



Summary of the presentations and debates of the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments

Luxembourg, 22-24 May 2016

The Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments took place on 22-24 May 2016 at the European Convention Center Luxembourg in Luxembourg.

It was attended by the Speakers and Presidents or their representative of 38 Parliaments/Chambers of 28 Member States as well as by the Vice-President of the European Parliament and the President of the European Commission. Also taking part were the Speakers of one EU candidate country and other countries attended as observers.

The Conference was chaired by Mr Mars DI BARTOLOMEO, Speaker of the *Chambre des Députés* of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

A meeting of the Speakers of the troika was held ahead of the Conference. The work centred on the draft conclusions including the amendments sent by the different delegations. Afterwards, Mr DI BARTOLOMEO invited his homologues to a symbolic visit to Schengen. Mr Robert GOEBBELS, former Secretary State of foreign affairs, foreign trade and cooperation of Luxembourg, who signed the Schengen Agreement 31 years ago for Luxembourg as well as Mr Ben HOMAN, current mayor of the city of Schengen, were also present.

Opening session

On Monday, the Conference was opened by the Speaker of the Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*. Mr DI BARTOLOMEO welcomed all the Speakers and representatives of Parliaments /Chambers of the European Union and started his speech affirming that Europe is facing rough times. He underlined the importance of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments and the need to convey a strong message. Mr DI BARTOLOMEO also pointed out the crucial need to show the EU citizens the added value of the common European project. He recalled that after World War II, the common European project was the key driver for peace, for a return to democratic rule, for an economic development, freedom and solidarity. The European continent has never been more democratic, peaceful, tolerant, free and safe than today. Therefore, the EU must tackle the current challenges that are unemployment, rising extremism, inequalities, peace and development in the world. Fundamental rights are fragile common goods and Parliaments have to make sure that they are preserved.

The Luxembourg EU Presidency took place in a particularly difficult context, which saw the Union facing a number of unprecedented challenges. Six interparliamentary meetings took place during the second semester of the Luxembourg EU Presidency: the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC, the interparliamentary Conference for the CFSP and the CSDP, the interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU and the plenary session of COSAC. Besides these three conferences, the Chamber of Deputies held a meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs and a



meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Development Cooperation. Mr Mars DI BARTOLOMEO underlined the importance of reinforcing the social dimension of the EU via a “social triple A”. He insisted that the social dimension should be at the heart of every European project and policy.

The Chamber of Deputies has also been tasked to organise a meeting of a COSAC working group. In addition, the meeting of the Secretary Generals of the Parliaments of European Union took place on 14-15 February 2016 in Luxembourg, ahead of the Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments.

In conclusion, Mr Mars DI BARTOLOMEO recalled that the European Union has to see the migration and refugee crisis in a global way. The long term solutions for these crisis are development, peace and political stability in the regions at stake.

Session I: Managing the Migration Flows

“Managing the Migration Flows” was the topic on the agenda of the first session. The session included interventions by the President of the European Commission, Mr Jean-Claude JUNCKER, the Deputy Speaker of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Mr Anastasios KOURAKIS, the Speaker of the French *Sénat*, Mr Gérard LARCHER, and the Speaker of the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Ms Ankie BROEKERS-KNOL.

In his introductory remarks, Mr Mars DI BARTOLOMEO recalled that it has been two years since the European Union is confronted to the refugee crisis which is developing towards a humanitarian crisis. The European Union has still not found a common solution to this crisis but the Speaker also stressed the solidarity and generosity of some people regarding the influx of refugees. These men and women are fleeing war zone countries in order to find peace and shelter in the European continent. There is a need to put in place mechanisms and structures that would help European citizens to overcome their reservations on taking in these refugees. It is crucial that governments implement the common decisions taken in Brussels. The role of national Parliaments is to control the governments in the proper execution of these decisions so that European citizens can be reassured. Solidarity between Member States is one of the key values of the EU and no Member State should be left alone to deal with the refugee crisis. All kind of amalgam between refugees and terrorists as well as between Islam and extremists should be avoided. Mr DI BARTOLOMEO concluded his intervention by stating that the best alternative to forced solidarity is voluntary solidarity. He is convinced that the European population is sufficiently strong and courageous to be able to rise to the challenge when it comes to take on refugees.

The President of the European Commission, Mr Jean-Claude JUNCKER, stated that the European Union does not really function at its full potential and that there is an insufficiency of union in the European Union. At the moment, there is a lack of interest regarding the European Union and its institutions because the EU was not able to respond properly to major questions and challenges within the EU. The insufficiency of growth and the rise of unemployment is one of the long term challenges that the EU is facing. 57 major projects are being launched in Europe and 170.000 companies benefit from these investment plans thanks



mainly to the 80 billion investment plan launched by the European Commission. The social wishes formulated by the European citizens have been taken into account. Nevertheless, Europe has still a 15 % deficit of investment compared to before the crisis in 2007. The European Commission is trying to progressively fill the gaps.

Apart from the growth and unemployment problems, the European Union is facing to another major problem: the refugee crisis. At the start of the mandate, the new European Commission presented concrete and coherent actions and proposals. Mr JUNCKER is saddened about the fact that some Member States preferred to choose unilateral and national ways to tackle the refugee crisis without consulting other concerned Member States or the European institutions.

The Schengen system is not functioning as it should and for this reason the European Commission made it its priority to fully restore it. At the same time, the European Commission proposed to reform the Dublin regulation. Europe is only able to cope with the refugee problem if European solutions are taken into account over national solutions. National solutions will only lead to chaos as it was the case when the Balkan route was closed. Moreover, if the EU had not achieved an agreement with Turkey, the problems in Greece would have been much worse. For this reason, Mr JUNCKER is confident that the EU will reach a relatively coherent system. However, the system will only function fully if there is solidarity in Europe. Furthermore, the President of the European Commission pointed out that the Commission will soon make a proposal on legal immigration. Debates on the Turkey deal and on the European asylum system are emerging and the European Commission wants to remain in close contacts with Member States, governments and national Parliaments, who did not spontaneously agree with the Commission's proposals. Concerning the Turkey agreement, the EU needs this agreement and he underlined the importance of respecting this agreement on both sides. Moreover, for a continent of 500 million people, it should be possible to integrate the refugees. Other countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey took more refugees than the European Union. Concerning the agreements regarding the visa liberalisation, the EU will stick to its 72 conditions including the amendment of anti-terror legislation.

In conclusion, Mr JUNCKER underlined that the European Commission and national Parliaments have to cooperate more closely. Europe cannot be successful if nations are not respected. For this reason, agreements with national Parliaments have to be reached on important European projects. There are various projects at the moment like the procedures on the yellow card, the red card and the green card. The draft directive on the posting of workers has met with some resistance in numerous Parliaments. The European Commission will respond to national Parliaments and present its views on this matter. This is a cross-border issue and therefore it should be dealt at the European level.

The second keynote speaker of this session was the Deputy Speaker of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Mr Anastasios KOURAKIS. In recent times, Europe has been called upon to manage a vast inflow of migrants and refugees that have led to destabilisation in various regions of the EU. The situation that the Union is facing right now has demonstrated some vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the EU. Under the present conditions, managing these flows



represents a huge challenge for the ideals, the values and the civilisation of Europe and the future of Europe is questioned. The refugee crisis is a major issue for his country, which is also facing a deep financial crisis. Despite these difficulties, Greece is responding quickly to ensure the good cooperation with the EU. Tackling these crucial issues cannot just burden one or a few countries, which due to their geographic position find themselves at the frontline of the reception of migrants and refugees. Only a common EU response to this crisis will lead to concrete results and long-lasting effects. Greece is in favour of creating a system based on the principles of solidarity, fair allocation, responsibility and the rule of law. Mr KOURAKIS welcomed the announcement of the European Commission to reform the common European asylum system and to strengthen the legal routes of migration. The sine qua non condition for the success and the smooth operation of the system is to adopt on the one hand a fair and appropriate criterion for the allocation of asylum seekers between the Member States and on the other hand to have a common mandatory system of return. If the new system doesn't integrate these preconditions, it runs the risk of failing. At the same time, along with the asylum system issue, the EU needs to pay greater attention to the issue of relocation and resettlement. Despite of the strong financial crisis, the Greek people spares no effort to provide help and care to the refugees. However, the State and the people cannot carry indefinitely such a burden, especially under such bad financial and economic conditions.

Regarding the issue of security, the response lays mainly on the good cooperation between Member States. Security is a common challenge which Member States need to manage. The Deputy Speaker of the Greek Parliament welcomed that an important step has been taken regarding the protection of the external borders. He deplored that Greece has been recently accused of not protecting properly its borders while it is facing this influx of people. In conclusion, Mr KOURAKIS highlighted the need to tackle the problems that cause this massive refugee and migrant flows at the source. The EU does not only need to contribute in ensuring peace and stability in the region but also to avoid any kind of intervention that could spark any kind of instability.

The third keynote speaker of this session was the Speaker of the French *Sénat*, Mr Gérard LARCHER. The EU is facing an unprecedented human crisis which is challenging the fundamental values of the European Union. The humanitarian situation in Greece is highly concerning and the Greek population have to face a heavy burden. The EU was not able to come up with a coordinated response to face the magnitude of this humanitarian crisis. The EU has to do more and has to do better by working together instead of working isolated behind national borders. Moreover, the EU must manage the influx with concrete measures and he proposed to put in place an operation system in order to systematically control entries and exits from the Schengen area. The Schengen area and the principle of free movement of persons need to be preserved. The role of national Parliaments is to make sure that there is more harmonisation and to put in place a legal migration policy. There is an urgent need to reinforce cooperation with the countries of origin and transit but also to strengthen development cooperation in the unstable regions. In conclusion, Mr LARCHER mentioned that the agreement between the EU and Turkey is necessary but the EU must be vigilant about the ways it is going to be implemented. Only in a collected dialogue the EU can give the accurate and human responses to this migration challenge.



The last keynote speaker of this session was the Speaker of the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Ms Ankie BROEKERS-KNOL, who underlined that the EU is confronted and overwhelmed with the largest influx of refugees since World War II. For years experts have alerted to the dangers of the instable situations in the Middle East. For too long Member States, governments and EU institutions failed to recognise the urgency of these problems and the need for a Union level agreement. Our humanitarian values require to respond to this crisis like a good Samaritan by reaching out for those in need. At the same time, the response to this crisis must be sustainable in the long run. Indeed, the impact of the crisis is felt acutely by the European citizens and tensions have been rising in the EU, especially because of the disproportionate burden faced by some Member States. Last year, according to Europol and Interpol, migrants smuggling networks earned 4.4 billion euros by profiting of human despair and taking advantage of gaps in European border controls. Regarding the EU-Turkey deal, the first elements of the deal seem to work and the influx of refugees has become more manageable. However, a structural cooperation can only work if both parties stick to the agreement and stand firmly in upholding the rule of law and respecting human rights. The crisis has made it clear that no country is able to manage it alone and the EU Member States must work together to achieve goals that go beyond the interest of the individual sovereign state. She sympathises with some Eastern countries that are still young democracies and trying to set up a stable and well-functioning economic viable state. Therefore, she underlined the need to find a fair and proportionate way of sharing the responsibilities. Tackling the crisis requires a considerable investment by all Member States and working together is the only way the EU can maintain its position as a solid bloc and as a unique economic partnership. The EU needs to create a clear and standardised approach to asylum seekers with agreement on returns and readmission to safe countries outside of the EU. Creating a common asylum and migration policy also requires substantial investments in reception centres. The management of the external borders plays an extremely important role in creating a standardised approach. Strengthening the EU external borders is urgently needed in order to prevent the internal closure of the Schengen borders. However, the migration issue cannot be reduced to an issue of border management and asylum policy, the answer must be embedded in a coherent foreign policy. In fact, the EU must tackle the root causes of these migration flows. In addition, Ms BROEKERS-KNOL warned about the increased of environmentally motivated migration. In conclusion, the Speaker of the Dutch *Eerste Kamer* underlined that for the current crisis the EU was insufficiently prepared and it should not repeat the same mistake again. She called on Member States to step up their efforts in confronting the continuing migration flows.

19 Speakers and Deputy Speakers took the floor in the following debate.

The Speaker of the Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Mr Eduardo FERRO RODRIGUES, noted that the reason of the influx of refugees is due to a humanitarian crisis. Refugees are not the cause of terrorism but, in contrary, terrorism is the cause of these waves of refugees. The EU must control and combat terrorism and the duty of the Europeans is to welcome with generosity those who are fleeing terrorism. Portugal has decided to welcome 4995 refugees in the framework of the relocation mechanism. Moreover, Portugal started bilateral negotiations with Greece, Italy, Germany, Sweden and Austria with a view on welcoming 2000 additional refugees.



The Deputy Speaker of the Czech *Poslanecká Sněmovna*, Ms Jaroslava JERMANOVÁ, expressed that the Eastern countries have a long historical experience regarding migration flows and the Czech Republic contributes a lot to the operations concerning the refugee crisis. For instance, the Czech Republic provided more experts to Frontex than it was required. Moreover, the government committed to accept 1500 refugees more than the originally quota. Therefore, she expressed her frustration to all kind of criticism against the Czech Republic. Finally, the EU must be based on the respect of common values and common history and those common values cannot be denied. National Parliaments should respect the voice of their citizens.

The Speaker of the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Mr László KÖVÉR, stated that the concept of EU's migration policy must be designed in accordance with the guidelines set out by the European Council and that these guidelines must be observed by the European institutions and by all the Member States. Hungary disagrees with the European Commission proposal to reform the Dublin system. According to Mr KÖVÉR the proposal is not based on the consensus of the Member States. Moreover, the mandatory settlement is unacceptable and should be done on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, the planned financial sanction has nothing to do with European solidarity. Migration is primarily an issue of security and the security of European citizens must be the main priority of the EU. Finally, the Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament informed on the action plan proposed by Viktor Orbán of a "Schengen 2.0" and underlined that Hungary is offering a solution to safeguard security in Europe.

The Speaker of the Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Mr Željko REINER, briefly reported on the conclusions of the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative held in Split in April 2016. One of the topics was the contribution of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative participating countries to the comprehensive European response to the migration crisis. At that conference the Speakers deplored that the refugee crisis has become one of the major political issues in the EU and beyond. They tried to expand the exchange of views of these burning issues at the interparliamentary level so that Speakers of national Parliaments of participating countries could try to make a parliamentary contribution to find a common, concrete, sustainable and solidarity based solution to this European and global challenge. No single country can cope alone with this complex problem of the refugee and migration crisis and therefore Member States have to act in a united manner to the greatest extent possible. The European migration and asylum policies must comply with the full implementation of all the principles of the EU founding Treaties and the Charter of fundamental rights. Finally, the Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative agreed on all actions aiming to build a sustainable system of migration management in Europe, in particular those with the objective to regain control of European external borders as well as those regarding the relocation, resettlement and returns of asylum seekers and refugees. Mr Željko REINER underlined the need to reform the Common European Asylum System to ensure greater burden-sharing. In conclusion, he stressed the need to address the root causes of population movements by striving to end conflicts and tackling poverty. Moreover, he warned to be vigilant in regard to possible new routes for irregular migrants and to intensify the fight against smugglers.



The Speaker of the Austrian *Nationalrat*, Ms Doris BURES pointed out that the main objective has to be to achieve peace and stability in the affected regions. Common European solutions and responses need to be established in order to meet these challenges. However, she deplored the fact that the EU has not yet established a common effective system for controlling the external borders as well as a system for a fair solidarity based distribution of refugees within the EU. As long as the EU does not have common European responses to these problems, it will remain necessary to take national measures. These national measures are emergency measures but are not the good solution to these problems. Last year Austria was one of the EU countries that has taken in the highest number of refugees. Another challenge ahead is to integrate these people in the society, in the labour market and in the education system. A high number of unaccompanied minors arrived in Austria and they urgently need these integration measures. In conclusion, Austria supports a solidarity based and European solution, welcomes the reform of the Dublin regulation, demands the installation of hotspots at the external borders and supports fair and binding relocation system within the EU. Furthermore, there is a need for an international alliance in order to tackle the root causes of migration. The only solution to this crisis is more Europe and not less Europe.

The Speaker of the Czech *Senát*, Mr Milan STECH, pointed out that Europe is currently facing two important issues: migration and terrorism. It is necessary to make a clear distinction between refugees and migrants, who are predominately motivated by economic reasons. The Czech Senate adopted a resolution regarding the managing of migration flows. Concerning the agreement that the EU made with Turkey, Mr STECH is concerned to see if Turkey will meet its obligations. A priority must be to ensure the elementary safety of the EU citizens and this safety must not be put in jeopardy by national Parliaments or by decisions taken at the EU level. Mr STECH also expressed his support for a common protection of the external borders of the Schengen area. In this context, the Schengen rules shall be respected and restored to its full potential. Over the past two decades the Czech Republic has welcomed half a million migrants arriving mostly from Eastern Europe, Balkan countries and Vietnam. He noted that his country wants to continue on this path and warned that the situation in the Ukraine is really tense, which might cause also a migration movement.

The Speaker of the Albanian *Kuvendi*, Mr Ilir META, stressed that in the framework of common European approach, Albania will contribute accordingly as asked by the EU. Albania is constantly monitoring to see a possible shift of the Balkan route through Albania. Albania's past experience with migration flows is an appropriate example that it is possible to manage unexpected migration flows. Therefore, Albania took several preventive measures regarding this issue. This crisis requires a fully coordinated European approach as well as a well-coordinated response. The EU must make sure that the citizens have faith in the common European crisis management capacities instead of supporting extreme nationalist political alternatives. Therefore, he underlined the need to produce concrete responses and sustainable solutions to this unprecedented crisis. Migration can seem like a painful challenge to the EU common security but he believes that it offers an opportunity to the EU.

The Speaker of the Swedish *Riksdag*, Mr Urban AHLIN, noted that the migration crisis can be seen as part of the success story of the EU because refugees are fleeing to Europe



and not from Europe. Moreover, he agreed with Mr DI BARTOLOMEO that compromise is the only way forward. Action based on solidarity and fair sharing responsibility should be the two key drivers of the crisis. Sweden has received the greatest number of asylum seekers in relation to its population size. In this context, Mr AHLIN deplored the lack of solidarity and the unwillingness of some Member States to participate in a fair sharing of responsibility and to implement the decisions that Member States agreed upon. All this have forced Sweden to consider the reintroduction of a temporary law to bring Swedish asylum regulations into the line with the minimum level of the EU law and international Conventions. Actions that have been decided jointly must be implemented, including the decisions that the EU has made regarding the relocation and resettlement scheme.

The Speaker of the *Kamratad-Deputati* of Malta, Mr Angelo FARRUGIA, stressed the urgent need to reform the Dublin regulation and to establish a solidarity based system. Mr FARRUGIA reminded the strong political message sent out last year during the Valetta Summit.

The Deputy Speaker of the Slovak *Narodnarada*, Mr Andrej HRNCIAR, noted that it is important that the European citizens know that national Parliaments take into account their opinions and fears. A binding quota system is not the solution to this refugee crisis and it does not represent mutual solidarity. Discussions on quotas overshadow other problems which are more important. Slovakia is not against asylum in Europe but he deplored that there is still no common opinion regarding this issue. Slovakia contributed to solve the refugee crisis by sending experts in different frontline Member States and it showed the willingness to help Frontex in controlling the external borders of the EU.

The Speaker of the Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Ms Tsetska TSACHEVA-DANGOVSKA, stressed the need to formulate a common European policy to ensure a predictable and stable management of migration flows. The EU external borders must be protected and not limited to the Schengen area. The management of migration flows is linked to border security which implies the strengthening of the capacity of Frontex. Bulgaria should be granted to accede the Schengen area as it completed all the technical requirements. In overall, Bulgaria welcomes the reform of the Dublin regulation. Regarding the EU-Turkey agreement, she underlined that this agreement has been an important step towards finding a lasting solution.

The Speaker of the Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, Ms Laura BOLDRINI, pointed out that the Member States should not only share the benefits but also the responsibility. The agreement made with Turkey and the results that have been achieved, shows the weaknesses of the EU. Indeed, this agreement gives Turkey an exaggerate role in Europe. The European Commission made concrete proposals and showed the Member States the right way to operate. Moreover, the EU needs a realistic migration policy and it must commit itself even more when it comes to peace negotiations in these regions. Furthermore, Ms BOLDRINI underlined the need to make a clear distinction between asylum seekers and migrants. In this context, she proposed to put in place a great “Marshall plan” when it comes to investment in Africa in order to stabilize those countries who are generating migrants.



The Deputy Speaker of the Polish *Senat*, Mr Adam BIELAN, pointed out that the results of the EU-Turkey agreement give the EU the opportunity to better manage the influx of refugees. Poland warmly welcomed the humanitarian aid program for Greece. Regarding the relocation of refugees, Poland has not enough experience in terms of hosting refugees and therefore realizing those measures has met with some difficulties in the country. Furthermore, Poland is hosting a lot of economic migrants coming from the Ukraine and Chechenia. There is a crucial need to strengthen the external borders of the EU. The measures taken so far are insufficient.

The Speaker of the Romanian *Camera Deputatilor*, Mr Valeriu Stefan ZGONEA, stressed that solidarity among Member States is nowadays more needed than ever. Even though Romania is not directly affected by the migration pressure, the country has contributed to the common European efforts by dealing with the migration pressure through the engagements of relocation of refugees. The EU must enhance the dialogue with its external partners, especially the country of origin and transit, in order to reach real long-lasting solutions. The preservation of the Schengen project should be a priority of the Member States and the migration issue should be treated in a responsible manner. The proposals presented by the European Commission regarding the reform of the Common European Asylum System must be subjected to prior larger consultations, in order to avoid further blockages and to make sure that the capacities of all Member States of receiving refugees are fully taken into account. Finally, Mr ZGONEA stated that an effective cooperation with Turkey is essential in dealing with this crisis.

The Vice-President of the European Parliament, Ms Mairead MCGUINNESS, noted that the European Union has a responsibility to be part of tackling the root causes of the migration flows. Moreover, she noted the necessity to communicate to the citizens the real story of the migration and refugee crisis. Ms MCGUINNESS pointed out that the important role of the neighboring countries of the EU, like Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, must be acknowledged more. She also underlined the need to closely monitor the agreements made with partner countries in order to see that human rights aspects are fully implemented. Furthermore, the fear of this influx of refugees and migrants is closely linked with the slow economy growth in Europe. Therefore, the EU must increase its efforts on the investments issues, on jobs and growth. She also called on the European Parliament and the European Commission to better communicate the plans and projects across Europe that will result in real jobs for the European citizens. Moreover, she pointed out the importance to avoid to link the debates around migrants and refugees with debates on terrorism. Finally, Ms MCGUINNESS called on Member States to have real plans in order to integrate refugees into the host society, especially in the education systems. In conclusion, she stressed the need to put in place more effective communication programs in the Member States and to fight against the rise of the sentiment of renationalization.

The Speaker of the Slovenian *Državni zbor*, Mr Milan BRGLEZ, expressed his concerns regarding the quota system. He pointed out the need to establish a common European system of integration with a common legal framework.



The Speaker of the Polish *Senat*, Mr Marek KUCHCINSKI, noted that the migration issue is perceived differently within the EU. Poland is currently hosting an extreme huge amount of Ukrainian migrants and the Polish government organised a few months ago the return of Polish citizens who were forced to flee Poland during the Soviet regime. Mr KUCHCINSKI finally informed that central and eastern Europe have been facing migration waves since a long time.

The Speaker of the German *Bundestag*, Mr Norbert LAMMERT, pointed out that there is a wide agreement in the description of the problems but there is no agreement in the conclusion and the solutions of these problems. Mr LAMMERT deplored the huge lack of consensus on how to deal with the migration crisis. The migration issue is a permanent problem and it will persist in the years to come. However, he noted the high level of agreement that no single country will be able to solve the problem on its own. Therefore, it should be possible to find common conclusions. There is insufficient solidarity with the people that are suffering but also insufficient solidarity among Member States. Always more voluntary solutions are advocated instead of binding solutions. The Geneva Convention on refugees is an obligation which binds all Member States of the EU. However, he also agreed on the fact that it is a complex issue and that the EU must take into account the individual situation that all country is in. Finally, he agreed with Ms BOLDRINI with her statement that the European Union is a family that has to share the burdens together.

The Speaker of the Swiss National Council, Ms Christa MARKWALDER, declared that Switzerland shares the values of the European community and reminded that Switzerland is also well known for its humanitarian tradition. After Luxembourg, Switzerland has the second highest proportion of foreigners living in the country. This is why migration is an important topic in their political agenda. The common task should be to tackle the root causes of the migration movement and to create peace and stability in these war zone regions. National Parliaments have the responsibility to remind their citizens of the common European humanitarian traditions and of the European values.

Session II: Strengthening the European Union

The second session on “Strengthening the European Union” heard speeches from the the Speaker of the Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Ms Laura BOLDRINI, the Vice-President of the European Parliament, Ms Mairead MCGUINNESS, the Speaker of the Polish *Sejm*, Mr Marek KUCHCINSKI, and by the Speaker of the French *Assemblée nationale*, Mr Claude BARTOLONE.

During his intervention, Mr DI BARTOLOMEO deplored that Europe is going through a solidarity crisis. Moreover, the European values are being threatened. On 14 September 2015, 4 Speakers of national parliamentary assemblies signed a declaration that calls for significantly greater European integration and seeks to relaunch the European dream. The European citizens need a project based on the respect of fundamental rights and human dignity, of the rule of law and social growth. Moreover, he underlined the need to reinforce the European



Union and to integrate the social dimension at every level. In some fields more Europe than less Europe is necessary to meet all the challenges that the EU is confronted with.

The first keynote speaker of this session was the Speaker of the Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, Ms Laura BOLDRINI. She reminded that the European project is a project of peace and stability. She deplored the fact that sometimes people forget about the efforts behind this common project. Ms BOLDRINI reminded that the President of the United States of America declared that the world needs a strong, rich, democratic and united Europe. Sometimes the European citizens need an outsider to remind them what they managed to achieve. People are concerned that Europe cannot manage in a coordinate way the different challenges like the migrant crisis and the economic crisis. Due to these different challenges and the bad management of it, European citizens do not feel attached to the EU anymore. As Speakers of Parliaments and representatives of the citizens, they have the responsibility to find together a way out of this crisis. She called on to strengthen Europe and to make sure that Europe is attractive again, not just for the third countries, but for Europe itself. In this context, she informed about the declaration signed in Rome seeking for more European integration and noted that, until now, 15 Speakers of Parliaments/Chambers have joined the declaration. This declaration reflects that the response to the crisis should go through more political integration. All the challenges that Europe is facing must be tackled together and not as individual Member States. Some Speakers involved their citizens in this declaration via an online public consultation. In her conclusion, Ms BOLDRINI noted that the fundamental values, like solidarity and fundamental rights, are the foundation of the European Union and without those values the Union will collapse.

The second keynote speaker of this session was the Vice-President of the European Parliament, Ms Mairead MCGUINNESS. A stronger European Union requires strong national Parliaments. Furthermore, there is a need for a greater engagement and communication between the European institutions and national Parliaments. Strengthening the EU is a necessity because many issues are cross-border and not just national challenges. Ms MCGUINNESS expressed the need for a discussion on how parliamentarians can take the time to reflect on the big global challenges and respond when they have an answer and not just an opinion of what they think might work. Ms MCGUINNESS resumed the experience she had at the European Youth Event a few days earlier and was delighted on the positivism expressed by those young European regarding the future of the EU. In this context, the social dimension arose in the discussions and she underlined the need to incorporate the social dimension in all the European policies.

Regarding the reform of the electoral law, there is a general consensus on the need to have more participation during the European, national and local elections. It is important to encourage citizens to participate and convince them that their vote matters. Parts of the proposal on the reform of the electoral law includes a better engagement of citizen in politics. The proposals made by the European Parliament aim to have a more effective democracy.

In conclusion, the Vice-President of the European Parliament deplored that sometimes there is a sense of Europe which has lost its roots and it is all about bureaucratic regulations.



National Parliaments have a responsibility to not only criticise and show the things that do not work in the EU but also to stick to the commitments decided at the EU level.

The Speaker of the Polish *Sejm*, Mr Marek KUCHARCZYNSKI, outlined in his presentation that before asking the question how the European Union can be strengthened, national Parliaments have to find out the reasons why the EU is going through these crises like the Greek financial crisis or the refugee crisis. He stated the need to establish systemic solutions and that decisions taken for the “new European Union” should be taken by sovereign countries. More integration cannot be the way on how to renew the EU. There is a need to make more use of the principle of sovereignty and the foundation of this “new European Union” is to be found in security and renewed institutions.

The principle of security must be redefined. People on the continent want to be safe and therefore the external borders as well as the internal borders must be protected. The EU should support the Member States in keeping their citizens safe and secure.

Concerning the migration crisis, it is unacceptable that the European Parliament and the European Commission impose their views to Member States. Indeed, this challenges the principle of subsidiarity.

Mr KUCHARCZYNSKI expressed the need to establish a balanced European Union with a properly functioning Eurozone. Moreover, he expressed his feelings against the creation of permanent barriers between Member States of the Eurozone and Member States outside of the Eurozone. Poland wants to be increasingly committed and initiate solutions that will serve not only the national interest but also the interest all EU Member States.

Concerning the European parliamentarism, Mr KUCHARCZYNSKI underlined that it doesn't function well enough. If national Parliaments are getting weaker it could have negative consequences and challenge the European model of democracy. A uniform electoral system is not the solution because that would lead to even more negative participation to the European elections.

In conclusion, Mr KUCHARCZYNSKI underlined to slow down the increasing process of the intervention of the EU institutions in Member States affairs. European policies need more room to the principle of subsidiarity, and this should be anchored in the European Treaties. The EU should be strengthened and renewed but he raised the question which kind of Europe do we want. Poland does not want to have a federal Europe because this is not in line with the Polish Constitution. A federal Union is not going to solve the problems but it would actually deepen the crisis.

The last keynote speaker of the session was the Speaker of the French *Assemblée nationale*, Mr Claude BARTOLONE. Europe is not an abstraction but a political and human reality. The EU citizens have a duty and responsibility to continue and to protect the project that the founding fathers created. Moreover, the EU created solidarity and peace and he deplored the fact that recently some Member States are considering to leave this common project. Everywhere in Europe, citizens are having a lot of doubts regarding this common



project. Therefore, he stressed the need to react to these doubts and reminded that last September he signed with his 3 homologues a declaration that wants to give EU a new impetus. Even though 15 Speakers support this declaration, there are still some that are sceptical regarding these proposals. In this context, the sovereignty of the European people is absolutely not threatened. There is no sovereignty without collective power. Only in a united manner Member States can face the threat of terrorism, energy transitions and other challenges.

Mr BARTOLONE was relieved to see that in the context of a public consultation regarding the Rome Declaration, citizens stated that they were very attached to the European core values like the free movement of people. Concerning the social Europe, the citizens stressed the need to enhance the fiscal harmonisation among Member States and the fight against fiscal fraud. Finally, Mr BARTOLONE called on his homologues to encourage their government to ratify the COP21 agreement.

15 Speakers and Deputy Speakers took the floor in the following debate.

The Speaker of the Albanian *Kuvendi*, Mr Ilir META, stated that Albania's main priority is the European Union membership. However, the future doesn't look very encouraging when they see that core European values are being questioned by some Member States. The economic crisis followed by the migration crisis has tested the cohesion within the EU and has put into question the European values of solidarity, human rights and social development. A strong EU requires a stronger European integration as well as a deeper cooperation between all Member States. Mr META fully supports the Rome Declaration and firmly believes that more Europe is needed and not less. Moreover, the European Union should not abandon the enlargement process and Member States should not abandon the values which brought them together in the first place.

The Speaker of the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Ms Khadija ARIB, pointed out the organisation of elections should remain a competence of Member States. The proposals made by the European Parliament to reform the electoral law have not sufficiently taken into account several Constitutions of Member States. The *Tweede Kamer* is closely following these proposals and is exchanging points of views with representatives of other Parliaments.

The Speaker of the Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Mr Eduardo FERRO RODRIGUES, supports the Rome Declaration. More Europe is needed to properly tackle the internal and external challenges. More Europe means more political integration, more fiscal harmonisation and more economic governance in order to strengthen the Economic and Monetary Union project. In order to tackle all the different challenges, Member States have to review some critical aspects of the construction of the Economic and Monetary Union.

The Speaker of the French *Sénat*, Mr Gérard LARCHER, added that the Paris Agreement should be ratified without delay. Concerning the reform on the electoral law, the French Senate is sharing the same believes as the Dutch House of Representatives. In this context, the exclusion of regional Parliaments would be unacceptable.



The Speaker of the Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados*, Mr Patxi LOPEZ ALVAREZ, noted that Spain, even after the new elections, will continue to believe that the EU needs to be strengthened. There is a confidence crisis within the EU and this is due to the adoption of certain erroneous decisions. Mr LOPEZ ALVAREZ stressed the need to have policies that are more ambitious. He also added the importance to put in place a fiscal harmonisation between Member States. In conclusion, he pointed out the necessity to have a united Europe instead of a divided Europe.

The Deputy Speaker of the Finish *Eduskunta*, Mr Mauri PEKKARINEN, reminded that peace, political stability and respect of common values are historically seen stronger than ever. However, the public support for the EU is decreasing in many Member States because the EU has not achieved its goals promised at the beginning of the 21st century. Mr PEKKARINEN doesn't believe that more integration is what Europe needs right now and he stressed the importance to concentrate on the unfinished tasks like finalising the internal market, investing in development, strengthening climate and energy policies, and strengthening internal security.

The Speaker of the Swedish *Riksdag*, Mr Urban AHLIN, noted that all the political parties in the Swedish Parliament rejected the proposals of the European Parliament to reform the European electoral law because they think the proposals do not respect the principle of subsidiarity. In this context, the proposals concerning the regulation of the inner workings of the political parties should not be regulated at the EU level as proposed by the European Parliament. Moreover, the organisation of elections is first and foremost a competence of Member States.

The Speaker of the Latvian *Saeima*, Ms Inara MŪRNIECE, underlined that all the challenges that the EU is facing can only be tackled as a union. The EU offers a lot of benefits to Member States and its citizens and Latvian citizens support the European project. Concerning the Rome Declaration and the deepening of the European integration, the Latvian Parliament wants to check each proposal on the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality. In order to address the challenges regarding social and employment issues, Member States should focus on the effective implementation of already adopted legislation. The involvement of national Parliaments should be improved.

The Speaker of the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Mr László KÖVÉR, noted that Member States have different views regarding the direction that the deepening of the European Union must take. The thesis proposed by the Rome Declaration to move forward to a Federal Union is not supported by Hungary.

The Speaker of the Lithuanian *Seimas*, Ms Loreta GRAUŽINIENĖ, underlined that a strong European Union must be guided by common and united interests. Moreover, the Lithuanian Parliament supports the main ideas of the Rome Declaration. However, some questions aroused on the provisions of the Declaration for example the proposal to grant more power to the EU institutions. Moreover, she added her concerns on the fact that implementing some provisions of the Declaration would require amending the current Treaties. Finally, it is not the appropriate time to have discussions around a Federal European Union and Member



States should concentrate more on remaining united and strong. Concerning the reform of the European electoral law, the organisation of elections falls within the competences of Member States.

The Speaker of the Slovenian *Državni zbor*, Mr Milan BRGLEZ, noted the importance of the Rome Declaration, especially during the current crisis. If the EU wants to develop into a more prosperous union, several steps have to be taken like deepening the economic union, establishing a viable fiscal union and moving towards a political union.

The Speaker of the *Kamratad-Deputati* of Malta, Mr Angelo FARRUGIA, noted that the problems that the EU is facing today are not the result of insufficient integration. There is a need for a greater European Union without interfering with the sovereignty of Member States.

The Deputy Speaker of the British *House of Commons*, Ms Eleanor LAING, emphasized the need to have a positive narrative on the EU common values. The conclusions of the European Council of 18-19 February 2016 stated that the purpose of the principle of subsidiarity is to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizens and acknowledged that the UK is not committed to further political integration into the EU. The UK is willing to cooperate but is against any further integration.

The Deputy Speaker of the Slovak *Narodnarađa*, Mr Andrej HRNCIAR, noted that the EU is currently facing huge challenges and that some of these challenges are going to be debated during the Slovak Presidency of the EU Council. He deplored the fact that some citizens are not interested in the political life of the Member States and of the EU. Therefore, he noted the importance of having a debate on the future of the European integration but at the same time he expressed his doubts on the discussion of federalizing the EU. The EU should set as priority the stabilization of its neighboring countries and in this context, he informed that the topic is going to be a priority of the Slovak Presidency.

The Speaker of the Romanian *Camera Deputatilor*, Mr Valeriu Stefan ZGONEA, expressed some concerns on federalizing the EU but he affirmed that the Rome Declaration offers a coordinated and strong reaction to the concerns of the EU citizens and sends out an important political message regarding the strengthening of the EU. The EU is an essential framework for the good development of the Member States. Regarding the reform of the European electoral law, the communication with national Parliaments should be improved.

Session III: The Role of National Parliaments and Interparliamentary Cooperation

The third session was on “The Role of National Parliaments and Interparliamentary Cooperation”. This session included interventions by the Speaker of the German *Bundestag*, Mr Norbert LAMMERT, and by the Speaker of the Swedish *Riksdag*, Mr Urban AHLIN.

In his introduction, Mr DI BARTOLOMEO stated that national Parliaments have to act united and must take concerted and systematic actions. The EU citizens expect concrete



actions from national Parliaments and therefore Parliaments cannot work in complete isolation. He stressed the need to have a European Union that is closer to the citizens on the basis of a parliamentary cooperation. Moreover, Mr DI BARTOLOMEO pointed out the importance of having regular exchanges of views with Speakers of national Parliaments and sharing best practices in order to improve the practical cooperation of national Parliaments. There is also a need to remind the citizens of the fundamental values of the EU and what the EU has achieved so far. A strengthened political dialogue will enable national Parliaments to play an active role in the decisions making process at the EU level.

Concerning the new regulation adopted by the European Parliament to strengthen the role of Europol, Mr DI BARTOLOMEO reminded that the political control of Europol's activities will have to be supervised by a joint parliamentary Committee composed by the members of the European Parliament together with members of national Parliaments. As the practical ways of this scrutiny are not specified in the new regulation, the Conference of Speakers is the ideal opportunity to exchange their views on the way forward and in order to have a joint strategy. In this framework, the Luxembourg Presidency took the initiative to propose to establish a Working Group which will be comprised by the troika of the Conference of Speakers and which will consider scrutiny mechanisms and present a draft proposal, after consulting and involving other Parliaments/Chambers. This Working Group would send this preliminary draft to all Parliaments/Chambers before the interparliamentary meeting organised by the LIBE Committee at the European Parliament in autumn 2016. Thus, the Parliaments/Chambers have the chance to discuss and comment on this preliminary draft. Finally, based on the preliminary draft and the ensuing discussions, the Working Group will prepare and submit a draft text by 16 December 2016, allowing Parliaments/Chambers to amend the text until February 2017 ahead of the next Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments, so that it can be adopted then.

The first keynote speaker of this session was the Speaker of the German *Bundestag*, Mr Norbert LAMMERT. In his presentation, Mr LAMMERT noted that since World War II the countries are more interdependent. The most political consequence of globalisation is that nation states are increasingly loosing sovereignty. Sovereignty is "the master of our own affairs". Thus, Member States are not fully sovereign anymore and have to find intelligent responses to the factual loss of material sovereignty. The most intelligent but also complicated attempt to find a response to this is the European Union. In its core the EU is an agreement on sharing and exercising sovereignty together. Member States won't lose sovereignty by strengthening the EU, but on the contrary it is the only way to preserve the influence and keep the sovereignty. Regarding the current challenges like climate change, migration crisis, fight against international terrorism, no State can solve those problems alone.

Concerning the cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament, there is no deficit in cooperation regarding the quantity of the interparliamentary meetings and bilateral meetings between the institutions. He is more concerned about reviewing the format of the meetings so that the results are clearer and more effective. Moreover, Mr LAMMERT shared his scepticism regarding the "cards system" in the EU.



Furthermore, he raised the question on how the perception of parliamentary powers can become more efficient. The right of legislative initiative by national Parliaments for European legislation is not an urgent matter. The European Parliament should have the right to legislative initiative. In order to have a balanced European legislation, Mr LAMMERT underlined the need to have cooperation between the European Parliament and the Council.

Concerning the TTIP negotiations between the EU and the USA, Mr LAMMERT noted that this debate is highly controversial in many Member States but it gained interest as well as distrust among the population. National Parliaments need to extend their competences when it comes to issues like TTIP. Mr LAMMERT is satisfied with the fact that the public has become more sensitive when it comes to setting standards to important part of their lives. Therefore, it lies in the responsibility of national Parliaments to ensure that these kind of procedures take place with the participation of the population and that Parliaments have the right to participate in the negotiations of international Treaties. To conclude with this point, Mr LAMMERT gladly noted that the exclusive role of the executive is becoming untenable and the role of national Parliaments is increasing.

Concerning the scrutiny of Europol's activities, it is important to create the right parliamentary body. He also reminded to keep in mind that there are two decision making levels in Europe: the level of the Member States and the community level. Thus, all the interparliamentary cooperation bodies are indispensable formats for the exchange of views and experiences but they are not decision making bodies.

The second keynote speaker for this session was the Speaker of the Swedish *Riksdag*, Mr Urban AHLIN. The influence of national Parliaments was strengthened with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. National Parliaments have several crucial roles to play in particular the role to carry out subsidiarity checks. Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, his Parliament scrutinised 565 draft legislative acts and submitted 55 reasoned opinions. By doing so, the Parliament influences the Swedish government in conducting European policies. The principle of subsidiarity is a central issue which deserves greater attention.

Concerning the reform of the European electoral law, the *Riksdag* issued several reasoned opinions. His Parliament firmly believes that national elections should remain a competence of Member States and that inner working of political parties should not be regulated at EU level.

Mr AHLIN noted the importance of IPEX which has the potential of serving a viable information sharing purpose if all national Parliaments take the necessary measures to properly use this practical tool.

Moreover, Mr AHLIN expressed his satisfaction regarding the continuous development of interparliamentary cooperation, especially the joint parliamentary scrutiny group of Europol's activities. In this context, it is important that this scrutiny is conducted in equal terms between the European Parliament and national Parliaments.



In conclusion, the Speakers should put more energy on exchanging their views and best practices than on underlining their divergent political views. The Speakers of national Parliaments of the EU should facilitate the establishment of platforms for interparliamentary cooperation.

12 Speakers and Deputy Speakers took the floor in the following debate.

The Speaker of the Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Mr Željko REINER, briefly outlined the contribution of his Parliament in strengthening the interparliamentary cooperation. The new mechanisms of strengthening the political dialogue in the form of a green card has encouraged the Commission's legislative initiative and will contribute to further strengthen the role of national Parliaments in the decision making process. Mr REINER expressed his satisfaction undertaken by COSAC in finding an effective model for strengthening the political dialogue. In conclusion, he highlighted the importance of cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament in scrutinising the activities of Europol as well as the importance of establishing a joint parliamentary scrutiny group and to clearly define its mechanisms of conduct.

The Speaker of the *Kamratad-Deputati* of Malta, Mr Angelo FARRUGIA, underlined that national Parliaments together with the European Parliament have an important role to play in the democratic control of decisions taken at the EU level. The interparliamentary cooperation should not be static and looked forward to the next COSAC meetings. Furthermore, the question of sovereignty is a very sensitive issue but he appreciates the Commission's right to initiate legislation. In conclusion, the effective entry into force of the new Europol regulation will happen during Malta's Presidency of the EU Council and he proposed to put the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG) on the agenda of the COSAC meeting during their Presidency.

The Speaker of the Spanish *Senado*, Mr Pío GARCIA-ESCUADERO, noted the importance for national Parliaments to have a role to propose and participate in the EU. The coordination between national Parliaments and the EU is a challenge to be taken seriously. Mr GARCIA-ESCUADERO underlined the importance to deal with practical aspects of Europol's scrutiny. Interparliamentary cooperation gives the Union a legitimacy and brings the EU closer to its citizens.

The Speaker of the Lithuanian *Seimas*, Ms Loreta GRAUŽINIENĖ, expressed that a developed political dialogue through the use of the green card procedure is a useful tool of interparliamentary cooperation. The political dialogue is an instrument of greater inclusion of national Parliaments into the EU decision making process and the European Parliament should be informed of all the green card initiatives. Lithuania supports the red card initiative which will contribute to a greater involvement of national Parliaments into the EU legislative process and make the EU more efficient. In conclusion, Ms GRAUŽINIENĖ asked the next Presidency to invite the representatives of the Eastern partnership countries to the next Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments.



The Deputy Speaker of the *House of Lords*, Mr Timothy BOSWELL, underlined the importance of national Parliament having a real constructive influence on the European policies. Mr BOSWELL expressed his satisfaction that the green card mechanism has picked up a lot of support by other national Parliaments. It is important to ensure that national Parliaments are equipped with sufficient time and resources for an effective collaboration. Moreover, Mr BOSWELL underlined the importance to develop new conceptual and constitutional tools to strengthen the role of national Parliaments and to put in place effective practical mechanisms to ensure their good cooperation. Moreover, he underlined the need to make an effective use of interparliamentary conferences and of IPEX. Furthermore, all the new tools will only be effective if national Parliaments have the means and the determination to use them.

The Deputy Speaker of the British *House of Commons*, Ms Eleanor LAING, emphasized that the JPSG will be carried out in full consultation with all other national Parliaments.

The Speaker of the Danish *Folketinget*, Ms Pia KJÆRSGRAD, underlined that national Parliaments are key players when it comes to take the concerns of citizens into account. National Parliaments must have a major say when it comes to tackle the different crises that the EU is facing. She noted the need to have a more significant role of national Parliaments in the EU decision making process and added her support of the introduction of the green card as well as the red card mechanism. In conclusion, national Parliaments must remain a key source of accountability in the EU.

The Speaker of the Polish *Sejm*, Mr Marek KUCHCINSKI, underlined that since Poland joined the EU, the Parliament has lost 60% of its competences. Moreover, he added that there is a need to strike a balanced compromise in sharing Member States competences.

The Speaker of the Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, Ms Laura BOLDRINI, pointed out that when the EU is facing a global challenge it has to provide an adequate response to that challenge. Sovereignty must be shared in certain domains but in other domains, for instance the TTIP, national Parliaments have to fully use the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality.

The Vice-President of the European Parliament, Ms Mairead MCGUINNESS, underlined that if the EU has a good green card system there is no need for a red card system. The European Parliament fully supports the idea of national Parliaments being more involved but the right mechanism and the effective way to make sure that the engagement works have yet to be founded. In conclusion, it is not the numbers of interparliamentary meetings that counts but the quality and effectiveness of those meetings.

The Speaker of the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Ms Ankie BROEKERS-KNOL, pointed out that, since the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, important steps have been taken regarding the cooperation between national Parliaments. IPEX is an important instrument and it must be used more often in the daily work of Parliaments. COSAC is the most useful platform for discussing in details further steps in cooperation, particularly the further development of the



different cards system. In conclusion, national Parliaments should stand together in requiring the most transparency and openness from the side of the European institutions.

The Deputy Speaker of the French *Assemblée nationale*, Ms Laurence DUMONT, noted her support for the green card mechanism and mentioned some doubts regarding the red card mechanism. Concerning the parliamentary control of Europol, national Parliaments should be able to send certain points for the agenda of the JPSG. Moreover, she added the importance of having a framework to allow to have regular exchanges between protection of data and the control group, so that the control group can be immediately informed about problems with Europol and the non-respect of fundamental rights.

In his reply to the contribution of the floor, Mr LAMMERT noted a consensus on the fact to strike a right balance in the European Union. Moreover, Mr LAMMERT expressed his satisfaction on the debate regarding the introduction of a green card which is a useful tool to initiate a European legislative process on behalf of the national Parliaments. He also noted a consensus on the fact that a lot of Parliaments stressed the need to examine the instruments that they have at their disposal and further develop them. In conclusion, he proposed to establish informal cooperation formats between national Parliaments and then pass on the proposals to established bodies like COSAC.

Mr AHLIN remarked the importance to have a pragmatic view regarding the interparliamentary cooperation. He expressed his wish to have more discussion around the best practices of national Parliaments rather than ideological debates on the future of the EU. There is a consensus among Member States to give up in some areas some competences in order to gain from a cooperation in the EU. However, Member States do not agree in which area they should give up their competences. In conclusion, Member States have to realise that they have to strike the right balance in order to fix the issues that the EU is facing and in order to deliver to the citizens what they are expecting.

Session IV: Ensuring the Security of Citizens while Respecting Fundamental Freedoms

The last session was on “Ensuring the Security of Citizens while Respecting Fundamental Freedoms”. The session began with keynote presentations by the Speaker of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Mr Pietro GRASSO, and by the Speaker of the Estonian *Riigikogu*, Mr Eiki NESTOR.

In his introductory remarks, the Speaker of the Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Mr Mars DI BARTOLOMEO, paid a tribute to all the victims of terrorism in Europe as well as in the rest of the world. All the recent terrorist attacks were meant to trigger hate and fear and were aiming to threaten the core values of the EU: freedom, openness, universal rights and diversity. However, terrorism is not going to destroy all the achievements that the EU has realised. More than ever Member States have to be united and determined to face this threat together. A safe Europe should not imply discarding the concept of European integration, that of the Europe of diversity, pluralism and openness. The democratic values of the EU are



anchored in our Constitutions and in the European Treaties. Europe has the indispensable means for establishing a fair equilibrium between security and freedom. Moreover, the exchange of information between the security departments and services at the EU level should go further and function better than it does today. The EU citizens will gain on peace and security if liberties and freedoms are promoted. The fight against terrorism requires close cooperation and calls for short and long terms measures as well as a joint action in fighting the causes of terrorism. In conclusion Mr DI BARTOLOMEO stressed that the EU must ensure security and freedom everywhere in the world.

The first keynote speaker of this session was the Speaker of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Mr Pietro GRASSO. In his speech, he recalled that the Pope described Europe as “the home of rights” and underlined that every citizen in this world should experience it. The topic of this session is very emblematic because throughout the years the EU citizens have been accustomed to the idea of Europe as guarantor of their safety and security. The idea of freedom, security and justice is rooted in the public conscience. The recent terrorist attacks tragically shut light on the common inability of the EU to prevent and react to events effectively. Judicial cooperation, sharing of intelligence and information and police cooperation are insufficient and this all makes the EU more vulnerable to crime. Therefore, Mr GRASSO underlined the need for Member States to think strategically and ambitiously in order to fully enforce existing instruments of cooperation. He welcomed the agreement on Europol and called on the national Parliaments to make fully use of the JPSG. Furthermore, the European Security Strategy should grant Parliaments the appropriate tools to scrutinize the work of governments and to participate in policy making so as to ensure that citizens’ interests are represented. Concerning judicial cooperation, Mr GRASSO pointed out that it still has too many unknowns. Moreover, the terrorist threats that the EU is facing require manifold actions and mutual cooperation. Mr GRASSO also called on to make more progress regarding the reform of Eurojust and the establishment of a European public prosecutor office.

In conclusion, Mr GRASSO declared his deep conviction that everyone feels the duty and the responsibility to protect the serenity and security of European citizens, as well as to guarantee them their fundamental rights by standing up for those values of civilisation and solidarity which constitutes the deepest identity of the EU.

The second keynote speaker of this session was the Speaker of the Estonian *Riigikogu*, Mr Eiki NESTOR. The EU and its Member States are facing numerous security challenges within and around its borders. The challenges have multiplied in scale and call on for a common response based on the shared principles and values of the EU. The main confrontation in today’s world is based on conflict between open and closed worlds. The open world, as opposite to the closed world, respects a person as it is, regardless of its gender, religious beliefs, political views or sexual orientation.

Mr NESTOR explained that Estonia believes that online freedom contributes to the fast development of information and communication technologies and increases the competitiveness of every country. He also expressed his concerns on the increasing and disproportionate attempts of Member States to block and filtrate online content. He also



deplored the fact that these actions are often justified under the pretext of national security and public order. Regarding this conflict of the open world against the closed world, the EU can only be successful if Member States act together. In conclusion, the Speaker of the Estonian *Riigikogu*, stressed the need of national Parliaments to remove the fears of the citizens and to help those who seek peace and asylum in Europe.

In the ensuing debate 5 Speakers and Deputy Speakers took the floor.

The Deputy Speaker of the French *Assemblée nationale*, Ms Laurence DUMONT, noted that this subject has become a democratic challenge. The French National Assembly has adopted several measures to seek balance between security and respect of fundamental rights. Concerning radicalisation, it is essential that civil society should organise itself so that it can combat the jihadist online propaganda. This would be more legitimate than the official communication coming from the government.

The Speaker of the French *Sénat*, Mr Gérard LARCHER, stressed that security is the first right and that it should be treated on the same level as freedom. When the Senate and the National Assembly voted the law regarding the prevention and fight against terrorism, majority and opposition voted together.

The Deputy Speaker of the Polish *Sejm*, Mr Adam BIELAN, pointed out that the world is facing a dilemma between freedom and safety. Moreover, he stressed the need to avoid a jungle of legislative initiatives. Central Europe can efficiently stand up to radicalisation and extremism. Poland is part of the International Coalition which fights Daesh and supports all the activities within the EU to fight the terrorist threats. He also welcomed the adoption of the PNR directive as well as the Smart Borders Package. In conclusion, mutual trust between Member States is the key for the good functioning of the EU. Lately there has been too much interference of the EU in the affairs of Member States and this interference represents a threat to national sovereignty.

The Speaker of the Slovenian *Državni zbor*, Mr Milan BRGLEZ, underlined that parliamentary scrutiny must act as a key mechanism in establishing the appropriate balance between freedom and security. The safeguards that Parliaments need to establish and supervise must be adequate, concrete and focused. Cooperation with international organisation in fighting the terrorism threat is essential. Moreover, all national Parliaments should make a more effective use of all available channels of communication in the exchange of best practices. Finally, he called on to put topics related to terrorism on the agenda of the next COSAC meetings and other interparliamentary cooperation meetings.

The Deputy Speaker of the Slovak *Narodná rada*, Mr Andrej HRNCIAR, reminded that the EU adopted important decisions in terms of the Agenda on Security. He also welcomed and underlined the importance of the adoption of the PNR directive. Member States should convince their citizens that the EU makes sense and therefore he called on the EU institutions to make improvements in all fields. The Slovak Presidency has the ambition to follow closely the JPSG regarding the parliamentary scrutiny of Europol.



In his reply to the contribution of the floor, Mr Pietro GRASSO, pointed out the need to avoid the accusation that migration can be a vehicle for terrorism. Indeed, no investigation in Italy ever indicated that migration is being used as a vehicle to export terrorism. Mr Eiki NESTOR called on Member States to work together in order to efficiently solve all the problems, like cyber security, that the globalised EU is facing. He stressed his firm conviction that the EU can solve these problems without violating human rights. Finally, Mr NESTOR pointed out that safety without freedom does not exist. In conclusion, Mr DI BARTOLOMEO stressed that security should not be achieved by putting other rights and freedoms in peril.

Closing Session

During the closing session the Conference of Speakers debated and adopted the Presidency Conclusions as proposed by the Luxembourg Presidency and amended by the delegations. Certain delegations expressed their reservation in respect of the content of some points in the conclusion. The reservations made by those delegations were marked in a footnote in the adopted conclusion.

Finally, Mr Andrej HRNCIAR, Deputy Speaker of the the Slovak *Narodnarada*, thanked Mr Mars DI BARTOLOMEO, Speaker of the Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, for the excellent organisation of the Conference of Speakers in Luxembourg. Mr HRNCIAR invited everyone to Bratislava for the next Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments due to take place in spring 2017.