



LORD SPEAKER
THE RT HON BARONESS D'SOUZA, CMG

20 December 2011

Lea Ewa Kopacz

The future of inter-parliamentary oversight of common foreign, security and defence policy

Thank you for your letter of 29 November, which suggested a compromise on the sizes of the respective delegations from national parliaments and the European Parliament at the new inter-parliamentary conferences on common EU foreign, security and defence policy, which the EU Speakers' Conference in April 2011 agreed should be established. It is now six months since the termination of the WEU Assembly, and two years since the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty, and we agree with you that it is essential that the arrangements are now agreed quickly.

In your letter, you suggested delegations of four members and two alternates for national parliaments and 16 members for the European Parliament.

You will be aware that the views of both Houses of the UK Parliament, as set out in reports endorsed by both Houses before the last Speakers' Conference, are that the European Parliament delegation should be the same size as a national parliament delegation, namely six members each.

This view is based on Article 10 of Protocol 1 to the Treaty on European Union and Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union on the role of national parliaments in the European Union, as amended by the Lisbon Treaty. Article 10 states that "a conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs" (COSAC) may "organise inter-parliamentary conferences on specific topics, in particular to debate matters of common foreign and security policy". We also have regard to Declaration 14 which says that the CFSP provisions of the Treaty "do not give new powers to the Commission to initiate decisions nor do they increase the role of the European Parliament."

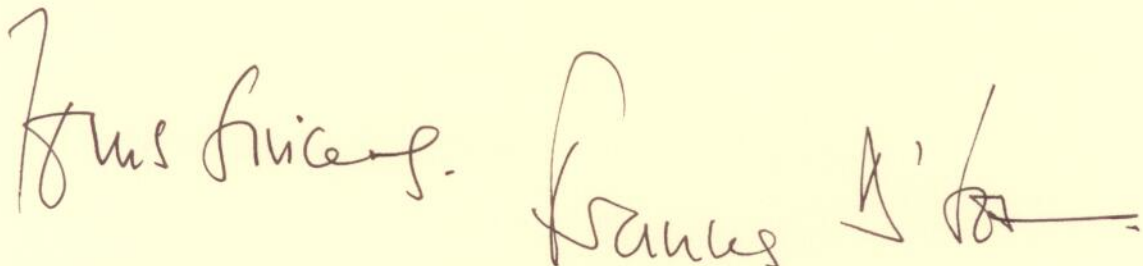
But the abolition of the WEU by its Member States has meant that there is no current forum for national parliaments to debate the intergovernmental aspects of the EU's foreign, security and defence policies. We have a pressing need for a forum in which that function can be performed, building on our existing structures.

In that spirit, although we do not accept the principle that the European Parliament should have any greater a role than a national parliament in the new inter-parliamentary conferences, the two Houses of the UK Parliament will not oppose your proposal if you, as the Parliament holding the Presidency of the next Speakers' Conference, find it necessary to secure agreement among all national parliaments and the European Parliament. This is dependent on an acceptable outcome also being reached on the only other outstanding issue, that of the secretariat to the meetings. Our position on this issue also remains unchanged: we would strongly favour the existing COSAC troika secretariat, which of course already includes the European Parliament, supported by the network of national parliament representatives in Brussels.

We would also be grateful for your confirmation that in your proposal the "alternate" members attending from national parliaments do so with the same participative rights as full members.

We would not support any efforts to reopen the conclusions which were reached by consensus and after long deliberations at the last Speakers' Conference.

We are grateful to you for seeking a resolution to this difficult issue and look forward to the resolution of these issues in Warsaw in April 2012.



D'SOUZA

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Lea Szoldan Borusiewicz,

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