

Courtesy Translation

Mr André Flahaut
Speaker of the Belgian House of Representatives

Mr Danny Pieters
Speaker of the Belgian Senate

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Dear colleagues,

Thank you for sending me your proposal on the organisation of parliamentary scrutiny of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in the European Union.

I forwarded the proposal to the five parliamentary groups represented in the German Bundestag and requested their comments. As the German Bundestag had no sittings in the first half of this month, I only received their responses this week, for which I must ask for your understanding.

There is a broad consensus among the parliamentary groups that parliamentary scrutiny in this field should be exercised by the national parliaments together with the European Parliament. All of the responses from our colleagues in the parliaments of the EU Member States also agree on this point.

At the same time, the responses from the national parliaments vary considerably – insofar as an overall impression can be formed at this stage – as do the positions of the parliamentary groups in the German Bundestag, and significant differences also exist between them and the Belgian proposal. Opinions differ on matters such as the size and composition of the body to be established, including as concerns the European Parliament's involvement, and the tasks of the forum, where its meetings should be held, and the organisational structure supporting it.

Given the great variety and diversity of the views expressed, I have some doubt as to whether it will already be possible to establish a form of parliamentary scrutiny of the CFSP/CSDP at the Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the EU Member States in early April 2011. Against the background set out above, I believe it would be wiser to take the Conference as an opportunity to clarify some fundamental questions, for example, with regard to the tasks of the body to be established, i.e. which aspects of the CFSP/CSDP it should discuss and whether it should adopt resolutions or serve primarily as a forum for sharing experience; or with regard to organisational aspects, i.e. what structural ties would achieve the greatest synergies. Further details could subsequently be agreed on the basis of these fundamental principles.

I look forward to an intensive and constructive discussion with our colleagues under your leadership, and hope that a consensus can be reached on this issue and the other matters on the agenda.

Yours sincerely,

Sgd. Professor Norbert Lammert
President of the German Bundestag