate on the Appointment Process of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2022–2023

The Chair noted that Mr Kenneth CURMI was reaching the end of the second and final term of his post by the end of the year. The Presidency would be calling for Parliaments to submit nominations for the position by 15 October. The decision on the further process of the selection of the candidate would then be decided within the framework of the Presidential Troika, which would also then be proposing the selected candidate for approval during the plenary meeting in November.

6. 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 Mr Eric NUSSBAUMER, President of the Swiss delegation for relations with the European Parliament, 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*; Mr Pere López, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Andorran *Consell General*. Mr POGAČNIK said that, following consultation with the Presidential Troika, invitations would be sent to all the above parliaments.
- Letter from the Croatian *Hrvatski sabor* wishing the Slovenian Presidency a successful implementation of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Presidency.
- Letter from the French *Assemblée nationale* and French *Sénat* proposing the establishment of two working groups during the Slovenian Presidency.

Ms THILLAYE wished the best for the Slovenian Presidency, which would be facing intense work in the following months. She expounded on the proposal put forward in the successive French Presidency's letter calling for the establishment of working groups. Ms THILLAYE informed colleagues that the French Parliament would probably hold the COSAC Plenary in March and explained that, given this tight timeframe, the establishment of working groups during the Slovenian presidency would provide an immediate opportunity to ensure that conclusions and results would be available during the first semester of 2022. She emphasized the need to shed more light on the work of COSAC, in order to get more visibility and media coverage. She further explained how the groups would concentrate on two issues. The first would focus on the rule of law and the work towards a common understanding of this principle. The second would focus on the role of national Parliaments in the European Union, adding that the work would be done in cooperation with the European Parliament. She once again emphasised the tight timeframe of the French Presidency and highlighted the need for the working groups to start working as soon as possible to achieve concrete results that would be presented at the COSAC plenary meeting during their presidency.

Mr RAPIN expressed his support for the Slovenian Presidency and underscored the views expressed by Ms THILLAYE, adding that the decision to hold these working groups had come after long discussions, and as an expression of the wish to give COSAC a stronger voice. It was important to coordinate with the Slovenian Presidency given the tight timeframe that the French Presidency would be dealing with, and acknowledged the need to explain the initial idea and proposal in more detail.

Mr CAPOULAS SANTOS also wished the best for the Slovenian Presidency and looked forward to working with the latter as well as the French colleagues. With regard to the proposal presented by the French colleagues, Mr CAPOULAS SANTOS agreed that there was a lack of visibility when it came to COSAC. He supported the proposal in principle, and expressed his willingness to discuss it further, but stressed the need for a more detailed proposal on the purpose and themes of the working groups.

Mr POGAČNIK said that due to the Rules of Procedure of the Slovenian National Assembly and National Council a decision on this proposal from the Slovenian Parliament was not possible in such a short time. He further acknowledged the importance of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFE) and stressed that any actions that could show a lack of confidence in the work and result of the CoFE should be avoided. It would be just as necessary to show the citizens what the added value of two extra groups in COSAC, in addition to the ones already existing under the CoFE umbrella, would be. In addition, the existence of two new working groups might be interpreted as a lack of confidence in the work of fellow national parliamentarians, who are representatives in the CoFE. He also stressed that any competition between working groups should also be avoided. In this regard, the Slovenian Presidency was wary of establishing such additional working groups and urged the French colleagues to submit a more detailed proposal.

Mr KEKEC echoed these sentiments, stating that while the French proposal should be taken into consideration, it was important to convey clear messages and avoid any duplication of work.

Mr CAPOULAS SANTOS referred to the question of alternate/substitute members in the plenary of the CoFE. He informed colleagues of his wish to raise this issue to the Chairs of the European Affairs Committees to ensure that these questions are discussed at the Executive Board Meeting, in order to guarantee that every plenary session would be represented by all the members of a delegation.

Mr POGAČNIK asserted that the French proposal would be taken into account, but once again stressed the need for a written form of the detailed proposal in order to present it to other Parliaments.

Mr RAPIN agreed with this position and thanked the Chair for his willingness to consider the proposal.

Ms THILLAYE also appreciated the misgivings expressed and the need to clarify the proposal further, and also stressed that there should be no confusion between the work of COSAC and the work of the CoFE. The aim of the working groups was to better define the role of COSAC. She also thanked the Chair for taking the proposal into consideration.

Mr CAPOULAS SANTOS also agreed with the Chair's proposal and, while noting that the rules of procedure foresaw the creation of such working groups, he underscored the need for a detailed proposal.

Ms METSOLA also spoke about the need to have a written proposal. She shared the concerns regarding possible overlap and duplication of work and expressed the willingness of the European Parliament to help ensure this would not happen.

7. Any other business

There was no other business.

Mr KEKEC thanked all participants to the meeting for the constructive debate.

Echoing these sentiments, Mr POGAČNIK closed the meeting.