

DEBATE ON THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRESIDENCY

Speaker Almeida Santos opened the debate on the draft Conclusions of the meeting, presented by the Presidency of the Conference, which had been handed out, with time given for reading and reflection.

Lord Tordoff (House of Lords, United Kingdom) noted that these are the Conclusions of the Presidency, which makes approval easier. As for the text, he said that very few things would not obtain the consensus of those present.

Speaker Birgitta Dahl (Sweden) was pleased with the way the text was presented and was happy with the way things were moving forwards, given that the variations in the responsibilities and political powers of the speakers are respected.

Speaker Frank Swaelen (Senate, Belgium) said he agreed with the proposal made and with the conclusions presented, but explained that the conclusions are not only of the Presidency, given that there is consensus on a number of points. For this reason the text went a bit further than mere conclusions. As to the contents, he asked for two corrections of the French version of the text, to which no objection was made.

Speaker Heinz Fischer (Nationalrat, Austria) considered the text to be very balanced, and made two proposals: that the creation of the working parties not lead to questions being excluded from the plenary session and that, in addition to expressing his concern about the crisis in Kosovo, it could be added that they had hope for a peaceful solution for resolving the conflict.

Deputy Speaker Maria van der Hoeven (Second Chamber, Holland) welcomed the way in which the conclusions reflected the proceedings of the conference. As for Kosovo, she proposed that reference be made to hope for a lasting solution, this being more important than a peaceful solution.

Speaker Apostolos Kaklamanis (Greece) supported all the points in the Conclusions, except that referring to Kosovo. As he had already dealt with this matter, he only said what should be said with openness and sincerity. He therefore proposed a wording for the point on Kosovo, which he proposed be included, explaining the fact that the war was a catastrophe in various senses, and that the Conference could therefore not remain silent on the subject.

It was necessary therefore to be courageous and take a position before the population of Europe. The reference to a peaceful solution would not harm anyone and, if not all the speakers were in agreement, it could be said that a given number of speakers agreed with these guidelines. Finally, he said that the outside world should be informed that this question was debated at the conference.

Speaker Almeida Santos argued that the conclusions should set out the points on which they agreed, not those on which they disagreed. The reference to the Kosovo problem is in the conclusions and to take this further will not be easy, as this might compromise the positions of our governments, and care was needed in these

matters. The text should be general, or they risked having no conclusions whatsoever.

Speaker Luciano Violante (Chamber of Deputies, Italy) referred to the working parties, one for the quality of legislation, and the other for the rules of procedure, and also to the troika for the organisation of the next conference. All these structures look like too much red tape, meaning that he proposed that the troika, comprising the Portuguese, Italian and Swedish parliaments and the European Parliament, should be able to invite whoever they saw fit for this work.

As for Kosovo, he stressed that the conference should not present a divided face, and it was better to have nothing than to have something which divided us. Nonetheless, there appeared to be on point on which a consensus existed – the G-8 plan – meaning that they could express their support for this plan.

Speaker Trillo-Figueroa (Congress of Deputies, Spain) agreed with Speaker Violante on the subject of Kosovo, except in relation to the G-8 plan, and said that this was a situation in there could be divisions even within the parliaments. He said that he has spoken with Speaker Kaklamanis and agreed with him on this matter, but that we could not go further than is set out in the proposed Conclusions presented by the Presidency. Either there will be only this mention, or they cannot be anything else.

For reasons of coherence with the notice of the conference, they could go no further, given that this would go beyond the mandate which each speaker had for the conference. Speaker Almeida Santos' proposal already went beyond the terms of the agenda, and a distinction should be made between the Conference Conclusions and opinions on current issues, which is not the business of the speakers.

Deputy Speaker Jan Lenssens (Chamber of Representatives, Belgium) argued that although the Kosovo question was not on the agenda, it should still be referred to. And although it was possible to go a little further, the text proposed by Speaker Almeida Santos should be maintained.

Speaker Birgitta Dahl (Sweden) supported Speaker Almeida Santos' proposal on Kosovo, reminding the speakers that they could express their own points of view without binding the other members of the conference.

Speaker Riittaa Uosukainen (Finland) supported the text proposed by the Presidency, and also the speech made by Speaker Trillo-Figueroa.

Deputy Speaker Maria van der Hoeven (Second Chamber, Netherlands) expressed here preference for the English version of the text on Kosovo, and said that she would like to go further, but that this was not possible. The French version therefore seemed the most consensual for this paragraph.

Speaker Apostolos Kaklamanis (Greece) expressed his satisfaction that all the speakers felt a sense of responsibility in respect of this question. The Conference

could give a positive signal to the citizens of Europe in relation to the European elections, without being able to affect the image of the European Union. For this reason, he said that he agreed with Speakers Trillo-Figueroa, Jan Lenssens and Maria van der Hoeven, supporting the consensual line, although he preferred Speaker Fischer's proposal, which called for support for a peaceful, lasting and political solution.

Speaker Almeida Santos proposed that they should not start discussing the question again, and asked for consensus for the Presidency's proposal. This was given by all the speakers present, and the text was therefore adopted.

The Conference was then closed, and Speaker Almeida Santos thanked all the speakers for taking an active part in the proceedings, and especially the rapporteurs for the debate topics. He also thanked the members of the working parties for their co-operation, as well as the conference secretariat and the interpreters.