



United Kingdom Parliament  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Belgian Presidency  
EU Speakers' Conference

14 March 2011

*Dear Colleagues,*

We were grateful to you for circulating the proposal put forward by the Belgian Presidency of the EU Speakers' Conference for future inter-parliamentary scrutiny of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). This letter is a joint response on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and the European Union Committee of the House of Lords.

As you know, a number of our Committees, Chambers and Parliaments have expressed their views on the shape that future inter-parliamentary scrutiny should take. In the UK, our Committees have approved in separate Reports a common proposal, which was also supported by the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee and House of Commons Defence Committee.<sup>1</sup> The House of Commons agreed to the approach outlined in the report on 10 March. The House of Lords will be invited to do the same on 31 March.

We have informally consulted a number of other national parliaments on their views and understand that a number of other national parliaments broadly share our position. In particular, the following committees or chambers asked us to say that they support the points made in this letter: the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Senate Committees on Foreign Affairs and Defence and European Affairs of the Dutch Parliament; the European Affairs Committee and the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee of the French Senate; and the Committee on European Affairs, the Committee on National Security and Defence, and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.

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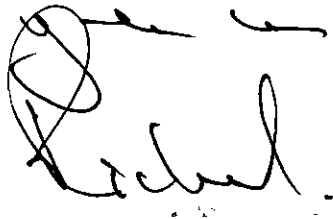
<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, First Report of Session 2010-11, *Future interparliamentary scrutiny of EU foreign, defence and security policy* (HC 697); House of Lords European Union Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2010-11, *Future interparliamentary scrutiny of EU foreign, defence and security policy* HL Paper 85

The UK Committees regard the arrangements that are to be put in place for future inter-parliamentary scrutiny primarily as a successor to the Western European Union's European Security and Defence Assembly, as well as a response to Article 10, Protocol 1, of the Lisbon Treaty. The abolition of the WEU by its Member States has left their parliaments without a formal inter-parliamentary body for the scrutiny of the inter-governmental elements of the EU's foreign, defence and security policies. The UK Committees regard it as vital that there should be oversight by national parliaments of these activities. National parliamentarians working on these issues must have a regular forum in which to question the EU's senior foreign and security policy-makers and exchange information and views among themselves. We see this as adding value to the work that we do in our national parliaments in holding governments to account for their actions in the EU Council and European Council.

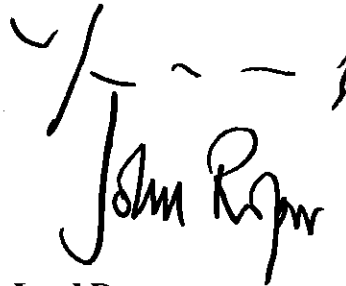
The UK Committees proposed the establishment of an Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security (COFADS). COFADS would follow a 'conference of committees'-type model. The key points of our proposal are that:

- The conference would not be a new or standing institution. It would be convened under the authority of the existing Conference of European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the EU (COSAC), on the basis of Article 10, Protocol 1, of the Lisbon Treaty. It would replace the current informal Conferences of Foreign Affairs Committee Chairpersons and Defence Committee Chairpersons.
- All EU national parliaments and the European Parliament would be full members of the conference. Each national parliament and the European Parliament would have delegations to the conference consisting of a maximum of six parliamentarians.
- Organisational responsibility for the conference would be borne by the parliaments of the relevant troika countries, which would also have the chairmanship.
- The conference should be able to adopt conclusions by consensus which would not be binding on the participants or their parliaments.
- Costs must be kept to a minimum.
- The conference would normally meet in Brussels.

We are of the view that only a forum convened along these lines will enable EU national parliaments to perform the oversight of inter-governmental CFSP and CSDP activity which we regard as essential.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Ottaway'.

**Mr Richard Ottaway MP**  
**Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee**  
**House of Commons, UK**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Roper'.

**Lord Roper**  
**Chair, European Union Committee**  
**House of Lords, UK**