

Meeting of the Secretaries General of EU Parliaments Nicosia, 10-11 February 2013

Synthesis of discussion

Preliminary remarks

On 10-11 February 2013, the Secretaries General of EU national parliaments, the European Parliament and the parliaments of candidate countries gathered in Nicosia to prepare the next EU Speakers Conference to be held on 21-23 April 2013 at the “Filoxenia” Conference Centre in Nicosia. The meeting was hosted by the Ag. Secretary general of the House of Representatives of Cyprus, Mr. Socrates Socratous.

Mr. Socrates Socratous briefly presented the outcome of the meeting of the Secretaries General of the Troika that took place on the 10th February 2013.

Progress of work on the implementation of the conclusions of the last Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments

During his welcoming speech, Mr. Socratous, said that since the previous Conference of Speakers, held in Warsaw in April 2012, progress had been achieved regarding the Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and parliamentary cooperation in the field of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union.

He then went on to present the first meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the CFSP and CSDP, organised by the House of Representatives in the framework of the Parliamentary dimension of the Cyprus Presidency, in Pafos, on 9-10 September 2012. Mr. Socratous made particular reference to the presence of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, while he expressed the wish that the High Representative be present in all meetings of the Conference, so as to ensure dialogue and a substantial contribution of Parliaments to the promotion of EU orientations and goals in this domain. He also made reference to the Rules of Procedure adopted during the meeting, as well as to the ad hoc Committee on the review of the amendments tabled, which, due to time

restrictions, were not examined. The Irish Presidency will be responsible for setting up this Committee and carry out a thorough examination of all pending issues. Further to this, as Mr. Socratous mentioned, the aim would also be to present recommendations to the Speakers' Conference in 18 months' time. Finally, Mr. Socratous spoke about the Cyprus Presidency's proposal to be presented at the next meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the CFSP and CSDP, to take place in Dublin, on 24 and 25 March 2013, regarding ways to enhance monitoring of the democratic processes in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Neighbourhood. The House of Representatives is to propose setting up a fact finding mission to the Arab Spring countries.

Furthermore, Mr. Socratous said that the discussion on Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union, calling for framing parliamentary cooperation in this field, was included in the Speakers' Conference agenda. Mr. Socratous also made reference to the European Parliamentary Week, organized on 28-30 January 2013 by the European Parliament, in Brussels, where discussions were held on topics related to the European Semester.

During the discussion, Mr Dzintars Rasnačs, Secretary General of the Parliament of Latvia, said that, despite austerity measures adopted, the EU was still facing problems in relation to the economic crisis. He went on to say that austerity measures adopted in Latvia had proven successful and that, in view of the country's wish to adhere the Eurozone, Latvia was hoping for the recovery of the European economy. He also expressed support to the accession of Croatia to the European Union.

Mr Kieran Coughlan, Secretary General of the House of Representatives of Ireland, gave more information on the second meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the CFSP and CSDP, to take place in Dublin, on 24 and 25 March 2013. He said that the ad hoc review committee was to be set up, as mandated by the Conference in Cyprus, and that, the goal being to strike a balance between efficiency and inclusiveness, a smaller Working Group would also be set up.

Ms Jacqueline Biesheuvel, Secretary General of the House of Representatives of the Netherlands expressed her appreciation for the organization of the Pafos Conference and said that an evaluation should be expected before 2014. She also stressed the need to bring citizens closer to the European Union.



Finally, Mr. Klaus Welle, Secretary General of the European Parliament, informed participants about the European Parliamentary Week, where more than 100 Members of Parliament, including 5 Speakers of Parliaments, participated. He underlined the success of the said event, but mentioned that improvement could still be made as to the time allowed for discussion.

Presentation of the Programme of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments 2013

The Acting Secretary General of the House of Representatives Mr. Socratous presented the agenda of the EU Speakers Conference to be held in Nicosia in April. The Speakers will address the role of EU national parliaments in enhancing democracy and human rights in third countries, emphasizing on the Mediterranean region. Furthermore, the Speakers Conference will address the issue of bringing citizens closer to the European Union, as well as the issue of social cohesion in times of austerity and the role of national parliaments.

A proposition for adding two items on the agenda of the next Speakers Conference, namely the Euro-Mediterranean issues and the topic "Parliament, public opinion and media" had been submitted by the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Belgium Mr. André Flahaut. With regard to these issues, Mr. Socratous stated that both issues are adequately addressed by the first two subjects of discussion of the agenda at hand.

Referring to the topic of Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union that has been included in the "One plus One" Session of the Speakers Conference, a number of delegations stressed the need for achieving significant progress in April and stated that a relevant decision should be included in the Conclusions to be adopted by the Speakers. They also suggested that the Conference of Speakers should build on the work made to date by several national parliaments. Commenting on the above suggestions, Mr. Socratous pointed out that the inclusion of the said topic in the "One plus One" meeting to be held in the upcoming Speakers Conference in Nicosia was decided in order to document the intention of the majority of national parliaments in the framework of an open discussion, which would facilitate progress in the field, adding that, should there be a significant outcome, this shall be reflected in the Conclusions of the Speakers.

IPEX related issues

Dr. Horst Risse, Secretary General of the German Bundestag and acting chair of the IPEX Board, presented the Annual report of IPEX for 2012. In his report, Dr. Risse mentioned that in order to bridge the gap with regard to the tasks of the National Correspondents, a draft description of these tasks was drafted and presented at the Secretaries General Meeting. It was also mentioned that the description of the tasks of the National Correspondents constitutes a mere

recommendation and is not intended to impinge on the sovereign power of decision-making within the national parliaments.

Commenting on further developments with regard to IPEX within 2012, the acting chair commended the progress made with regard to the use of symbols in IPEX and the development of the news section in IPEX which is regularly utilised by national parliaments to report on topical issues of European policy. The content of IPEX was further enhanced, through the national Parliaments' descriptions of their working procedures in relation to subsidiarity and proportionality checks, aimed at promoting the comparison and better understanding of procedures in different national parliaments.

The IPEX acting chair, also informed the Secretaries General of the IPEX partnership project which was recently launched and aims at the exchange of best practice and the further promotion of IPEX.

Dr Risse, called upon the Meeting of Secretaries General to support the suggestions he made before them, aimed at further enhancing the interparliamentary exchange of information through the IPEX platform. His first suggestion called upon the Secretaries General to propose to the Speakers that they carry out the interparliamentary exchange of information of the new permanent conferences via IPEX, which was embodied in paragraph 7 of the conclusions on IPEX. His second suggestion, was for the Secretaries General to request the Speakers to address to the European Commission the interest of national parliaments to have the complete range of its COM documents available to them via IPEX, a development which would strengthen the national parliaments' ability to monitor their governments' activities in the Council. The said suggestion was embodied in paragraph 9 of the Conclusions on IPEX.

In accordance with the IPEX Guidelines, the Secretaries General agreed on the composition of the IPEX Board during the Lithuanian Presidency of the EUSC (2013/2014) as stated in paragraph 2 of the Conclusions on IPEX. The German Bundestag declared its readiness to continue chairing the IPEX Board and Dr. Horst Risse, Secretary General of the Bundestag was unanimously elected to the above position.

The Secretaries General, unanimously adopted the conclusions on IPEX.

