

30 June 2006

**Address to EU Speakers' conference 2006 in
Copenhagen**

Christian, fellow Speakers,

The last time we met in this connection, in Budapest in May last year, we did not yet know that the constitutional treaty would remain in the air the way it did. Instead of continuing to prepare ourselves for a new treaty, the past year has given us an opportunity to consider once more what kind of future EU we wish to have – we have been "reflecting."

In our debate on the future, the enlargement of the Union is an important issue. We all want to create a Europe, and with it a European neighbourhood, in which democracy, stability, welfare and prosperity are self-evident. We also have seen the beneficial effects of enlargement in the new member states. For this reason I view with concern the sceptical attitude to continued enlargement of which we can see a number of signs. The discussion about the Union's "absorption capacity" is one example.

It has proved unfortunate to link the ratification of the constitutional treaty with continued enlargement. A new treaty is not a precondition for continued enlargement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Budapest we spoke about what the new treaty would mean for us and how our parliamentary procedures would be affected. The discussion is still relevant, but in a new context. The opportunities offered by the current treaty to make national parliaments important players in EU cooperation have not in my view been fully utilised. A more vigorous use of our treaties and the relevant protocols is needed!

1) Closer cooperation in relation to subsidiarity and proportionality control, for instance, can be started right away. (I would like to thank Margot Wallstrøm for the Commission's commitment to distribute documents directly to IPEX and national parliaments).

2) I would also welcome further discussion about the role and composition of COSAC. COSAC is the only interparliamentary body recognised in the current treaties. Might we be able to make COSAC more efficient as a forum for cooperation? To give it a broader basis in our regular parliamentary work and to link it better with other interparliamentary fora? (Since this assembly – the Speakers' conference – decided to set up COSAC in 1989 we have not had new discussions about COSAC's function on any further occasion.)

In the Swedish Parliament it is our intention to review the preparations for COSAC meetings and the composition of its delegations in this respect.

Before I continue, I would like to thank Christian and his staff for a very useful report! It will serve as an excellent point of departure for further discussions.

One question discussed in the report is the different types of meetings for interparliamentary cooperation. I believe the Hague guidelines have proved not to be sufficient in their current wording to clarify the interaction between the different kinds of meetings and fora. I would therefore welcome efforts to make them clearer, in order for them to be a useful tool for the interparliamentary cooperation. – A cooperation needed to achieve a European Union closer to the citizens.

Finally, I should like to touch on our own work in the Speakers' conference and more specifically on the rotation scheme for the EU Speakers' conferences. Today it is separate from the EU Presidency. Considering the coordinating responsibility which the host parliament has for the Speakers' conference according to the Hague guidelines, it is my opinion that coordination benefits could be achieved if the hosting of the conference were more closely tied in with the EU Presidency.

Thank you.