



## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LXIX COSAC

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN, 14 - 16 MAY 2023

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## **PROCEEDINGS**

IN THE CHAIR: Mr Hans WALLMARK, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Riksdag and Ms Matilda ERNKRANS, Deputy Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Riksdag.

### **1. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

#### **Welcome speech by Dr Andreas NORLÉN, Speaker of the *Riksdag***

Mr NORLÉN welcomed all delegations to the Swedish *Riksdag* and the LXIX COSAC Plenary meeting in Stockholm. He recalled that the *Riksdag* so far had hosted six of the eight interparliamentary meetings organised during the parliamentary dimension of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU, noting that one meeting had been organised online (on Energy), and the one on Economic Governance had been conducted in cooperation with the European Parliament in Brussels. Mr NORLÉN noted that, after the COSAC Plenary meeting had been concluded, only one interparliamentary conference remained to be organised in the *Riksdag* before the Spanish *Cortes Generales* took over the responsibility for the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency of the Council of the EU as of 1 of July.

Mr NORLÉN made a short introduction of the *Riksdag* and the Plenary chamber, explaining that all 349 elected members of Parliament had assigned seats distributed according to the constituency rather than the party affiliation, which was common in many other countries. He explained that Sweden was divided into 29 electoral constituencies, and had a proportional electoral system. He further noted that EU matters were mainly dealt with by the 15 specialised parliamentary committees, which also included the subsidiarity checks and the issuing of reasoned opinions.

Mr NORLÉN stated that the *Riksdag* was an active Parliament in EU matters, highlighting the more than 1200 subsidiarity reviews of EU proposals the Swedish Parliament had issued since the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force in 2009. He explained that the *Riksdag* routinely carried out subsidiarity reviews of EU proposals where the Union did not have exclusive competences. In 2022, around 190 proposals were scrutinised resulting in the issuing of 14 reasoned opinions on subsidiarity, which were always transmitted to the EU institutions. He added that, for constitutional reasons, it was more difficult for the *Riksdag* to take part in the political dialogue, which explained why the subsidiarity reviews were such an important tool. Mr NORLÉN said that every time the *Riksdag* adopted a reasoned opinion, a letter was sent to all fellow Speakers of national Parliaments to draw their attention to the concerns raised, alluding to the Treaty provisions stating that if a sufficient number of Parliaments raised subsidiarity concerns the European Commission needed to formally respond. He further expressed his wish to see a more frequent exchange among national Parliaments on subsidiarity, and that he would welcome an increased number of subsidiarity reviews from other Parliaments in the future.

Mr NORLÉN then referred to the topics discussed during the XLII COSAC Plenary meeting, held in 2009 at the *Riksdag*: the financial crises, the climate crisis, the EU enlargement and neighbourhood policy, noting that even if some of the underlying reasons had changed, all of these were very topical matters still that day.

Mr NORLÉN said that holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU was complex and challenging, noting that Sweden had taken on this task at a difficult period of time with a brutal war on its doorstep, an energy crisis, and high levels of inflation. He recalled that little more than a year had passed since the lives of millions of Ukrainians had dramatically changed. He emphasised that the date 24 of February 2022 would forever be tainted by the unjustifiable violence by the Russian Federation aimed at subjugating Ukraine as a country.

Mr NORLÉN expressed his great respect for the Ukrainian people for their courage, resilience, and resistance, noting that probably very few could fully see and recognise the sacrifices Ukraine had been forced to endure. He referred to the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments held in Prague in April earlier that year which had expressed strong support for Ukraine. He noted that the final session of the LXIX COSAC Plenary would be an opportunity to further discuss the situation, and how the support for Ukraine could be upheld and coordinated, as well as how national Parliaments could contribute to an inclusive reconstruction process of their neighbouring country.

Mr NORLÉN concluded by alluding to the other topics on the agenda of the LXIX COSAC Plenary, namely the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council, the 30th anniversary of the Single Market, and the green transition. He considered that delegations would have two interesting days with discussions on important topics, and once again warmly welcomed all delegations to the Swedish *Riksdag*.

#### **Opening remarks by**

- **Mr Hans WALLMARK, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Riksdag and Ms Matilda ERNKRANS, Deputy Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Riksdag**

Mr WALLMARK expressed his gratitude to the Speaker of the Swedish *Riksdag*, Mr Andreas NORLÉN for his welcoming address. He further welcomed three new colleagues from national Parliaments who were attending the COSAC Plenary for the first time: Ms Liisa-Ly PAKOSTA, Chair of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Estonian *Riigikogu*, Mr Colm BROPHY, Chair of the Committee on European Union Affairs of the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, and Ms Adéla ŠÍPOVÁ Vice Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the *Senát* of the Czech Republic. He further informed that Lord KINNOULL, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the United Kingdom *House of Lords*, had been appointed to a new position and as a consequence would not take part in coming COSAC meetings. Mr WALLMARK expressed his personal gratitude to Lord KINNOULL for the good cooperation over the years, and wished him all success with his new tasks.

## **2. PROCEDURAL AND OTHER GENERAL MATTERS**

### **Approval of the Draft Programme of the Plenary Meeting of the LXIX COSAC**

Mr WALLMARK briefly introduced the draft programme of the Plenary Meeting of the LXIX COSAC, previously distributed to delegations. The different sessions covered the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU, the 30 years of the Single Market, the green transition, and Ukraine. He highlighted that the two first sessions of the second day of the meeting would be conducted in the presence of Her Royal Highness (H.R.H.) Crown Princess Victoria. The programme was then approved.

### **Results of the Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC**

Mr WALLMARK informed delegations of the outcome of the Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC which had taken place the day before in the presence of representatives of the Swedish *Riksdag*, of the Spanish *Cortes Generales*, of the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* and *Senát*, and of the European Parliament. The agenda included a number of matters including the approval of the draft programme of the LXIX COSAC Plenary meeting, the presentation of the 39<sup>th</sup> Bi-annual Report, and information on letters received by the Presidency.

Mr WALLMARK also informed delegations that the Troika had discussed and agreed on the draft Contribution and Conclusions of the Plenary Meeting of the LXIX COSAC, noting that several amendments to the drafts were put forward by delegations within the set deadline of 5 May and that the Presidency had distributed a table with those amendments. Finally, he informed that revised compromise texts of the Contribution and Conclusions had been circulated to delegations after the meeting of the Troika, which were to be further discussed in the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC later the same day with a view to formally approve them in Plenary at the end of the LXIX COSAC Meeting.

### **Presentation of the 39th Bi-annual Report of COSAC**

Mr WALLMARK referred to the [39th Bi-annual Report of COSAC](#), drafted by the COSAC Secretariat on the basis of replies to the related questionnaire circulated to national Parliaments/Chambers on 14 February 2023, with a deadline on 16 March for submitting the answers. Mr WALLMARK thanked the COSAC Secretariat for their work and gave the floor to its Permanent Member, Mr Bruno DIAS PINHEIRO, to present the Report.

In his presentation Mr DIAS PINHEIRO emphasised the fact that all Parliaments/Chambers of the Member States, as well as the European Parliament, had replied to the questionnaire, expressing the expectation that the findings of the Report might prove useful not only for the COSAC Plenary but also for future work. He further expressed his gratitude to the members of the COSAC Secretariat for their work with the Report.

He further recalled that the three chapters of the Report were dedicated to: 1. the role of Parliaments/Chambers in the handling of the Fit for 55 package; 2. the role of Parliaments/Chambers in the accelerated decision-making processes in response to crises; 3. the best practices for information exchange between Parliaments, including the use of IPEX.

The main results from the Report were summarised in a short [video](#) clip produced by the Permanent Member and displayed at the end of his intervention.

### Letters received by the Presidency

Mr WALLMARK recalled the following letters received by the Presidency requesting invitations to attend the COSAC meetings that were received before the Chairpersons meeting:

- Mr Benedikt WÜRTH, President of the Swiss delegation for relations with the European Parliament, Swiss *Assemblée fédérale*;
- Mr Masud GHARAHKHANI, President of the Norwegian *Stortinget*;
- Lord Charles KINNOULL, Chair of the European Union Committee, United Kingdom (UK) *House of Lords*;
- Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Icelandic *Althingi*;
- Ms Maka BOTCHORISHVILI, Chair of the Committee on European Integration of the Georgian *Sakartvelos p'arliament'I*;
- Ms Rrezarta KRASNIQI, Chair of the Committee on European Integration, Kosovo<sup>1</sup> *Kuvendi i Kosovës*.

He also mentioned that ahead of the LXIX COSAC meeting, letters requesting an invitation to attend the Plenary were also received from Sir William CASH, UK *House of Commons*, and from Brigitte BOCONE-PAGES, President of the *Conseil National* of Monaco, and Régis BERGONZI, Chair of the respective Committee on Negotiations with the European Union.

Mr WALLMARK said that, following consultation with the Presidential Troika of COSAC, invitations had been extended to all the above-mentioned Parliaments to take part in the LXIX COSAC.

Finally, he also alluded to the letter sent to the Presidency with the Conclusions of the meeting of the Committees on European Affairs of the Parliaments of the Visegrád countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), held in Budapest between 16–18 April 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

All the letters mentioned were made available on [IPEX](#).

### **Any other business**

Mr WALLMARK informed on two additional procedural issues, the first being the termination of the old COSAC website ([www.cosac.eu](http://www.cosac.eu)). He said that all content on the old website had been successfully migrated to IPEX and reminded delegations that a paragraph on the termination of the old website would be included in the draft Conclusions from COSAC, and that the COSAC Secretariat would implement this decision in 2023/24.

Mr WALLMARK recalled that the co-financing of the current Permanent Member and the office of the COSAC Secretariat ended on 31 December 2023 and that the Swedish Presidency had had invited Parliaments to renew their commitment to the co-financing agreement for the period from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025. He then announced that 39 out of the 39 National Parliaments/Chambers had signed and sent their letters of intent indicating that they are willing to participate in the co-financing for the above stated period, emphasising the fact this procedure could be initiated and concluded during the Swedish Presidency and therefore the co-financing of the Permanent Member and the office of the COSAC Secretariat would continue.

### **3. KEYNOTE VIDEO MESSAGE: H. E. Ms URSULA VON DER LEYEN, PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

In a pre-recorded video message, the President of the European Commission, Ursula VON DER LEYEN, expressed her gratitude for being able to address COSAC even if she was not able to attend in person.

With war raging at the doorstep of the EU and competition rising on a global scale, she argued it was essential that Europeans set the direction of their travel together. She said that parliamentarians, as the democratic representatives of the European citizens, had brought the hopes and aspirations of the people to the political discourse and decision-making. That was also why she had tasked the College of Commissioners to regularly meet with national Parliaments, and noted that since the beginning of the current mandate, the Commission College had made more than 400 visits to Parliaments in all Member States: more than two visits per week.

Ms VON DER LEYEN expressed her gratitude to the Swedish Presidency of the Council, and recalled that when Sweden joined the EU in 1995 it was in another watershed moment for the Union. She noted that in the almost 30 years since, the EU had become stronger and larger, but that the last years had shown that the job was far from being done. She continued by listing three current tasks of great importance for the EU. Firstly, the need to re-think the European security order in the wake of the war in Ukraine. Secondly, the global race for the clean and digital technologies of tomorrow, which called for renewed focus on Europe's global competitiveness. Thirdly, the need to better protect European democracies. She noted that these tasks corresponded with the

Priorities of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU; security, sustainable competitiveness, and democracy.

Regarding the first task, she said that Russia tried to deny Ukraine its most basic rights: the right to exist and the right to be free. She argued that this concerned all Europeans, and not just the countries sharing borders with Russia. She said that the EU had, since day one of the war, stepped up its support to Ukraine and that all over Europe doors had been opened to welcome Ukrainians “*fleeing from Putin’s bombs*”. The EU had helped Ukraine’s economy to operate, and the EU and its Member States continued to supply the weapons and ammunition Ukraine needed to fight back. She recalled that the EU had promised to support Ukraine “*as long as it takes*”, and Europe would keep its promise.

As for the second task, she argued that the global economy was also at a watershed moment, since the world's major economies were racing to develop the technologies of tomorrow, including the best clean technology and the most advanced chips, and to access critical raw materials. She said that the EU was part of this competition, and noted that, with the Green Deal, the EU was the first to set the path to climate neutrality. She noted that European companies were currently world leaders in clean tech research and innovation, recalling that last year, for the first time, Europe generated more electricity from wind and solar than from gas. To support, strengthen, and accelerate this economic development and to support the clean tech industry, the Commission had proposed the Net Zero Industry Act. She also noted that Europe’s supply chains for critical raw materials had to be strengthened and secured, exemplifying by saying that 98% of the rare earth supply originated from China. This was not sustainable, she argued, which also was why the Commission had proposed the Critical Raw Materials Act, arguing that it was time to de-risk our value chains for a stronger and a more resilient EU.

Lastly, she argued that new challenges to European democracies were evolving. Foreign autocrats were targeting European countries, trying to influence public debates, not only through social media walls, but also in the halls of universities, and in the lobbies of institutions. She noted that Europeans should know if a university course or an alleged independent study actually were funded by a foreign autocratic regime. She further expressed a hope that all Europeans could join forces to better protect our democracies.

Ms VON DER LEYEN concluded by stating that the future of Europe was then being written, and that Members of national Parliaments were the voice of the European people, and for that reason, their contributions were more important than ever. She finally remarked that Europe was “*what we all make out of it*” and expressed her hope of a successful COSAC Plenary Meeting.

#### **4. SESSION I - THE SWEDISH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU**

**Keynote Speaker: Ms Jessika ROSWALL, Minister for EU Affairs**

In her introduction Ms ROSWALL expressed her appreciation for being invited to address the COSAC Plenary Meeting. She then acknowledged the close cooperation between the Swedish Presidency and the European Parliament. This good cooperation was also present in the Presidency's close dialogue with the *Riksdag*, while adding that having strong support "*from home*" was needed in order to conduct a successful Presidency in Brussels. Ms ROSWALL said that national Parliaments played a vital role for the democratic process in the EU, and for that reason she was pleased to see so many representatives of national Parliaments present in the *Riksdag* to discuss EU matters.

Ms ROSWALL noted that with 75 % of the Presidency already passed, progress had been made to make Europe safer, greener, and freer.

The first priority was to continue providing support to Ukraine and putting pressure on the Russian regime through sanctions. Ms ROSWALL argued that the recent adoption of the 10th sanctions package was an important signal from the EU, emphasising that being able to agree on ten sanctions packages in 12 months was an historic achievement for the EU. She argued that sanctions were also hitting Russia harder than many expected, and welcomed the Commission's proposal for an 11th sanctions package focussing on circumventions. She then referred to the need to harmonise the criminal definitions of sanctions violations to properly implement these restrictive measures. The Swedish Presidency aimed at reaching a general approach on this proposal at the Justice and Home Affairs Council in June.

She further stated that the Swedish Presidency had tried to provide as much support as possible to Ukraine: financial, political, humanitarian, and military, of which the Council agreement on the joint procurement of ammunition was just one example. She also alluded to two important tasks still ahead of the Presidency: to reach an agreement on a judicial resolution on how to prosecute Russia's crime of aggression; and to find ways to use frozen Russian assets to help rebuild Ukraine, for which a Council Ad Hoc Working Party had been set up. She also referred to the important agreement reached on the establishment of an international centre in the Hague for the prosecution of war crimes committed in Ukraine, and that it was vital to get the centre up and running.

Ms ROSWALL further said that the historic decision by the European Council to grant Ukraine and Moldova status as candidate countries had placed the enlargement process even higher on the EU's agenda, and that both countries had also made remarkable progress despite the ongoing war and destabilisation attempts. She also emphasised the high priority given by the Presidency to the Western Balkans, as stability was important for the region itself but also for the EU, especially in the current geopolitical context. Ms ROSWALL noted that during the Presidency she had, together with the Swedish minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Tobias BILLSTRÖM, visited all six countries in the region.



Ms ROSWALL then turned to the discussion on the future of the EU, noting that the EU could consist of 35 Member States or more in the not so far future. In her view, this called for a reflection on how the Union should work and be governed, which would also be on the agenda for the informal meeting of Ministers for EU Affairs in Stockholm in June.

She then turned to a few of the 350 legislative files on the Council's agenda during the current semester, emphasising firstly that the migration policy was a key issue in European politics and also a priority for the Swedish Government. With that regard, she said that the Presidency aimed at making as much progress as possible on the Pact on Migration and Asylum, noting that negotiations had been conducted on all levels including in the European Council, and leaders would return to the issue again in June. In parallel to the negotiations in the Council, talks had been held with the European Parliament, and Ms ROSWALL welcomed the fact that the Parliament recently had reached a position on the matter.

On energy and climate, she noted that several important components of the Fit for 55 package had been negotiated under the Swedish leadership and were very close to being finalised, noting that it would be a major success both for the EU and for the climate to have the Package in place. Regarding energy, she alluded to good progress made on several important files, including some negotiations successfully concluded.

She then turned to competitiveness and growth, highlighting that strengthening this area was crucial in the current geopolitical situation. She noted that Sweden had asked for a reference in the European Council Conclusions last December inviting the Commission to put forward a strategy on how to boost the EU's long-term competitiveness and productivity. This Strategy had now been presented and the last European Council tasked the Commission and the Council to take this work forward.

On trade, Ms ROSWALL said that the process of concluding agreements with New Zealand and Australia had been successful. She also highlighted the upcoming EU-US Trade and Technology Council, that would take place in the Swedish city of Luleå later that month, which was an important forum to coordinate approaches to key global trade, economic, and technology issues.

She also noted that substantial work had been conducted during the Swedish Presidency to provide input to the reform of the EU's economic governance framework, and that the Presidency would now start negotiations in the Council based on the legislative proposal tabled by the Commission.

Finally, Ms ROSWALL underscored the Presidency's focus on upholding democratic values and fostering the rule of law, e.g. by starting the second round of rule of law dialogues in the Council. She noted that at the upcoming General Affairs Council meeting, the Article 7 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) hearings with Poland and Hungary were to take place, and she also acknowledged the close cooperation with the European Parliament on these matters.

In her closing remarks, Ms ROSWALL said the Presidency's busiest period was currently taking place and that it was working day and night to deliver a safer, greener and more secure Europe.

**First Speaker: Mr Salvatore DE MEO, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament**

Mr DE MEO commended the Presidency for its work to support Ukraine as well as its efforts to create conditions for peace which could be endorsed by Ukraine. As chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament he argued that the EU could only tackle these challenges with the proper set of rules to manage its internal affairs. He thanked the Presidency for its commitment in this area, including its determination to implement the Conclusions from Conference of the Future of Europe (CoFE).

Mr DE MEO then turned to the current constitutional agenda of the EU and the follow up to the CoFE, reminding of its Conclusions, in which citizens had asked for more Europe, but also for a different, more efficient, and more tangible Europe. Some proposals from the CoFE, such as enhancing the rule of law provisions, or making EU decision-making more efficient, could be implemented within the current Treaty framework, he argued. However other proposals required modifications of the Treaties. He underlined the importance, noted by the CoFE, that every EU institution needed to play its role attributed to it by the Treaties.

Mr DE MEO said that, under the Swedish Presidency, the Council had worked on a number of measures which would enable it to directly implement some of the proposals emanating from the CoFE. In particular, the proposal for qualified majority voting to be introduced in the Foreign Policy and Security area, but also how *passerelle* clauses could be used more effectively and more frequently, he said.

The European Parliament also had been very engaged in promoting the possibility of Treaty change, having adopted a Resolution, by an overwhelming majority, calling for a Convention for the revision of the Treaties under Article 48 of the TEU. In this resolution, the European Parliament noted the following priorities: changing the voting rules from unanimity to qualified majority in the field of Foreign Policy; strengthening the procedures for the protection of the values the EU was founded on (Article 7 TEU); giving the European Parliament a proper right of legislative initiative and full co-decision rights on the EU budget; and adapting the competences attributed to the Union in the Treaties, in particular in the field of health. He noted that this Resolution had been forwarded to the Council, and he hoped that the Swedish Presidency would initiate the procedures needed for a Convention to eventually be convened, as it was something citizens had pleaded for.

Mr DE MEO further noted that the next European Parliament elections - scheduled for June 2024 - would be a watershed moment for the EU, and that important proposals had been presented to ensure that a strong, robust, and credible Parliament emerged from the

elections. He noted however that more was needed to strengthen the rules governing the elections, ensure proper cross-border electoral campaigns, prevent foreign interference, and meet the genuine democratic standards which the EU was founded on. In this context, he was grateful to the Swedish Presidency for all their work on these complex topics and for their cooperation with the European Parliament on the proposals for a new European electoral law; the revision of the regulation on European Political Parties and European Political Foundations; and on the proposal for a regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising.

In his conclusion, Mr DE MEO congratulated the Swedish Presidency for their decisive role in shaping the negotiation framework for the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, and said it was his personal hope that the EU would shortly accede to this important Council of Europe convention. Mr DE MEO pointed to the crucial moment in the history of Europe and the need to show European citizens the strength of the European Union, of our national Parliaments and of our democracies.

During the ensuing debate, 34 speakers took the floor. A great variety of themes and policy areas were present in the debate of which the most frequent are accounted for here.

Overall, there was broad support for the **priorities of the Swedish Presidency**, including, amongst others, from Mr Kasper SAND KJÆR, Danish *Folketing*, Mr Richárd HÖRCKSIK, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Mr Raoul BOUCKE, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Mr Marco PAVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Mr Stefan MUȘOIU, Romanian *Camera Deputaților*, and Ms Rrezarta KRASNIQI, Kosovo<sup>2</sup> *Kuvendi i Kosovës*.

Various aspects of the **EU's response to Russia's war of aggression** were also prominent themes in the debate. Amongst others raised by Mr Andris SPRŪDS Latvian *Saeima*, Mr Jean-François RAPIN, French *Sénat*, Ms Davina SAMMUT HILI, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, and Mr Sylwester TUŁAJEW, Polish *Sejm*.

Several delegates raised the issue of **migration** including Mr Stefano CANDIANI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, Mr SAND KJÆR, and Ms Radvilė MORKŪNAITĖ-MIKULĖNIENĖ, Lithuanian *Seimas*.

In the context of the changing geopolitical situation several delegates expressed support to **Sweden's application for membership to NATO** including Mr Arminas LYDIKA, Lithuanian *Seimas*, Mr Luís CAPOULAS SANTOS, Portuguese *Assembleia da República* and Mr RAPIN.

**Trade** and the need to conclude ongoing free trade negotiations with e.g New Zealand and Mercosur was raised by Mr Rihards KOLS, Latvian *Saeima*.

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<sup>2</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Another frequent theme in the debate was need to defend and strengthen our **democracies and foster the rule of law**, these issues were raised by, amongst others, Ms Evin INCIR, *European Parliament*, Mr Ruairí Ó MURCHÚ, *Irish Houses of the Oireachtas: Dáil Eireann*, Mr BOUCKE, and Mr PAVIĆ.

The importance of the **green transition** and energy issues was raised by Ms Maria HUBER, Austrian *Bundesrat*, Mr CAPOULAS SANTOS, Mr Rubén MORENO, Spanish *Cortes Generales* and Mr RAPIN.

Many delegates discussed **EU enlargement policy** and the need to make tangible progress including Mr Georgios KYRTSOS, *European Parliament*, Mr HÖRCKSIK, Mr Anton HOFREITER, German *Bundestag*, Ms Maka BOTCHORISHVILI, Georgia *Sakartvelos p'arlament'I*, and Mr Bojan GLAVAŠEVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*.

The **Recovery and Resilience Facility**, as well as the ongoing review of the **Stability and Growth Pact**, were referred to by Ms Elena MURELLI, Italian *Senato della Repubblica* who warned of excessive inflexibility in these frameworks which could hinder needed investments.

## **5. SESSION II: 30 YEARS OF THE SINGLE MARKET**

Mr Hans WALLMARK, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Swedish *Riksdag* opened the session by introducing the topic and two keynote speakers.

### **Keynote speakers:**

#### **Mr Othmar KARAS, First Vice-President of the European Parliament**

Mr KARAS began his intervention by alluding to the creation of the internal market back in 1993 by the Maastricht Treaty, noting that even if it was the longest standing project in the EU it should not be taken for granted and its benefits should be maximised. He described it as a very valuable contribution to the EU, not only as a centrepiece of European integration and European unity, but also as the key to peace, stability and prosperity in the EU.

He then alluded to the next European Parliament's elections where a very large number of people (450 million) would participate: this was also the number of people that belonged to the internal market, and a figure higher than the population of North America. He noted that, while this number had to be put in perspective, given the 10 billion global population, the internal market was a tool that enhanced the EU's strength in global competition.

Mr KARAS said it represented the largest integrated internal market in the world and emphasised the need to focus on the internal market's significance. He also underlined that it was responsible for the creation of 660 000 jobs in the last year, highlighting the

fact that 25 % of the overall economic performance of the EU was directly attributed to its existence. He gave several examples, namely that it ensured healthy competition, stronger economy and industry, better selection of quality goods available at more affordable prices, but it also made it much more simple to travel, to live, to study, and to work in the EU. Furthermore, Mr KARAS identified other important achievements of the Single Market such as more social justice and cohesion, the Erasmus program, mutual recognition of diplomas, the elimination of roaming charges, the single payment areas (SIPA) or the elimination of geo blocking. He gave the example of his own country, Austria, as a country placed in the heart of Europe which benefited immensely from the Single Market, since Austria's exports to the EU had more than tripled and it produced 2/3 of its economic revenue from the internal market within the EU.

Mr KARAS noted however that the internal market was not yet completed and that the EU had to act in order to make the most of its remaining huge potential.

He mentioned the various crises the internal market had faced in recent years (Brexit, the pandemic, inflation, energy crisis and the brutal Russian war of aggression against Ukraine), noting that they had made the EU stronger internally. Despite some EU wide initiatives (energy union, security union, defence union, digital, health or social union), Mr KARAS noted that there was a lot of unused potential (e.g. capital markets, banking union) which meant costs and barriers to the Single Market.

On energy, technology and climate, he considered that more needed to be done, since the EU still imported too much energy. Mr KARAS also pointed out that the EU risked losing its place in the global market: while 30 years ago, 25 % of the global GDP was generated in Europe, by 2040 the comparable figure would become 11 %, due to competition from China, United States and India. He considered that this trend could be mitigated by enlarging and deepening the internal market. Therefore, in order to become a genuinely global player in terms of new green technologies, there was a clear need for independence in competition and trade policies, also as an answer to the Inflation Reduction Act of the United States. For that, the EU needed to cut costs, enhance efficiency and maintain and improve its global competitiveness, mentioning conservative estimates made by the think-tank of the European Parliament pointing to an unfulfilled potential of the Single Market to 829 billion euros per year.

Finally, Mr KARAS addressed the potential that the EU could generate by implementing the Green Deal, NextGenerationEU, REPowerEU, proposals on digital markets, digital services, EU industrial strategy, Single Market Emergency Instrument, European Chips Act, Critical Raw Materials Act, on Artificial Intelligence and on Cyber Resilience. Mr KARAS concluded his speech by reiterating that the 30 years of the Single Market had been very successful, even if a lot of work laid ahead in order to obtain even greater achievements in the decades to come.

**Ms Kerstin JORNA, Director-General of Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs**

Ms JORNA welcomed the discussion as a great opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the Single Market and at the same time to reaffirm the shared eagerness for democratic scrutiny and cooperation on this matter. She underlined that the Single Market was a shared European value and that it had been as relevant in the times of pandemic and war as it was 30 years ago.

She then presented her four perspectives of its relevance today: firstly “*Single Market protects us*”; secondly, “*Single Market enables us*”; thirdly “*Single Market makes our voice heard*”; and fourthly “*our Single Market*”.

With regard to the “*Single Market protects us*” approach, she pointed to its tangible benefits brought to the EU. It meant more opportunities for people with regard to travel, work or access to better and cheaper products, more opportunities for business to make cross border trade and investment and it also brought more competitiveness to the EU. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, she recalled the EU’s ability to ramp up the vaccine production that rose from 20 to 300 million doses within six months and made the EU the world leader in mRNA vaccines.

Concerning the perspective “*the Single Market enables us*”, Ms JORNA considered this had been made clear also with the pandemic, a crisis that has shown how a well functioning Single Market and a strong European industry were two sides of the same coin. In this context she welcomed the findings of the 39th Bi-annual Report presented earlier at COSAC Plenary Meeting.

The European industry was faced with the biggest challenge ever with the green and digital transition, Ms JORNA said. Therefore, and in order to successfully decarbonize the European industry, the EU needed to master net zero technologies, acknowledging that the net zero market was growing fast and unleashing its great economic potential and opportunities for jobs and growth (it was set to triple by 2030, with an annual worth of around 600 billion euros).

She stressed that the EU’s partners and competitors (USA, China, India, Japan) were deploying ambitious, even aggressive, measures to secure significant parts of this market, and that a “*clean tech race*” was in full swing.

She stated that no Member State could face this alone and that building new synergies was necessary, noting some encouraging new forms of cooperation arising in many areas (e.g. the hydrogen valleys initiative, that brought several regions together on hydrogen production, on transportation and on the range of cutting edge applications for example chemical industry or steel industry).

Industrial alliances was another example mentioned by Ms JORNA, highlighting that since the launch of a very successful battery alliance in 2018, the EU now had the

hydrogen alliance, raw materials, semiconductors and more recently solar voltaic tanks alliances. In these cases, industries, innovation institutes, small companies, regions, Member States and the EU were working together and focussing on the full supply chain.

Ms JORNA also underlined some of the most important proposals put forward by the European Commission, namely the European Chips Act, the Net Zero Industry Act, and the Critical Raw Material Act. She referred to them as anchors to the green transition, while emphasising they represented a new type of legislation in which four elements were always needed in order to get the investment: access to land, finance, skills and market.

On the third perspective "*the Single Market makes our voice heard*", Ms JORNA stated that in the current context of growing insecurity, the Single Market had also become a geopolitical tool. In fact, and with regard to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, there was for instance a mobilisation of industrial capacity, and acceleration of ammunition production in solidarity with Ukraine. This showed that the Single Market had become an essential lever for European solidarity and cooperation. She mentioned as an example the special program for Ukrainian SME's and young entrepreneurs through which they benefited from the EU's Single Market.

Finally, and on the last perspective "*our Single Market*", Ms JORNA considered that the Single Market went beyond the simple meaning of four freedoms and it could be viewed also as a policy compass, a political catalyst and as a EU joint asset. She underlined the importance of respecting the rules of market and customs surveillance. Ms JORNA concluded by mentioning the need to correctly transpose EU legislation at the national level, noting that a loophole in any of the Member States meant a barrier for all the companies. She furthermore presented the Single Market enforcement task force that addressed the concrete Single Market's barriers across the EU, noting for instance that 800 barriers were identified in the regulation on professional qualifications, being that almost half of these barriers were rolled back by the Member States.

During the ensuing debate, 26 speakers took the floor.

Almost all of them acknowledged and welcomed the **Single Market as a great achievement of the EU** which has created new opportunities, brought innovation and welfare to the whole EU. Although it was often reminded during the discussion that the Single Market was **not completed yet** and there were many challenges ahead of the Single Market such as energy crisis, green transition (Mr Rubén MORENO, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, Mr Vytautas GAPŠYS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, Ms Ellen SAMYN, Belgian *Chambre des représentants/Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers*), digital transition and others.

A significant number of speakers argued that there should be immediate action towards **accession of Romania and Bulgaria into Schengen area** (Mr MORENO, Mr Ștefan MUȘOIU, Romanian *Camera Deputaților*, Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, German

*Bundestag*, Mr Andrzej GRZYB, Polish *Sejm*, Mr Vasile DÎNCU, Romanian *Senat*, Mr Marko PAVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Mr Anton HOFREITER, German *Bundestag*, Ms Cristina Mădălina PRUNĂ, Romanian *Camera Deputaților*).

Many Members addressed the need of eliminating **red tape and bureaucracy** in legislation in order to simplify the life of companies and enhance the functioning of the Single Market (Mr Christian BUCHMANN, Austrian *Bundesrat*, Mr GAPŠYS, Mr KRICHBAUM, Mr Andris SPRŪDS, Latvian *Saeima*, Ms PRUNĂ). Furthermore, many reiterated the need of **strengthening the Single Market** by making it more resilient and prepared for collective responses to future crises (Mr Pierre-Henri DUMONT, French *Assemblée Nationale*), while at the same time acknowledging that the Single Market had succeeded and proved to be an important tool in times of various crises in recent years (Mr BUCHMANN, Mr Ruud KOOLE, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Mr Georgios KYRTSOS, European Parliament, Mr Didier MARIE, French *Sénat*, Ms PRUNĂ). Ms SAMYN mentioned specific areas as critical to the Single Market, such as the medical and energy sectors.

During the discussion an urgent call for **securement and diversification of the supply chain** echoed (Mr GAPŠYS, Mr Ruairí Ó MURCHÚ, Irish *Houses of Oireachtas*).

Some of the speakers urged for **strategic autonomy of the EU** and, in that regard, welcomed the European Chips Act or the Critical Raw Material Act legislation (Mr DUMONT, Mr GRZYB, Mr PAVIĆ, Mr MARIE, Mr Ó MURCHÚ).

Members also warned against **replacing dependence on Russia by dependence on China**, and at the same time urged the EU to be aware of the fact it was **lagging behind China and the United States** (Ms PRUNĂ, Mr KYRTSOS). Mr José María SANCHEZ GARCIA, Spanish *Cortes Generales* added that the President of the United States, Joe BIDEN, had accepted the position of the previous American President, Donald TRUMP, with regard to protectionism, referring to the Inflation Reduction Act.

Several speakers underlined the importance of **skills on the Single Market**, highlighting that all barriers in recognition of diplomas and skills must be removed and recalled 2023 as the European Year of Skills (Mr BUCHMANN, Mr DUMONT, Mr KRICHBAUM, Mr SPRŪDS, Ms Susana CORREIA, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*).

Mr KRICHBAUM elaborated on the topic of **trade agreements** and urged for more courageous and ambitious arrangements, hoping for a breakthrough on the EU Mercosur deal soon.

Ms Hanna KOSONEN, Finnish *Eduskunta* and Mr GRZYB touched upon the topic of **artificial intelligence**. Ms KOSONEN pledged for artificial intelligence regulation, when she stated that people lived in danger when not using the artificial intelligence because of its great possible implications to democracy, urging the EU to be the leader on this.



Mr Péter BALASSA, Hungarian *Országgyűlés* stated in his intervention that harmonisation of prices across the Single Market was more or less achieved throughout the EU, but the completion of the Single Market concerning the same **level of wages** across the continent must not be forgotten.

Ms Isabella DE MONTE, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, pledged for more robust rules, as better regulation was essential to **address unfair competition**. She urged to ensure that the transition of the State Aid regulation would not overburden the less strong economies.

Mr Andrius KUBILIUS, European Parliament, noted the success of the Single Market using the example of his own country, Lithuania. He recalled Lithuania's EU accession negotiation process back in 1993, when the country was economically poor back then (GDP per capita at 32 % of the EU average). Since the accession to the EU, the country had moved up to 92 % of the EU average, which meant on a global scale the level of Japan. In 2033, he added, Lithuania should be at Swedish level, on 120 % EU average. He pledged to ensure Ukraine and Moldova had the same opportunity and concluded by saying that the integration to the Single Market was the most **powerful geopolitical instrument** to spread growth, stability and prosperity across the whole European continent.

Ms Elena MURELLI, Italian *Senato della Repubblica* mentioned in her intervention the current legislative proposals including the **Fit for 55** package as a future burden to the industry, families and public sector, therefore, she said its goals should be kept only to a minimum, she also shared her view on the disproportionality of the Packaging and packaging waste regulation proposal.

Mr Constantinos EFSTHATHIOU, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* argued that Cyprus could not **benefit** freely of **all four freedoms** of the Single Market, due to what he considered to be a **Turkish invasion**.

Mr DÎNCU linked **positive migration** and the internal market in his intervention, mentioning also the injustice of Romania not acceding to the Schengen area, urging the Spanish presidency to take things forward in the right direction.

In her final remarks Ms JORNA thanked all participants for the interesting and consensual debate and took the opportunity to reflect on the tasks for the future. She repeated her four points perspective for the business case, concretely: access to land, finance, skills and markets. Regarding access to land she reiterated the need for shortening the permitting process from the Member State's side. She noted there was also funding available to accompany the transition to a more effective process. On access to finance she mentioned the possibility for the future to align more closely the EU budget with the national budgets. In this context, she noted that the European Commission had changed the State Aid rules, also in order to have more predictable financing for companies. Concerning access to skills, Ms JORNA emphasised that the skills themselves were more important than the qualifications, mentioning the

installation of the solar panels as an example. Lastly, on access to markets, while of course the Single Market rules enabled access to market, she also mentioned the mandatory sustainability and resilience elements in public procurement, already incorporated in the Net Zero Industry Act.

In his final remarks Mr KARAS thanked all the participants for the fruitful debate, admitting he was surprised by the unity in the debate. He noted that the success of the Single Market had to be translated into individual countries and that there were lessons to be learnt from the experiences. He urged all to search for shortcomings and for the lessons learnt that were not yet experienced by the Single Market. He also underlined the need for strengthening and enhancing the Single Market. He noted that there was essentially a consensus on many points: on the need of removal of the obstacles; that all Member States should be members of the Schengen area, when the necessary conditions were met, and noted that the countries that were blocking this should remove these obstacles as soon as possible. He also stressed that the EU's trade agreements needed to be aligned with European values and law, and that all agreements currently listed needed to be concluded still this year. In the context of the SMEs and municipalities he mentioned that the European Parliament was very much in favour of implementation of the proportionality principle. He also touched on the issue of red tape, bureaucracy, supporting the European Commission proposal which would bring cutting of 25 % of red tape in the EU legislation by June. Mr KARAS also stated there should be no gold plating within the Member States. Lastly, he urged the Members to look at the Single market also from its geopolitical context.

## **CONTINUATION OF SESSION II: 30 YEARS OF THE SINGLE MARKET**

Mr WALLMARK opened this interactive session by welcoming the moderator, Ms Katarina ARESKOUG MASCARENHAS, Chair of the Board of the Centre for European Studies, Lund University.

Ms ARESKOUG MASCARENHAS explained the special format of this session and shared her thoughts on the Single Market as a foundation of EU cooperation, benefiting both companies and citizens. The Single Market and its positive effect on the European Union was an idea reiterated by the majority of speakers that took the floor in this session. Ms ARESKOUG MASCARENHAS stated that, in times of war, we should zoom out, and, quoting the Schuman Declaration (1950), she recalled that the original aim of the European project was that *“war should not be merely unthinkable, but materially impossible”*. In this line, she defended the enlargement of the Single Market to Ukraine as a key step. She continued quoting Robert SCHUMAN, French Foreign Affairs Minister at the time: *“Europe shall not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity”*. She added that the Single Market was a fantastic success, but which needed to be constantly renovated and checked. The challenges faced by the Single Market

were numerous, namely the need to reinforce the capital markets union, as well as the weight of the services sector and the need for enforcement to be improved. In order to achieve this, she considered that national administrations needed to remove obstacles to the Single Market, and proposed the creation of national offices in the Member States for that purpose.

The first keynote speaker, Ms Anna STELLINGER, Deputy Director General, International and EU Affairs, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, focused on three questions. The first, the importance of the Single Market, “*crown jewel*” of European integration, which was turning 30 in 2023, noting it was time for celebration but not for complacency. She considered the focus should be on long term challenges to the Single Market, and more attention had to be paid to a deepened and forward looking Single Market agenda. Secondly, she referred to the concerns from a business perspective, mostly the need to avoid competition to be distorted within the Single Market; and to be careful not to put the Single Market in reverse. Ms STELLINGER stated in her third point that the European Commission should be empowered to remove obstacles to the Single Market, and to be broad based, both via a Regulation to guarantee healthy competition in the Single Market and to create an innovation climate, and via the use of a competitiveness check on every new Regulation proposed by the Commission.

The second keynote speaker, Ms Therese SVANSTRÖM, President of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO), stressed the need for social partners to be involved so that they feel secure enough to embrace the changes, especially in these rapidly changing times, as nothing was more competitive than a strong Single Market where social partners are involved. She then pledged for lifelong learning, and for talking about it in a concrete way, acknowledging that some jobs will be lost, some will be created, and most will be transformed. She proposed a specific objective of 60% of adults in training. This, she said, would imply a new mindset, as university formation will no longer be valid for the whole career and workers would have to go back to university in the framework of a regular re-skilling programme, which should be accessible, relevant and properly financed. She called for more cooperation to get all perspectives on board, and for responsibility to be shared amongst the state, companies and employees. She mentioned the forthcoming Recommendation on Social Dialogue, and recalled the recent labour market reform in Sweden, the biggest in the last 30 years, that made moves in the right direction, like increased protection to specific categories of workers and increased employability of workers. Ms SVANSTRÖM concluded her intervention with a reference to the need to reinforce the gender perspective, as the lower involvement of women in the labour market was a matter of equal rights that implied not only a discrimination, but a loss of human capital.

The moderator, Ms ARESKOUG MASCARENHAS, introduced the panel that would comment on the answers to the questions and after that, she opened the quiz, which consisted of six questions that were shown on the screens.

The first question inquired about the factor that increased competitiveness in the EU the most, and the reply that got the most votes was option a) Strengthened resilience by EU's own productions (e.g. critical raw materials).<sup>3</sup> Mr Othmar KARAS, First Vice-President of the European Parliament, commented on the result, noting that he would have rather opted for a combination of more open trade, for example through Foreign Trade Agreements and World Trade Organisation reform, and increased autonomy, at the same time.

The second question asked what would be the key for the Single Market to be able to strengthen competitiveness in the EU. The option with the majority of votes was the one that proposed to strengthen SMEs through, for example, a more efficient Single Market, simplification of regulations and good skills provision<sup>4</sup>. Mr Pere Joan PONS SAMPIETRO, Member of the Joint Committee for the EU Affairs, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, would have rather preferred as key the need to speed up the digital and green transition, given the fact that the green transition would make a difference for the next generations.

The third question of the quiz referred to how could the Single Market contribute to a quicker digital and green transition, and the reply that received the most votes was the one that opted for legally binding requirements for companies<sup>5</sup>. Mr Ondřej KOLÁŘ, Vice-Chair of the EU Affairs Committee, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, commented this reply and he agreed with the result, saying it could not be presumed that citizens were always responsible. He added that rules had to be compulsory in order to guarantee its implementation.

The fourth question asked what would be the biggest and most important obstacle for SMEs, and the reply that got an absolute majority was legal obstacles and administrative processes<sup>6</sup>. This reply was commented by Mr PONS SAMPIETRO, who considered that not only legal obstacles and administrative processes, but also a lack of good skills provision would be an obstacle, and in any case, he made the case for a more federal Europe in order to achieve a more efficient Single Market.

The fifth question asked how could the Single Market better safeguard good skills provision, and the most voted reply was that it would be achieved via a combination of

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<sup>3</sup>The three possible replies to question 1 were: a) Strengthened resilience by EU's own productions (e.g. critical raw materials); b) More open trade, for example through FTAs and WTO reform; c) A combination of the above.

<sup>4</sup> The three possible replies to question 2 were: a) To speed up the digital and green transition, b) To strengthen SMEs through, for example, a more efficient Single Market, simplification of regulations and good skills provision, c) Other.

<sup>5</sup> The three possible replies to question 3 were: a) Legally binding requirements for companies; b) Voluntary requirements/standards/incentives; c) Other.

<sup>6</sup> The three possible replies to question 4 were: a) Legal obstacles and administrative processes; b) A lack of good skills provision; c) Other.

internal measures, for example increased recognition of professional qualifications within the EU, and more skilled workers from third countries<sup>7</sup>. Mr KOLÁŘ, who commented this result, agreed with it and stressed the need for an easier recognition of diplomas within the EU, having suffered this problem himself after having moved to the Czech Republic from Ireland.

The last question enquired how could national Parliaments best contribute to the strengthening of the Single Market's competitiveness and resilience. The overwhelming majority (82%) replied this could be achieved through contacts at an early stage of proposals with the Commission or national governments, as well as subsidiarity checks<sup>8</sup>. Mr KARAS agreed with this result in his final comment.

During the ensuing debate, 11 speakers took the floor.

All of them praised the **positive results of the Single Market**, as cornerstone of European integration. Different issues affecting the Single Market were mentioned, as the **diverging energy prices** in Member States (Ms Boglárka ILLÉS, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*), or the need for the **regulation of artificial intelligence** (Mr Robert TROY; Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas: Dáil Eireann*). Representatives from candidate countries (Mr Zdenko ČOSIĆ, Bosnia and Herzegovina *Parlamentarna skupština* and Mr Mile LEFKOV, North Macedonian *Sobranie*), pleaded for their entry in the European Union and considered **enlargement** to be a key topic that could have been included in the agenda. Ms Fjolla UJKANI, Kosovo<sup>9</sup> *Kuvendi i Kosovës*, pleaded for candidate status to be offered to Kosovo, while Ms Maka BOTCHORISHVILI, Georgian *Sakartvelos P'arlament'i*, added that Georgians expected their work towards European integration to be assessed timely.

Ms KILLONEN, Finish *Eduskunta*, asked Mr KARAS about possible **new funding instruments in cross border areas**, to which Mr KARAS replied that, even if the end of the mandate of the European Parliament and European Commission should be awaited before being able to answer, he would discuss this topic with the Budget Committee members in the European Parliament.

Mr Vlad-Mircea PUFU, Romanian *Camera Deputaților*, stated that the Single Market could work only on the basis of solidarity, and deemed as an injustice the fact that **Romania** had been prevented from joining **Schengen**.

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<sup>7</sup> The three possible replies to question 5 were: a) Internal measures, for example increased recognition of professional qualifications within the EU; b) More skilled workers from third countries; c) A combination of the above.

<sup>8</sup> The three possible replies to question 6 were: a) Through contact at an early stage of proposals with the Commission or national governments, as well as subsidiarity checks; b) Through contacts with members of the European Parliament and interparliamentary cooperation; c) Other.

<sup>9</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Ms Zita PLEŠTINSKÁ, Slovakian *Národná rada*, evoked her former work as member of the Internal Market Committee of the European Parliament and she recalled a very favourable recent **tax reform** in favour of women with young children in Slovakia.

Once the debate on the quiz results finished, the moderator gave the floor back to both keynote speakers. Ms SVANSTRÖM deemed that the quiz had shown that there were no quick fixes to difficult issues, as it was the case of the Single Market. Challenges such as the green transition and the digitalisation could be turned into opportunities for Europe to compete globally, for which education remained a key tool.

Ms STELLINGER described the European Union as a balancing act, in which both employers and employees should be included in the search for a common direction. Besides good legislation on the Single Market, she emphasised that better implementation was also needed.

Mr WALLMARK deemed that this session of the COSAC Plenary had been very amusing, and closed the session.

## **6. MEETING OF THE COSAC CHAIRPERSONS - DISCUSSION ON THE CONTRIBUTION AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE LXIX COSAC**

Mr WALLMARK informed the Chairpersons of the procedure regarding the adoption of Contribution and Conclusions by the LXIX COSAC, recalling that the drafts of both texts had been circulated to all delegations on 28 April. Since then, the Presidency had received amendments from Parliaments/Chambers within the set deadline of 5 May and, following the discussion during the Troika meeting on 14 May, delegations had received a modified document, as well as the amendments tabled until the deadline of noon, that day.

He also mentioned that the Swedish Presidency had tried to present a short and concise text that would reflect the topics actually discussed at the COSAC meetings. He briefly commented on the amendments received on the Contribution, referring that the Presidency had tried to accommodate most of them, but trying to keep the text balanced and susceptible of reaching consensus amongst delegations. Regarding to the draft Conclusions, Mr WALLMARK informed that no amendments were received within the deadline of 5 May, but that the European Parliament had asked for the insertion of a reference to the Conclusions of the Presidency of the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments held in Prague on 24-25 April 2023, in particular the invitation to COSAC to propose an exchange of best practices and to reflect on possible ways to strengthen modern parliamentarism. This suggestion was accommodated by the Presidency.

Following some debate, in which delegations expressed their views on the different amendments, the draft Conclusions and an amended text of the draft Contribution of the LXIX COSAC were agreed by consensus, without any vote required.

## **7. SESSION III - TOWARDS A GREEN TRANSITION**

The session was conducted in the presence of H.R.H. Crown Princess Victoria.

Ms Matilda ERNKRANS, Deputy Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the *Riksdag* opened the session by welcoming the three keynote speakers.

### **Keynote Speaker 1: Ms Helén FRITZON, Member of the ENVI Committee, European Parliament**

Ms Helén FRITZON started her speech by welcoming all delegates in Sweden and stating it was an honour and a pleasure to stand in the Swedish Parliament again and talk about the most important issue of our time - the green transition. To illustrate that importance she quoted the popular Swedish artist Mr Ted GÄRDESTAD and explained that the climate and environmental crisis was about the limits of the only planet we live on - and which world we should leave to our children and grandchildren. She noted that Sweden and the Social Democrats had long been pioneers in climate and environmental policy. As early as 1972, Mr Olof PALME, former Swedish Prime Minister, had invited people to the first UN Environmental Conference in Stockholm to discuss environmental problems. In the 1970s, the Swedish government had implemented a major investment programme in district heating to break the dependence on oil. Ms FRITZON explained that her country had managed to almost halve the country's emissions in just over a decade - while being the most equal country in the world. She further developed that in the 1990s, Mr Göran PERSSON, former Swedish Prime Minister, had launched the idea of the green Swedish welfare state based on the idea of a just transition where everyone was involved in creating a better, more sustainable society.

Ms FRITZON also referred to Ms Anna LINDH, former Swedish Minister for the Environment and later Foreign Minister, who had pushed for the EU's strategy to combat acidification and for stricter chemicals legislation. Ms FRITZON then stated that she could clearly see the legacy of Swedish social democratic policy in the EU's flagship project, the European Green Deal, which was launched in 2019. The ambition had been to take a holistic approach to climate change and environmental issues, including non-toxic environment and biodiversity, food production and social justice. In her opinion, these matters could not be separated, and therefore the transition policy must be coherent. She noted that the basis of the European Green Deal was the historic European Climate Law agreed on in 2021, with clear climate targets that determine that the EU should be climate neutral by 2050, and that the emissions must be reduced by at least 55 % by 2030. In order to do so, Ms FRITZON described that a comprehensive Fit for 55 reform package had to be negotiated, consisting of a wide range of reforms and new tools to reduce emissions and promote a fair transition that would strengthen Europe's competitiveness.

Ms FRITZON further explained that in the Fit for 55 package, the EU's Emissions Trading System (ETS) had been tightened so that the price of emissions would increase

significantly already from 2024. The ambition levels of all countries to reduce emissions by 2030 had been raised, and the targets for storing more carbon in forests and soil had been increased. She then introduced further elements of the package: a Social Climate Fund to support households and small businesses in the transition; climate tariffs at EU level to put the same price on emissions for goods outside Europe, and using the EU's collective strengths and Single Market to put pressure on the rest of the world to act. She noted that the negotiations on all Fit for 55 legislation were being finalised and emphasised it would then be up to Member States to deliver on what had been agreed on the EU level.

Ms FRITZON concluded by highlighting a few other aspects of the green transition. Firstly, she urged to start the work immediately as there were only seven years left until 2030, and postponement would only lead to increased costs and reduced competitiveness. Secondly, she emphasised that gender equality and the green transition must go hand in hand, as women took a lot of responsibility for the transition in their daily lives, but were also more affected by its risks. Nonetheless, 75 % of new green jobs globally by 2030 were expected to go to men. Therefore, it must be ensured that more women are empowered to participate in the green transition. Thirdly, for the transition to succeed it was crucial that it became the pathway to a fairer and more democratic Europe which would require redistributive reforms and support for households and businesses. Ms FRITZON closed by stating that there was a big and important job ahead of the EU policymakers which should be dealt with together as a united Europe, facing crises by increasing democracy, freedom and sustainability.

**Keynote Speaker 2: Mr Daniel MES, Member of Cabinet of Executive Vice-President Timmermans, European Commission**

Mr Daniel MES opened his intervention by posing the question of how to achieve a good transition to a climate neutral future knowing from our lives that transitions really matter. He then referred to the Czech-Austrian composer Mr Gustav MAHLER who had stated that a *“secret of a beautiful piece of music peace was in the transition, in its rhythms”*. Similarly, a journalist Ms Robbie SHELL said that *“if you had big global transitions, big challenges brought the best out of us as humanity, namely to make new discoveries in science and innovations to master the change”*.

Mr MES explained those parallels as transitions were essential for achieving the European Green Deal and the climate action and stated the importance of citizens for these changes. Mr MES also referred to Australian philosopher Mr Roman KRZYNARIC who sketched a dilemma in this context by suggesting that we all wanted to be good ancestors and leave the world for those who come after, which would be at least as good as the one we found. However, the problem was to focus purely on the long-term as there were many things to worry about in the short-term which was rather natural for human beings. To overcome such a dilemma Mr MES advocated for an assessment of whether the goal of a sustainable future could be achieved by short-term success which would lead to trusting that the approach was right and eventually long-term goals could



be implemented. Three things could be relevant for that: the importance of targets to trigger the transition, the limits of targets without a realistic plan to achieve them, and giving a voice to everyone who was struggling or facing obstacles in making that transition.

On the importance of targets, Mr MES noted that the direction was set in the European Climate Law which created a legally binding obligation to reach climate neutrality collectively by 2050. He stated that the EU was not only defining targets but setting the legislation to achieve them. However, he considered that the targets had limits and the adoption of the climate package some months earlier was only the beginning. The implementation on a national level would be challenging and difficult choices would have to be made, highlighting that the Social Climate Fund would play an important role to help more vulnerable households.

Mr MES also referred to the business angle to the green transition, mentioning two seemingly unrelated examples. First, and to illustrate how the perception that the green transition was only available to the upper class was not accurate, he gave the example of his own parents who lived in a social housing project, yet were able for instance to afford solar panels earlier than him. Another example was a recent announcement for a new Korean owned car battery factory to be built in Dunkirk, northern France, which would bring some 20,000 jobs to the region. The connecting element between those two examples was the network of businesses, the chain of companies that can work together and bring those solutions that everyone can use. Without SMEs, Mr MES' parents could not have green innovations in their house as nobody could provide them. Similarly, the Korean investor decided to invest and build a factory in France because the EU had a long-term stable commitment towards green transition, but mainly because it had a network of SMEs they could cooperate with. Mr MES therefore praised the value chain of companies which could bring these affordable solutions to citizens.

Mr MES also mentioned the BlackRock founder Mr Larry FINK, who had predicted that the next 1000 unicorns (companies that reach a valuation of 1 billion dollars without being listed on the stock market) will be those in the climate technology business. Mr MES related this to the fact that the EU had the Green Deal in place, however, it should then focus on a business plan to make its targets happening which involved cooperating with businesses who could facilitate that. The EU should not only cooperate with such businesses but also make a friendly environment for them to ensure access to resources and prevention of bureaucratic obstacles.

Mr MES also emphasised the importance of ensuring the proportionate distribution of such businesses across the whole of the EU, and not only in leading countries such as Sweden or the Netherlands. Toward the end of his intervention he also drew attention to the importance of SMEs' access to decision-makers on the EU level as small and medium companies often had solutions to problems which did not reach the right ears. He used Sweden and the Netherlands as examples of leaders in cooperation with innovative SMEs companies and connecting them with bigger businesses that were

interested in their solutions. He considered that the EU should learn from Scandinavia how to give SMEs a stronger voice. Mr MES concluded by congratulating Sweden on its success in the green transition and expressed his hope it would keep inspiring the EU in this matter in the future.

**Keynote Speaker 3: Mr Johan KUYLENSTIERNA, Director General, Formas - A Research Council for Sustainable Development**

Mr Johan KUYLENSTIERNA, began by stating that the topic of this session was the most exciting of all and referred to the current climate situation as a “*code red for humanity*”, in the words of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. He also mentioned that the World Economic Forum stressed very clearly in its latest Global Risk Report<sup>10</sup> that 6 out of 10 major global challenges would be environmentally related in the next ten years (climate, biodiversity, natural resources). He noted that the green transition was happening around the whole world and that there was a need for system shifts to lift the global population out of poverty and into a greener future. To illustrate, he recalled impacts in Europe from droughts and floods, but also that the indirect impacts on Europe from such problems elsewhere could be as severe. He warned that even though such circumstances were short-term, in the long run a major shift could be seen in terms of sea level rise, shifts in atmospheric circulation etc. that could bring changes that would be difficult for modern society to cope with.

Mr KUYLENSTIERNA stated that the world was in the “*Anthropocene*” era, facing lots of crises and challenges, for which a system approach was much needed. The Green Deal was about going from fossil to non-fossil economies, but that leadership required system shifts to deal with a green transition, since it was about going from linear to circular economy, and to resource efficiency in times of crises. He further emphasised that it was important to understand the link between resource efficiency and geopolitics and security, something that the war in Ukraine had demonstrated. Despite these challenges Mr KUYLENSTIERNA considered himself more optimistic than ever before in his long career since, despite all the crises, what was happening at the EU level and globally was a mindset change which was laying the foundations for the green transition to occur. The top-down approach from the Green Deal entailed a broad framework not just looking at the climate transition but also its whole socio-economic dimension, making sure all people would be on board and experience a real change.

Mr KUYLENSTIERNA highlighted the importance of the bottom-up force emerging from cities, and regions that really invested in the future, as a transforming trend for the climate, but also many other challenges facing local communities. He also noted that the corporate sector was moving from talking about climate and biodiversity as environmental responsibilities to instead seeing these as market-driven business opportunities for the future. He pointed out that there had also been new challenges coming up in terms of raw materials. This was about circular economy and resource efficiency, which also applied to bio-resources – forests, food security etc. He stated that

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-risks-report-2023/>

national Parliaments had a critical role in that, as they were in the junction between the EU and global policies, and the bottom up force of businesses and local communities.

Mr KUYLENSTIERNA announced three messages that he would like to share for the discussion that day. The first one was about catalysing the transition, upscaling and enabling change, explaining that the power and force were among local communities and businesses. The question was whether the implementation could be speeded up by catalysing change in economic, legal and social areas. The second message was about the importance of multi-level governance, understanding how the EU level could be connected all the way down to the local level and businesses in terms of implementation. According to him, it was also about understanding the value chains and value webs. Global trade had grown tenfold since the Stockholm Conference in 1972, economy fourfold and population doubled. So the global trading system, the flows of materials, were connecting companies, people and countries across the globe. And his final message was related to the whole issue of skills and competences for the green transition, since there could be a lot of new positions in the new green economy, but people could not take them without proper training. The EU had been pushing this issue of skills for the green transition really hard during the Swedish Presidency.

However, Mr KUYLENSTIERNA would like to see that effort becoming a long-term goal. To conclude his intervention, he quoted the famous Danish chemist Mr Niels BOHR, who allegedly stated that “*predictions are difficult, especially about the future*”.

Mr KUYLENSTIERNA added that this landscape would bring surprises, but with the right policies and the right decisions one could be possibly sure that we would also be able to harness all the opportunities that the green transition would bring to us: European competitiveness and driving the transition of the entire world.

During the ensuing debate, 25 speakers took the floor.

All speakers agreed that the green transition was absolutely essential to achieve a greener future and thus supported it. At the same time it was said that the path to that goal would not be easy but there was no other alternative. Mr Raoul BOUCKE, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, further added that the current generation was the last one which could tackle climate change but at the same time the first one that would suffer the consequences.

A significant number of speakers mentioned **the social aspects of the green transition and the importance of the Social Climate Fund**. They mostly argued the green transition should not cause a burden on citizens and lead to energy poverty, as that would hit the most vulnerable citizens of the EU. Moreover, speakers pointed out that the cost of decarbonisation must not be put on citizens as it would raise the price of energy for them (Mr Rubén MORENO, Spanish *Cortes Generales*; Mr Andrzej GRZYB and Ms Anna KWIECIEN, both Polish *Sejm*; Mr Andris SPRŪDS, Latvian *Saeima*; Mr Georgios KYRTSOS, European Parliament).

Mr Marc DEMESMAEKER, Belgian *Chambre des représentants/Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers*, expressed his concern about the ETS system resulting in higher prices. Mr Pietro LOREFICE, Italian *Senato della Repubblica* and Mr Firmino MARQUES, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, recalled the importance of solidarity, both among different social groups and generations as well as countries. Ms Cristina-Madalina PRUNA, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, emphasised that living standards should not deteriorate as a result of the green transition, as that would lead to a lack of trust from European citizens.

Furthermore, speakers also argued **in favour of nuclear energy** (Mr Pere Joan PONS SAMPIETRO, Spanish *Cortes Generales*; Mr Pieyre-Alexandre ANGLADE, French *Assemblée nationale*). Mr Tomasz NOWAK, Polish *Sejm*, emphasised the importance of nuclear energy as a stabiliser during green transition. Ms KWIECIEŃ argued nuclear energy should be included among the green energies. Mr Jean-François RAPIN, French *Sénat*, added that the EU's energy supply must be guaranteed and nuclear energy would allow it to better safeguard its energy independence in Europe, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine. Mr Rubén MORENO, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, stated that he was not in favour of building new nuclear plants, noting however that it may be needed to extend the life of the current ones.

There were also **calls for the EU to be a global leader in the green transition**, which was mentioned for instance by Ms Maria HUBER, Austrian *Bundesrat*. Mr Pär HOLMGREN, European Parliament, stressed that the EU was more ambitious than the USA or China, however, at the same time it was far away from what was needed according to science. He suggested that instead of reducing 55 % of greenhouse emissions by 2030, the EU should aim at 70 % and climate neutrality should be achieved by 2040, not 2050. Mr Marko PAVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, drew attention to the fact that the EU was responsible only for 8-9 % of the greenhouse emissions, whereas countries such as China and India produce over 50 %.

Many speakers also informed about **the specific situation or progress made in their home countries**. Mr PAVIĆ mentioned that Croatia had planned to become an energy hub for south-east and central Europe by doubling their liquified natural gas capacity on the islet of Krk. In addition, almost half of the electric energy of the country came from hydro energy sources, 20 % came from wind and there were capacities for the solar energy being built. Mr Aurelius VERYGA, Lithuanian *Seimas*, listed that a quarter of energy of his country came from renewables and this should get to 80 % by 2050. Ms Hanna KOSONEN, Finnish *Eduskunta*, informed that Finnish businesses were prepared for a faster transition and politicians were falling behind.

There was a significant support for **the respect of energy mix of each Member State** (Mr GRZYB; Mr Zoltán TESSELY, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*; Mr NOWAK and Ms KWIECIEŃ). Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI, Estonian *Riigikogu*, added that that had been outlined in the COSAC Contribution.

**The economic dimension of the climate crisis** was mentioned for instance by Ms HUBER who argued that climate policy could be turned into an economic advantage and it should be implemented in a way to offer the industrial opportunities we needed. She added there was a need for green and clean products and that the EU was actually already the market leader in that, as well as in technology and innovation and it should stay that way.

Mr Stefano CANDIANI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, argued that **the long-term objectives should be clear to all**, noting that, even if it would be costly to achieve them, it had to be done. He added that the unique characteristics of each EU Member State should be respected and that a one-size-fits-all approach should be avoided.

Ms Lucia TACER, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, raised **the issue of the need for better connectivity of Europe by train**, recalling that last April the European Commission registered a citizen's initiative to facilitate a network of fast speed trains to connect the EU capitals. She urged members of Parliaments to support this initiative so it could proceed faster.

Among other topics raised was for instance **the risk of extinction** (Mr Anton HOFREITER, German *Bundestag*), and **the need to secure energy and resource independence from Russia and other problematic countries** such as China (Ms Ellen SAMYN, Belgian *Chambre des représentants/Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers*; Mr BOUCKE).

After the debate, the floor was given to the keynote speakers for brief comments.

In her concluding remarks, Ms FRITZON drew two main conclusions from the debate. First, the perspective should change from top-down to bottom-up. The green transition must be local, national and international. Second, there was not a conflict between sustainability and growth because for the future we must use the green transition to achieve both and also gender equality. Mr MES added that the move to renewable energy was actually a move to freedom and independence from problematic energy suppliers. He also agreed that the issue of high energy prices in the EU should be resolved quickly. Lastly, he emphasised that the green transition must be well communicated to the EU citizens. Mr KUYLENSTIERNA argued that the green transition was very much about social and economic development, EU leadership and security aspects. The one thing he missed in the debate was the issue of skills and competences needed in the process of the green transition.

## **8. SESSION IV - UKRAINE**

Mr Hans WALLMARK, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Swedish *Riksdag* opened the session by introducing the topic and keynote speakers.

**Keynote Speaker 1: Ms Ivanna KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE, Chair of the Committee on Ukraine's integration into the EU, Ukrainian *Verkhovna Rada***

In her opening speech, Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE thanked the Swedish Presidency for maintaining Ukraine on top of the EU's agenda, and the EU and its Member States for their support to the Ukrainian people who were fighting not only for their countries but also for the values of the EU. She welcomed the humanitarian support for Ukraine, the pressure placed on Russia through the sanctions adopted and through the calls for accountability for the crimes committed. Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE highlighted the importance of military support, which allowed the country to resist repeated Russian attacks on Ukrainian cities. She noted that the common objective had to be to put an end to the war that secured Ukrainian victory and Russia's defeat, as this country was seeking to destroy the post-Cold War international order.

Furthermore Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE called for all possible support for the reconstruction, recovery and development of Ukraine, as this support was necessary to rebuild peoples' lives. She noted that 14 billion dollars were needed immediately to cover basic needs, of which the Government of Ukraine would provide 3 billion, and the remaining 11 billion should come from the international community. She outlined that the overall reconstruction needs were estimated at 400 billion dollars and that the Multi-agency Donor Coordination Platform would play an essential role in mobilising international public and private investment, as well as securing local engagement.

Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE closed her intervention by highlighting the importance of the Ukraine Recovery Conference that would take place on 21-22 June 2023 in London and stressed the need to maintain the reconstruction and reform processes in parallel to allow Ukraine to transform itself and continue on the EU integration path.

**Keynote speaker 2: Anders AHNLID, Chair of the Council's Ad Hoc Working Party on Frozen and Immobilised Assets to support Ukraine's reconstruction**

In his presentation, Mr AHNLID outlined the work initiated under the Swedish Presidency on the use of frozen and immobilised assets to support Ukraine's reconstruction, in line with the mandate from the European Council. He said that the Ad Hoc Council Working Party was established in February and was pursuing a holistic approach - carrying out legal, financial, economic and political assessments - to the question of frozen and immobilised assets. The preparatory work could support concrete future Council proposals and initiatives that should be in line with EU and international law, according to Mr AHNLID.

Mr AHNLID explained the three different strands of work being carried out: first, understanding the data on the value, ownership, type and location of the frozen and immobilised assets. He said that it was estimated that 300 billion dollars in public assets

were frozen and immobilised in G7 countries, while private assets of individuals amounted to around 20 billion dollars. Second, assessing the feasibility and appropriateness of different options regarding frozen and immobilised assets. While the confiscation of private assets of individuals found guilty of crimes was feasible, the options regarding public assets were more complicated given the principle of state immunity. The third strand concerned international cooperation and coordination with the work done by other G7 countries. Mr AHNLIID closed by reiterating the objective of seeking as many results as possible, calling on Member States to take responsibility, and noted that he expected the Working Party to deliver tangible results before the Foreign Affairs and European Council meetings in June.

**Keynote speaker 3: Mr Jean-Erik DE ZAGON, Head of European Investment Bank Representation to Ukraine**

Mr DE ZAGON began his [presentation](#) by providing data on the estimated direct damages caused by Russia's attacks in Ukraine since the start of the full-scale invasion in February 2022 which amounted to 115 billion dollars. He also said that reconstruction needs were estimated to 411 billion dollars. This higher figure resulted from the more modern and higher standards to be used in reconstruction. Immediate needs for the next 18 months were estimated to 14 billion dollars, of which the international community should contribute with 11 billion dollars. He noted that the main priority for reconstruction was public sector investment and the repair of critical infrastructure, which would allow people to come back to Ukraine and crowd-in private investment. As the main challenges, he pointed to Ukraine's limited absorption capacity, as well as the need to secure concessional financing in order to ensure debt sustainability.

Mr DE ZAGON outlined the main areas in which the European Investment Bank (EIB) was active in Ukraine and the available support from the EU for the reconstruction work in Ukraine. Since 2007, the EIB had invested 7 billion euros in Ukraine, with a focus on social infrastructure. Since the start of Russia's invasion in 2022, 2.3 billion euros have been dedicated to immediate relief to Ukraine, particularly targeting government funding and repair of damaged infrastructure such as roads. In order to secure continued support in the coming 18 months, and since the use of the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+) sovereign lending guarantee was currently not possible, the EIB had developed the EU for Ukraine (EU4U) Initiative. This included 100 million euros of the EIB's own resources and the creation of the EU for Ukraine Trust Fund, which was open for contributions from the European Commission, Member States and like-minded countries.

Mr DE ZAGON explained that the EU4U initiative would allow the continuity of important support projects, including 2 billion euros for the recovery of the public sector. This included repairs and rebuilding of the transport infrastructure, such as Solidarity Lanes to allow export and import goods and equipment from/to Ukraine, repairs in the energy sector and support for infrastructure. EU4U also envisaged the

economic resilience of the private sectors by supporting access to finance for SMEs, with guarantees to larger corporations and investing in Ukrainian private equity funds.

During the ensuing debate, 23 speakers took the floor.

Almost all the speakers **called for continued EU support to Ukraine** until the country's victory and the reestablishment of Ukrainian control over all the territory within its international borders. Mr Helmut BRANDSTÄTTER, Austrian *Nationalrat* and Mr Ondřej KOLÁŘ, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* also noted the importance of concrete and visible shows of solidarity such as EU visits to Ukraine or establishing contacts between local authorities in the EU and Ukraine.

Mr Rihards KOLS, Latvian *Saeima* condemned those undermining EU unity in support of Ukraine and asked EU leaders to overcome their fears and provide Ukraine with longer-term, comprehensive support. Mr Pieyre-Alexandre ANGLADE, French *Assemblée nationale* and Mr Marc DEMESMAEKER, Belgian *Sénat/Senaat* highlighted the **importance of stepping up military support** to Ukraine ahead of the expected counter-offensive and called for the delivery of fighter jets.

In her intervention Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI, Estonian *Riigikogu* clearly stated that it **pertained only to Ukraine to decide on any possible peace negotiations**. A message that was echoed by Mr Sylwester TUŁAJEW, Polish *Sejm*. Ms JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI also called on the EU to lead efforts to bring the Russian leadership to justice under a special tribunal, a call supported by other speakers taking the floor like Mr Ruud KOOLE, Dutch *Eerste Kamer* and Mr Arber ADEMI, North Macedonian *Sobranie*. The **call for accountability for Russian crimes committed in Ukraine** was also made by Mr Claude KERN, French *Sénat* and Mr Gaëtan VAN GOIDSENHOVEN, Belgian *Sénat/Senaat*.

Mr DEMESMAEKER noted the need to explore how to **use Russian frozen and immobilised assets for the reconstruction of Ukraine**, a message supported by Mr KOLÁŘ. Mr DEMESMAEKER also stressed the importance of the 11th EU sanctions package being prepared, and of closing the existing loopholes in the sanctions regime, which was also mentioned by Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, German *Bundestag* and Mr TUŁAJEW. Mr KRICHBAUM also raised the **issue of Ukrainian agricultural exports to the EU** market and harming European farmers due to decreased agricultural prices.

Ms Ana-Maria CĂTĂUȚĂ, Romanian *Camera Deputaților* highlighted the **importance and challenges of the reconstruction process in Ukraine**, which would need both important financial commitments and reforms to be carried out by the Ukrainian government. Ms CĂTĂUȚĂ also noted that the involvement of women was essential for a successful reconstruction. This last message was also underlined by Ms Anna LASSES, Swedish *Riksdag*. Ms Eva Maria HOLZLEITNER, Austrian *Nationalrat* denounced the **violence against women and children committed by Russian troops in Ukraine** and the need to investigate these human rights violations, as well as to defend the rights of all women across the EU.



Numerous parliamentarians, including Radvilė MORKŪNAITĖ-MIKULĖNIENĖ, Lithuanian *Seimas*, Mr ADEMI and Mr Michał KAMIŃSKI, Polish *Senat* noted that **Russia's war of aggression** and actions were not directed only towards Ukraine, but they **constituted a direct attack on the international order and against the EU** as a project, and the values it represented.

At this juncture, Mr Logi EINARSSON, Icelandic *Alþingi* noted that the **Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe** taking place on 16-17 May in Reykjavik presented a historic opportunity to redefine the mission and purpose of this organisation. He also noted that he expected that the outcomes of the summit would include actions to support Ukraine.

Mr Andrius KUBILIUS, European Parliament, called for a broader and longer-term discussion than military peace in Ukraine. He stressed the **need to look at the elements which were necessary for Europe's sustainable peace**. For Mr KUBILIUS this required the democratisation of Russia and Belarus as well as securing **Ukraine's accession to the EU and to NATO**, which he called for as soon as possible. Ms JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI and Mr ADEMI also called for Ukraine joining the EU and NATO.

Ms Doina GHERMAN, Moldovan *Parlamentul Republicii* noted that Moldova was the most vulnerable neighbour of Ukraine and was currently facing security, humanitarian, economic and energy challenges, as well as increasing Russian propaganda and attempts at destabilisation. She called for the **EU's solidarity and support for Ukraine to be extended also to Moldova**.

Ms Maka BOTCHORISHVILI, Georgian *Sakartvelos p'arlament'i* expressed Georgia's solidarity with Ukraine as the country was also experiencing Russian occupation and military presence, and the displacement of an important part of its population. Ms BOTCHORISHVILI noted Georgia's close cooperation with the EU and NATO despite not being a member, and **called for EU candidate status to be provided to Georgia**.

Mr Natan ALBAHARY, Serbian *Narodna skupština* noted that his party would continue to push for a closer alignment of Serbia and the EU positions on Ukraine, and **asked the EU to keep open the possibility for Serbia to join the EU**. On the subject of EU **enlargement**, Mr KOOLE noted his support for Ukraine and Moldova to join the EU if all the criteria were met and therefore called for the EU to provide the necessary support so this could happen as soon as possible. Mr Salvatore CAIATA, Italian *Camera dei Deputati* and Mr TUŁAJEW also expressed their **support for advancing the EU's enlargement process with all candidate countries**.

In his replies, Mr DE ZAGON emphasised that the war in Ukraine was not only about territory but about value, stating that support for Ukraine was urgent in military terms but also in regards to reconstruction.

In his final intervention, Mr AHNLID reiterated that it was evident that there were large amounts of frozen and immobilised assets that could be used for Ukraine's reconstruction, and called on members of national Parliaments to engage with their national governments so that work in this area could be advanced.

In her replies Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE thanked all for their statements - and actions - in support of Ukraine and called for continued engagement and support until Ukraine's victory. She stated that Russia needed to be defeated, isolated and punished for the aggression against Ukraine and that this was the only way for durable and sustainable peace in Europe. Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE acknowledged the concern of EU farmers but stated that it was not possible to cut the lifeline that agricultural exports represent for Ukraine and called for detailed discussions to find a solution to this complex issue. She also noted that Ukraine was expecting the next Commission report on Ukraine's progress towards the benchmarks needed before accession negotiations can start. Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE concluded by welcoming the unprecedented decision by COSAC Chairs to travel to Ukraine last September and extending an invitation for further visits to the country.

In his closing remarks, Mr WALLMARK highlighted the importance of the work being carried out by the EIB, and the Ad Hoc Council Working Party on frozen and immobilised assets, and asked Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE to convey to the Ukrainian people and members of the Ukrainian *Verkhovna Rada* the solidarity and commitment by the EU to continue supporting Ukraine for as long as was needed.

## **9. CLOSING SESSION: ADOPTION OF THE CONTRIBUTION AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE LXIX COSAC**

Mr Hans WALLMARK, Chair of the Committee on European Union Affairs of the Swedish *Riksdag*, concluded the meeting by emphasising the fruitful discussions held. He then alluded to the texts of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LXIX COSAC Meeting, distributed to all delegations, which were adopted by consensus with no amendment presented during the Plenary, highlighting that no vote was required throughout the entire procedure. The Chair gave the floor to Ms Susana SUMELZO, Chair of the Joint Committee for EU Affairs of the Spanish *Cortes Generales*, as incoming Presidency of COSAC in the second semester of 2023, who announced that the meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons would take place on 9-10 July, and that the LXX COSAC would be held on 24-26 September, both in Madrid.

Mr WALLMARK concluded the LXIX COSAC Plenary Meeting by extending his thanks also to the staff who assisted in the organisation.