



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

PARIS, FRANCE, 3 MARCH 2022

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

CHAIR: Ms Sabine THILLAYE, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*, Mr Jean-François RAPIN, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Sénat*;

Mr Jaroslav BŽOCH, Deputy Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Mr David SMOLJAK, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Czech *Senát*;

Mr Nik PREBIL, Deputy Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, Mr Bojan KEKEC, Chair of the Committee for International Relations and European Affairs, Slovenian *Državni svet*;

Mr Othmar KARAS, First Vice-President, European Parliament;

Mr Antonio TAJANI, Chair of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament, was unable to attend.

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PROCEEDINGS

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

Ms Sabine THILLAYE, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*, welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika") to Paris, highlighting the improvement in the sanitary situation, which allows for the organisation of the COSAC plenary meeting in a physical format. Ms THILLAYE also warmly congratulated Mr Othmar KARAS for his recent nomination as First Vice-President of the European Parliament (EP), expressing the wish to continue the fruitful cooperation with the EP.

She then alluded to the tragical context in which the LXVII COSAC took place, emphasizing that the Russian military aggression against Ukraine was an attack to the values that unite the Europeans, namely democracy, freedom and peace, considering that it represented a confrontation between power and law, and concluding that the respect for the latter should always be a priority for the European Union, as community based on law. For that reason, and considering that the European security should be debated at the LXVII COSAC, Ms THILLAYE informed the Troika that a new debate on Ukraine had been added to the draft agenda and that the adoption of a declaration on this issue was foreseen.

She then referred to the agenda of the meeting of the Troika, which had been previously circulated to all delegations, and was adopted without amendment.

2. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT PROGRAMME OF THE LXVII COSAC

Ms THILLAYE alluded to the programme of the LXVII Plenary meeting, revised as to include the debate on Ukraine and with a change in the time foreseen for the intervention of the Prime Minister of France, Mr Jean CASTEX.

Therefore, the programme of the LXVII COSAC meeting would be split into six sessions:

- Session I – First assessment of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union
- Session II – Recovery plan for Europe and end of crisis
- Session III – Climate change and energy transition
- Session IV – Conference on the Future of Europe
- Session V – Progress reports from the working groups
- Session VI – Debate on Ukraine

The draft programme of the LXVII COSAC Plenary meeting, previously circulated to all delegations, was approved without amendment.

3. PRESENTATION OF THE 37TH BI-ANNUAL REPORT OF COSAC

Ms THILLAYE referred to the 37th Bi-annual Report of COSAC, which was drafted on the basis of replies to the related questionnaire circulated to national Parliaments/Chambers on 17 January 2022, with a deadline on 31 January for submitting replies. The report consisted of three chapters: the first dealing with the role of national Parliaments in the European Union; the second focusing on the rule of law; and the third dedicated to the Conference on the Future of Europe, due to hold its final plenary session in spring 2022.

Ms THILLAYE showed a short video clip produced by the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, Mr Bruno DIAS PINHEIRO, showcasing some of the results of the report, and thanked him for his work. Mr DIAS PINHEIRO was given the floor to present the report, emphasizing the work done by the COSAC Secretariat in the very short period of time given to draft the report, and expressing the expectation that the findings of the report might prove useful not only for the COSAC Plenary but also for the works in the months ahead.

4. ITEM ON THE COMPOSITION AND ACTIVITIES OF WORKING GROUPS

Ms THILLAYE provided a state of play on the activities of the two working groups (WGs) established by the French Presidency, highlighting that the first results had exceeded the expectations, with 42 Members joining the WG on the role of national Parliaments and 44 joining the WG on the place of values at the heart of the sense of belonging to the EU. To date, each of the WGs held two meetings, one dedicated to a general exchange of views amongst Members and the second one to a hearing of experts. Furthermore, Ms THILLAYE detailed that each WG was expected to have about six additional meetings until the end of the French Presidency, with the final meeting scheduled for 14 June, in Paris and in presential. On this occasion, the WGs will be convened to possibly adopt, by consensus, their draft reports.

Mr Jean-François RAPIN, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Sénat*, mentioned that the high level of participation in the first meetings was encouraging. Referring that it was still early for any conclusions, he considered that the experience has been positive, expressing his wish that it might last at least until the end of May, allowing for the drafting of an interesting report, which could motivate the incoming Presidencies to further deepen these debates. Mr RAPIN also mentioned that one of the most valued benefits of this exchange was the freedom of the debates and spirit of a true dialogue.

Ms THILLAYE added that the WGs were also allowing for a better knowledge and understanding between parliamentarians.

5. PROJECTED HEARINGS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES OF COSAC UNDER THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY

Ms THILLAYE referred to the activities within the framework of COSAC after the Plenary meeting, namely to continue the practice inaugurated by the previous Presidencies of organizing informal hearings of personalities by videoconference. This could include meetings with the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and with the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, if they would accept the invitation. Furthermore, she mentioned a possible visit to the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU), for an exchange with the President and the Judges on the latest activities and jurisprudence of the Court, which could also take place in format to be determined (presence, hybrid or virtual).

Mr KARAS welcomed the ideas presented and the deepening of the coordination between Parliaments, alluding also to the role of the COSAC Secretariat in these exchanges of information. Regarding the proposal of a visit to the CJUE, he considered that the recent rulings regarding the rule of law conditionality and its implementation were very important. For that reason, he noted that this visit would be a very good initiative to foster a better understanding of these matters.

Mr Jean-François RAPIN expressed his support for this proposal, mentioning the work done at the French *Sénat* on these issues, especially the ongoing information mission on the judicialization of politics, which included a hearing of the French judge of the CJEU.

These proposals were approved and the Presidency would follow up on them in due course.

6. METHODS OF REPORTING TO EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS ON THE WORK OF THE PLENARY MEETING OF COSAC

Ms THILLAYE informed the meeting that, according to the procedure followed by the previous Slovenian Presidency, a letter of the Presidency would be addressed to the European Commission, to the Council and to the EP with a summary of the main outcomes of the debates during the LXVII COSAC Plenary meeting, which would also include a reference to the statement on Ukraine.

Mr Nik PREBIL, Deputy Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, acknowledged that this approach was indeed followed by the previous Presidency because of the limitations imposed by the pandemic. However, and given that the meetings are resuming their physical format, he noted that the previous practice of sending actual contributions of the COSAC plenary meeting to the EU institutions should also be reinstated.

Ms THILLAYE agreed with this proposal, noting that the approach followed by the French Presidency was due to the fact that until the very last moment there was no certainty whether the Plenary meeting could be held in person or not.

7. LETTERS RECEIVED BY THE PRESIDENCY

Ms THILLAYE referred to the following letters received by the Presidency requesting invitation to attend the COSAC meetings:

- 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, UK *House of Lords*;
- Sir William CASH, Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee, UK *House of Commons*;
- Ms Maka BOTCHORISHVILI, Chair of the Committee on European Integration of the *Parliament of Georgia*;
- Mr Pere LOPEZ AGRAS, Chair of the legislative committee of the *General Council* of Andorra;
- Ms Rrezarta KRASNIQI, Chairwoman of the Committee on European Integration, Kosovo¹ *Kuvendi i Kosovës*;
- Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Icelandic *Althingi*;
- Mr Stéphane VALERI, President of the *Conseil national* of Monaco.

Ms THILLAYE said that, following consultation with the Presidential Troika, invitations had been sent to all the above Parliaments.

8. DRAFT STATEMENT ON UKRAINE

Ms THILLAYE presented the draft statement regarding the situation in Ukraine prepared by the Presidency and previously circulated to all Troika members, identifying the main points addressed therein: condemning the Russian military aggression, calling on Russia to allow access for humanitarian aid, calling for a cease-fire and a withdrawal of Russian forces, including the end to cyberattacks, to welcome the sanctions adopted

¹ 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.

by the EU, inviting the EU to organise itself welcoming the inflow of refugees, affirming the need to involve Parliaments in the decision making process in the management of this crisis, deepening the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU and enhancing its strategic autonomy.

She further explained that, if an agreement on the content were to be found, this declaration would be endorsed by the Troika and then circulated to all delegations, so that the respective Heads or Chairpersons could co-sign it, before it was sent to the EU institutions.

Mr Jaroslav BŽOCH considered that the declaration should mention not only Russia, but also Belarus, which sides with Moscow in this conflict.

Mr KARAS congratulated the Presidency on this initiative, since it showed a key and united message from COSAC to the outside. He suggested that the declaration was given a concrete title and also asked for a mention to the EP Resolution of 1 March 2022 on the Russian aggression against Ukraine², which was adopted by an overwhelming majority of 637 votes in favour.

Mr Nik PREBIL proposed that a specific reference to the positions and resolutions issued by national Parliaments on this matter would be included in the statement and also supported the inclusion of a title.

After a short exchange on the adequate title, Ms THILLAYE informed that it would be named “*Statement in support of Ukraine attacked by the Russian Federation*”, Furthermore, she noted that the references to Belarus would be enshrined in the relevant paragraphs of the statement and that a reference to the EP resolution of 1 March 2022 would also be added.

The statement was endorsed by the Troika of COSAC and would then be circulated to all delegations for co-signing.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ms THILLAYE thanked all participants in the meeting for the constructive debate and closed the meeting.

² Available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0052_EN.html