

## **The XLIV COSAC in Brussels (Belgium)**

The XLIV COSAC was held in the Brussels Egmont Palace on 24-26 October 2010.

The participants were welcomed by Senator Philippe MAHOUX, Co-Chairman of the Federal Advisory Committee on European Affairs of the Federal Parliament of Belgium, and by Mr Herman DE CROO, Member of Parliament and former Speaker of the Belgian House of Representatives.

The meeting adopted the 14<sup>th</sup> Bi-annual Report with the analysis of the replies of the 41 Chambers/Parliaments. This report contained the three following chapters: (1) Sustainable Development in the Europe 2020 Strategy, (2) Parliamentary Scrutiny of the Common Security and Defence Policy and (3) the Future Role of COSAC after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (continuation).

Each of these topics was debated after being introduced by Prof. ir. Bernard MAZIEN, Ghent University, Prof. Dr. Jan WOUTERS, Catholic University of Leuven, and Mr Herman DE CROO, Member of Parliament and former Speaker of the Belgian House of Representatives, respectively.

Mr Yves LETERME, Prime Minister of Belgium, highlighted the Presidency's priorities<sup>1</sup> and sketched the obtained results. Moreover, he reported on the state of play regarding the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Agreement on the European Patent and the Conclusions of the so-called Task Force on Economic Governance. As to the remainder of the Belgian Presidency, Mr LETERME stressed the importance of the G20 Summit in Seoul and the Climate Conference in Cancún. In the ensuing debate, the Members of COSAC asked the Prime Minister, *inter alia*, about the enlargement of the EU, climate change, the economic crisis and its solutions and the EU common foreign and security policy.

Mr José Manuel BARROSO, President of the European Commission, reminded the Members of COSAC of the origins of the political dialogue between national Parliaments and the European Commission. In this context, the President specifically suggested that national Parliaments would play a role in the preparation of the Commission's Work Program for 2012. In addition, he focused on the economic reform and on the pillars it is based on<sup>2</sup>. During the debate that followed this intervention, several issues were raised, such as e.g. the (victims of the) totalitarian regimes, the need for

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<sup>1</sup>i.e.: the economic and social issue, the execution of the Stockholm Programme, the social dimension of the EU, climate and foreign policy

<sup>2</sup> i.e. a reform of the European financial system, a stronger approach to economic governance and the Europe 2020 Strategy

cooperation between the European Commission and national Parliaments in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Patent System.

It was the first time in the history of COSAC that Mr Herman VAN ROMPUY addressed the Conference in the capacity of the President of the European Council. The President started his intervention by reflecting on the Union's institutional framework after the coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in general and on the new post of the President of the European Council in particular. Regarding the latter, he stressed his role as a consensus facilitator. Mr VAN ROMPUY also stressed the double democratic legitimacy as articulated by the European Parliament and by national Parliaments. Furthermore, the President outlined the results of the Task force he had chaired<sup>3</sup>. He also emphasized that the current crisis, although not of the European origin, needed a European solution. Subsequently, the Members of COSAC asked Mr VAN ROMPUY about specific proposals advanced by the Task force, about the possibility of sanctioning Member States that had become a liability to the Stability and Growth Pact and about the planned increase of the EU budget for 2011.

The XLIV COSAC adopted a Contribution containing positions on: (1) sustainable development in the Europe 2020 Strategy, (2) the parliamentary scrutiny of the common foreign and security policy and the common security and defence policy, (3) economic governance in the EU, (4) the future role of COSAC and (5) the cooperation with EU institutions.

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<sup>3</sup>-i.e.: the review of the Stability and Growth Pact, the broadening of the scope of monitoring developments on national level and an enhanced coordination of national policy decisions