

# **The Conference of the Speakers of the EU Parliaments Bratislava, 25 May 2007**

## **INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION**

### **Speech by Baroness Hayman, Lord Speaker of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom (Transcript)**

Mr. President, colleagues,

It is a pleasure to be here and the privilege to speak for the first time at a Conference of EU Speakers, although I had the pleasure of being at a splendid event in Rome earlier this year and so at least I can see some familiar faces in the room today. As many of you know, I think, mine is a completely new office and I hope to be able to represent the House of Lords abroad more than my predecessor, the Lord Chancellor, was able to do because of his governmental responsibilities.

But like everyone in the room, I have pressures on my time, and one of those in particular is around the responsibility that I think was alluded to in a quite a lot of the debate this morning; the responsibility of trying to connect parliament with the public more effectively, and particularly to try and connect parliament with the young people, because of the concerns that I think are shared across the Union in terms of a growing disenchantment in some ways, or simply a disaffection, a lack of commitment to parliamentary processes.

So I am delighted that a colleague, whom many of you know very well, Lord Grenfell, will continue to represent the House of Lords when I am unable to do so. As you know, the House of Lords has had a very strong interest in scrutiny of European legislation and issues. And both Lord Grenfell and Lord Tordoff before him have been very active in COSAC. So Mr. President, I particularly welcome the remarks that you made and the recommendations that we have before us to align some of the work of the COSAC even more closely with the work of this body.

I think it is very challenging to think how we can best gain the benefits of interparliamentary cooperation without introducing too much bureaucracy or overburdening busy members of parliaments. And I congratulate the Secretariat of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and their colleagues in the Troika on the work they have done both in the Working Group and at the Meeting of the Secretaries General to produce the two papers before us. I am very happy, Mr. President, with your suggestion about continuing the work on the draft provisions of the Hague guidelines. I think that perhaps the most important thing is not the detail of what is said, but the fact that we commit ourselves to having a strong and disciplined framework that discourages the proliferation of uncoordinated meetings of different kinds. And I think that again goes back to the relevance of our work to European citizens and making sure that we cannot be accused of simply proliferating meetings.

As far as the Presidency of this Conference is concerned, I am slightly embarrassed to speak about it at all, because the United Kingdom last played host more than a decade ago, and we will not hold the EU Presidency for another decade, so in some ways we are out of the issue. However, I do agree that it is desirable that the Conference should not have to rely on volunteers coming forward to play host, and support the proposals, which link the Presidency of this Conference to that of the EU, as long as there is an element of flexibility, to which I think you referred, for individual circumstances. In any case, we should seek to reduce the costs to the host parliament by asking participants to meet more of their own costs. But for now, we are all benefiting from the generosity of our host today. So I would like once again to thank you, Mr. President, for the warmth of your welcome and for the organisation of this event.

Thank you for your attention.