



Ceann Comhairle

10 March 2011

Mr. Danny Pieters
Speaker of the Belgian Senate

Mr. André Flahaut
Speaker of the Belgian House of
Representatives

Dear Colleagues,

I wish to thank you for your invitation to the EU Speakers' Conference and I look forward to attending the conference in Brussels in April. I also wish to thank you for the Presidency proposal on the parliamentary oversight of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and welcome your efforts to progress this important discussion.

However, it is our view that the Presidency proposal is not in line with the COSAC position as adopted in Brussels on 26 October 2010. Also, in contributing to this position, the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Affairs put forward a number of ideas for the parliamentary oversight of the CFSP and CSDP which differ significantly from the Presidency proposal.

In our view, given the special status of the CFSP and CDSP and its inter-governmental nature, national parliaments are in the best position to undertake effective parliamentary oversight of the policy and therefore this oversight should be interparliamentary. It is also important that any new arrangement should focus on all aspects of the CFSP and not exclusively on the CSDP which was the main focus of the WEU Assembly. The basis for this interparliamentary oversight should be Article 10, Protocol 1 of the Lisbon Treaty.

In light of this and the position adopted by COSAC in October 2010, as well as the views of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Affairs, I would support the establishment of a conference on the CFSP and CSDP under the authority of COSAC and replacing COFACC and CODAC, thus not creating any new standing institutions. All EU national parliaments and the European Parliament should be full members of the conference with each national parliament and the European Parliament having

delegations consisting of a maximum of six parliamentarians. The organisation of the Conference should use the COSAC rules of procedures as a blueprint with the conference meeting twice a year under the chairmanship of the rotating EU Council Presidency with the support of parliaments of the relevant troika countries. The COSAC secretariat should provide the secretarial support to the conference with additional support provided as required. The conference should normally meet in Brussels in order to keep costs to a minimum but it could be possible to hold the conference in the country holding the rotating EU Council Presidency. It is also important that the conference would adopt conclusions by consensus which would not be binding on the participants or their parliaments.

I believe that a conference arranged along these lines would be the most effective approach to ensuring the proper parliamentary oversight of the CFSP and CSDP. I look forward to reviewing the Presidency's compromise text in due course.

I wish you all the best with your preparations for the forthcoming Speakers' Conference which I am sure will be a great success and I looking forward to meeting you in Brussels in April.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Sean Barrett', with a stylized, flowing script.

Sean Barrett, T.D.,
Ceann Comhairle