

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LIII COSAC
Riga, Latvia, 31 May - 2 June 2015

IN THE CHAIR: Ms Lolita ČIGĀNE, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Latvian *Saeima*.

AGENDA:

1. Opening Session

- Welcome address by Ms Ināra MŪRNIECE, Speaker of the *Saeima* of the Republic of Latvia.

- Introductory remarks by Ms Lolita ČIGĀNE, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the *Saeima* of the Republic of Latvia.

2. 'State of play of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union'

Keynote speaker: Ms Laimdota STRAUJUMA, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia.

3. Procedural matters of the Meeting of the LIII COSAC

3.1 Adoption of the agenda of the LIII COSAC.

3.2 Presentation of the 23rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC.

3.3 Procedural matters.

4. 'European Union Energy Policy: State of Play, Challenges and Opportunities'

Keynote speakers: Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission for Energy Union, Mr Jerzy BUZEK, Chair of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy of the European Parliament, Mr Petr HLOBIL, Chair of the Green 10.

5. 'EU Trade Policy for the Next Five Years: Focus on the EU-US TTIP negotiations'

Keynote speakers: Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM, EU Commissioner for Trade, Mr Artis PABRIKS, Member of the Committee on International Trade of the European Parliament.

6. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

- Consideration of the draft Contribution of the LIII COSAC.

7. 'Future of the Parliamentary Scrutiny of European Union Affairs'

7.1 National Parliaments' Involvement in EU Decision-making: State of Play and Overview of Existing Instruments

Keynote speakers: Mr Herman DE CROO, Member of the Flemish Parliament, Mr Gunter KRICHBAUM, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the German *Bundestag*.

7.2 Green card: Towards an Enhanced Political Dialogue

Keynote speakers: Mr Dominic HANNIGAN, Chair of the Joint Committee on European Affairs of the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, Mr Paolo TANCREDI, Vice-Chair of the EU Policies Committee, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*.

7.3 The European Commission's Multiannual Work Programme and the Role of Parliaments

Keynote speakers: Ms Maria João RODRIGUES, Member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament, Ms Danielle AUROI, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*.

8. Adoption of the Contribution of the LIII COSAC

PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening session

Welcome address

Ms MŪRNIECE, Speaker of the Latvian *Saeima*, referring to the first Presidency of Latvia of the Council of the European Union, spoke of the Presidency's readiness to act at critical moments and mentioned the six high-level inter-parliamentary conferences and other events that had been organised within the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency. She underlined that, for the first time, the College of Commissioners, during its traditional call to the incoming Presidency, attended the Parliament and welcomed the European Commission's commitment to the political dialogue with national Parliaments.

She underlined that national Parliaments' contributions should be made at the early stages of the legislative process; national Parliaments should be more pro-active in setting the EU's agenda, for example by finding the best approach for applying the "green card".

Ms MŪRNIECE mentioned the issues that would be addressed at the LIII COSAC meeting and also the security challenges in the East specifically referring to Ukraine, which was testing the unity of the EU and which showed the need for joint efforts in order to promote and protect EU democratic values and deliver results to citizens.

Introductory remarks

Ms Lolita ČIGĀNE welcomed the Chairpersons and Committee members recently elected, especially Ms Anne-Mari VIROLAINEN, Chair of the Grand Committee of the Finnish *Eduskunta* attending the COSAC meeting for the first time.

The Chair informed the participants of a change in the order of the agenda items to be discussed due to the Prime Minister's agenda and, before proceeding with the procedural matters, gave the floor to Ms Laimdota STRAUJUMA, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, to address the topic of State of play of the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council.

2. State of play of the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council

Keynote speaker: Ms Laimdota STRAUJUMA, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia.

Ms STRAUJUMA, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, stated that the Latvian Presidency started trilogue negotiations on 25 legislative acts and completed the procedure on 10 of them. It hoped to begin trilogues on 18 other legislative acts, as well as to conclude another 16 by the end of June.

Ms STRAUJUMA then elaborated on the main achievements to date of the Latvian Presidency of the Council.

Concerning the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), which would be operational in September, the Prime Minister referred to the agreement reached by the Latvian Presidency and the European Parliament on 28 May 2015.

As to the European Energy Union, the Latvian Presidency focused mainly on regional cooperation, ensuring reasonable consumer energy prices and the availability of funds for energy projects, and also had a leading role in the preparation of the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP21 meeting).

With regard to the Digital Single Market, Ms STRAUJUMA informed that discussions would continue at Council level to prepare the June European Council and referred to the progress made on several legislative acts, among others, on the Telecom Single Market proposal with the new approach of the Latvian Presidency; on the General Data Protection Regulation, where a general agreement on the entire text was expected to be reached during the June Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council meeting, as well as on the proposed Network and information security directive, where negotiations with the European Parliament would be possible to conclude with a compromise in June. Ms STRAUJUMA then referred to the Digital Assembly "One Europe, one Digital Single Market".

With reference to the terrorist attacks, the Prime Minister stated that the Latvian Presidency immediately reacted to the Paris attacks to prepare a single European response. In March, EU Member States' Ministers of the Interior identified specific steps to be taken in the fight against terrorism by the end of the first half of 2015. Ms STRAUJUMA added that the Presidency backed the European PNR.

The Prime Minister then referred to the EU Internal Security Strategy 2015- 2020 that would be adopted in the June JHA Council meeting and which would cover terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime and cybercrime.

Regarding migration, Ms STRAUJUMA cited the extraordinary meeting convened on 23 April when the Heads of States and Governments agreed to step up the operational capabilities of FRONTEX Agency in the Mediterranean. She added that proposed amendments to the budget were under consideration and that the Ministers of Finance of the EU were planning to adopt them on 19 June. She referred to the European Agenda on Migration and to the need for setting up legal migration channels.

On the Eastern Partnership, Ms STRAUJUMA stated that the Riga Eastern Partnership Summit had reached a compromise on an ambitious declaration. She stressed that the EU continued to support Ukraine and suggested that the EU should show its readiness to step up restrictions in case of further escalation of the situation in the Eastern Ukraine.

With regard to the external security, Ms STRAUJUMA informed that the June European Council would focus on Common Security and Defence Policy and would assess the progress achieved since 2013 and recommend further steps. She said that the EU had to reconsider its security vision and, early warning, cyber defence and other capabilities in order to promote greater resistance against hybrid threats posed by individual states and non-governmental groups. The Prime Minister stated that, in order to counter Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns, specific measures for strengthening the EU's strategic communication were foreseen in the conclusions of the Foreign Council meeting in January and of the May European Council meeting. She then indicated that the June European Council would consider an action plan in this regard, as well as decide on the European Security Strategy review process.

Twenty-eight parliamentarians took the floor during the debate.

Many Parliamentarians expressed their views on Junckers' EU Investment Plan (EU Investment Plan). Ms Ana BIRCHALL, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, and Mr Paolo TANCREDI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, stressed the need to see the Plan implemented as quickly as possible by ensuring that it supported only additional investment. Mr Richard HÖRCSIK, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, stated that the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) was the key priority of the upcoming weeks and he welcomed the fact that the Fund would be additional to the existing cohesion policy instruments. Moreover, regarding the composition of the Investment Committee, he stressed the importance to guarantee equal treatment between Member States. Mr Ľuboš BLAHA, Slovak *Narodna rada*, underlined the need to use the EFSI to reduce regional inequalities and to strengthen cohesion and solidarity in Europe. Mr BIZET, French *Sénat*, stated that local authorities should play a decisive role. Ms Danielle AUROI, French *Assemblée nationale*, pointed out that it would be essential to attract private investments, whereas Mr Edmund WITTBRODT, Polish *Senat*, expressed his Chamber's doubts on the leveraging effect of the EFSI.

The Energy Union was considered as a key issue by a number of speakers, including Mr Gerardo CAMPS, Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados*, who stressed the importance to have better energy interconnection between States.

Several speakers underlined the need to make progress on the digital agenda. Mr WITTBRODT asked the Prime Minister what the chances were that the work on directive on information networks was going to be completed until the end of the Presidency. Mr Jerzy BUZEK, European Parliament, talked about the trilogue on Telecom Single Market, and stated that the most important issues were net neutrality, consumer rights and an end to roaming. He then called on the upcoming Luxembourg Presidency to take a decision on radio frequency spectrum in order to complete the Digital Single Market.

Many speakers stated that security of Europe was a key priority after the Paris and Denmark attacks. Mr BIZET and Mr Pierre LEQUILLER, French *Assemblée nationale*, called for a European PNR, while Mr Ivan IVANOV, Bulgarian *Narodno Sabranie*, stated that Bulgaria's accession to Schengen would help in tackling terrorism and in strengthening border security.

Many parliamentarians expressed their views on the situation in the Mediterranean and the management of migration flows, touching upon various issues. Among others, Mr Luciano BUSUTTIL, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* and Ms Athina KYRIAKIDOU, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, stated that the Mediterranean had to remain a priority. Many national Parliaments' representatives, including, among others, Mr António RODRIGUES, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, and Mr LEQUILLER, stressed the need for Europe to be more effective and act quickly. Mr Roberto COCIANCICH, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, stated that the situation in the Mediterranean could not be considered as an emergency, but something that required a long term policy and a collective effort.

Some speakers, including, among others, Mr Sean KYNE, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, called for a more humanitarian approach. Mr VALCÁRCEL SISO referred to the number of applications for asylum received by the EU, comparatively lower to the one registered in Jordan and Libya, and called on the Presidency to support the EU's initiative to adapt its policies to the realities on the ground, while respecting all human rights instruments.

Several Parliamentarians (e. g. Mr CAMPS, Mr KOPF, Austrian *Nationalrat*) stated that illegal migration was a European problem and called for burden-sharing and tangible solidarity. Commenting on the quota system of sharing refugees, a few other Parliamentarians expressed their opposition by stressing that it had to be set up on a voluntary basis. Mr BLAHA added that Europe had to address root causes of illegal migration and fight against arms trade. Mr PARTS, Estonian *Riigikogu*, stated that Europe had to rather focus on a long term and sustainable solution.

Mr RODRIGUES and Mr Alex SAEZ, Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados*, referred to the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as a great opportunity. Mr SAEZ specifically stated that the ENP needed to be consistent not only with EU security policy, but also with that of NATO.

Many parliamentarians referred to the Eastern partnership, Ukraine and relations with Russia. Some of them stressed the need to restore dialogue with Russia while others stated that it was necessary to be cautious. Mr BLAHA pointed out that it was time to fight phobias and anti-Russian sentiments, whereas Mr PARTS, Estonian *Riigikogu*, replied that it was not a question of being Russophobe, but of having common understanding of what Russia was going to be in the coming years.

Several national Parliaments' representatives welcomed the new Minsk agreement and some stressed the need to keep sanctions against Russia until the peace deal was implemented (e.g. Mr BIZET, Mr KRICHBAUM). Mr PARTS, Estonian *Riigikogu* and Mr BIZET, French *Sénat*, underlined that Ukraine needed to keep up reforms.

Talking about the Eastern Partnership Summit, Mr Victor DOLIDZE, Georgia, and Ms Agnieszka POMASKA, Polish *Sejm*, stated that the next step was a visa-free regime between Ukraine, Georgia and the EU. Ms Anniken HUITFELDT, Norwegian *Stortinget*, mentioned the close cooperation between the Ukrainian Parliament and Nordic and Baltic Parliaments. She then asked the Prime Minister what kind of support she would recommend for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.

Some stressed the importance of moving forward with TTIP. Among those, Mr KYNE stated that safeguards could not be put at risk, while Mr KOPF mentioned Austria's support to moving forward with TTIP, although stressing his country's criticism on the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS).

Some Parliamentarians referred to the fragile economic situation and the need to promote jobs, growth and competitiveness, while Mr KRICHBAUM and Mr BIZET talked about the situation in Greece and in the Eurozone.

Mr TANCREDI stressed the need to start thinking again about the Economic and Monetary Union and referred to the so-called Four Presidents' report to be presented in June.

Mr Mehmet TEKELİOĞLU, Türkiye *Büyük Millet Meclisi*, stated that Turkey was continuing its reforms to comply with EU standards, even though accession negotiations had come to a halt. He added that dialogue on various issues of mutual interest continued between Turkey and the EU.

Mr Aleksandar SENIĆ, Serbian *Narodna skupština*, referred to the 10th Conference of the European Integration/Affairs Committees of States Participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process of the South-East Europe and stressed that the event was an important starting point in the further normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. He then stated that Serbia expected to get all the screening reports by the end of the year.

In her response on the EU Investment Plan, Ms STRAUJUMA, pointed out that cohesion policy was not affected at all and that it would be crucial to attract private investments and ensure the independence of the Investment Committee.

Concerning the situation in Greece, the Prime Minister stated that Greece was one of the big challenges for the Latvian Presidency and said she expected the issue to be solved within the next weeks.

Talking about the situation in the Mediterranean, she stated that at the end of April the Presidency along with the European Commission and the European External Action Service had prepared a comprehensive action plan for implementing the decisions taken during the extraordinary European Council meeting. She said that Member States' opinions on a mandatory quota system of sharing refugees were divergent, but all of them recognised the importance of the principle of solidarity. She added that Latvia reckoned that this system had to be on voluntary basis.

Regarding the Eastern Partnership and relations with Russia, Ms STRAUJUMA replied that she shared some Parliamentarians' position about sanctions and said that the dialogue with Russia had to be kept. As regards the Riga Summit, she stated that Europe had strengthened its cooperation in all spheres with its partners and stressed the importance of the various fora organised on the fringes of the Summit. She informed that some promises were made and deadlines were set on the Association Agreements and on visa free regime for Georgia and Ukraine. On Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, she stressed that the reform process remained Europe's partners' responsibility and that the best thing Europe could do was to support the reforms.

On TTIP, the Prime Minister stated that it was essential to explain properly to European citizens the content and the advantages of the agreement.

3. Procedural matters of the LIII COSAC meeting

3.1 Adoption of the agenda of the LIII COSAC

Following the discussion with the Prime Minister, the Chair continued with the procedural matters, and presented the draft agenda of the LIII COSAC, which was adopted without amendment.

3.2 Presentation of the 23rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC

Ms ČIGĀNE then gave the floor to the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, Ms Christiana FRYDA, to briefly present the 23rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC, consisting of

three chapters: 1) EU energy policy: state of play, challenges and opportunities, 2) The future of parliamentary scrutiny of EU affairs, and 3) EU trade policy and the role of Parliaments.

3.3 Procedural matters

Ms ČIGĀNE announced that further amendments to the draft Contribution would be accepted until 12pm.

She then referred to the letters received by the Presidency:

- Two letters, one from Ms Teuta SAHATQIJA, Chair of the Committee on European Integration of the Assembly of Kosovo¹ and one from the Georgian Parliament, expressing their interest in participating in the LIII COSAC meeting.
- Two letters from Mr Vaclav HAMPL, Chair of the Committee on European Union Affairs of the Czech *Senat*, one regarding the conclusions adopted by the representatives of the European Affairs Committees of the Parliaments of the Visegrad group countries at their meeting on 14 April 2015, and one on the Czech *Senat's* resolution on the "green card".
- A letter from Mr Pietro GRASSO, President of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* and Ms Laura BOLDRINI, President of the Italian *Camera dei Deputati* regarding the conclusions of the EU Speakers Conference held on 20-21 April 2015.
- A letter from the Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the German *Bundestag*, Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, regarding the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on single-member private limited liability companies.
- A letter from Mr Malik AZMANI, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, on the overview of national Parliaments' priorities selected from the European Commission Work Program 2015.

The Chair then invited Mr Jean BIZET, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Sénat*, to briefly report on the results of the interparliamentary meeting on the fight against terrorism, which had taken place in Paris on 30 March, mentioning that, further to that meeting, the Presidency had decided to include on the COSAC agenda an informal session on the EU Passenger Name Record (PNR) proposal.

Then, the Chair brought to the attention of the participants the draft COSAC statement on the recent entry bans imposed by the Russian Federation prepared by Mr Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO, European Parliament, , stating that it would be presented for adoption at the Chairpersons' meeting, and gave the floor to Mr VALCÁRCEL SISO to briefly comment on it.

Commenting on a procedural point in relation to the draft Contribution and Conclusions presented by Presidencies, Mr KRICHBAUM, German *Bundestag*, drew attention to the length of the texts stating that these should be restricted to the essentials. He added that these should not be affected by the content of the discussions held during the informal sessions. Acknowledging the length of the proposed text, the Chair observed that this reflected the

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

complexities of the EU issues discussed and called upon everyone at the Chairpersons' meeting to ensure the brevity of the text.

4. European Union Energy Policy: State of Play, Challenges and Opportunities

Key note speakers: Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission for Energy Union; Mr Jerzy BUZEK, Chair of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy of the European Parliament; Mr Petr HLOBIL, Chair of the *Green 10*.

The Chair, Ms Lolita ČIGĀNE, stressed that Energy security was a topmost concern for many members of the EU. Improving the EU's energy independence and security would be the result of concerted work and efforts over time. She noted that the Commission's communication on "A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy" on the EU agenda reminded that national Parliaments were called upon to do their part in achieving the EU's and the individual states' energy and climate goals. Ms ČIGĀNE also referred to the 23rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC that underscored the key significance of energy policy in all Parliaments: every decision taken that day would have consequences for many years to come. The Chair highlighted several questions for the discussion, such as on the key elements brought about by the European Energy Union, on how Parliaments could develop closer cooperation and coordination in matters of common interest in the realm of energy policy, including, among others, renewable energies.

Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission for Energy Union, started his intervention, by stressing that the Energy Union could not be seen as a Brussels' project, but as a common project, where the support and input from the national Parliaments were needed. He asked EU Parliaments for help in bringing the Energy Union closer to the EU citizens. He thanked the Latvian Presidency for the skilful scheduling of the debate in the EU Council resulting in the support of the Energy Union's Strategy, as proposed by the Commission, in different sectorial Council meetings, as well as by the Heads of States and Governments. He supported the idea of greater involvement of national Parliaments, as proposed in the 23rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ noted three main issues to be tackled. First, regarding investment, there was a clear need to restore the normal investment process and the Energy Union together with the Investment plan could help to modernise the EU energy infrastructure. Second, regarding the legislative framework, he informed that the Commission had to present the first Energy Union draft legislative package on how to redesign the electricity market, how to present new deals for consumers, as well as new relationships with whole sale and retail markets before the summer break. The package would also include a proposed reform of emission trading scheme and a new energy labelling directive. He informed that, during the second half of the year, the Commission would publish the circular economy package on how to better use waste, where and how to put the emphasis on energy efficiency, as well as on how to guarantee security of gas supply.

On energy security, he stressed its importance as well as the Commission's willingness to focus on transparency and commercial contract, so as the free trade agreements could be compatible with the EU law. He also mentioned the need for the South Eastern European countries to ensure better energy security and different suppliers.

Third, the Vice-President focused on the need for national and EU leadership. In this context, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ welcomed the close cooperation with national Parliaments. The European Commission was ready to visit the national Parliaments and to explain the relevance of the Energy Union to the EU Member States and its citizens and the use of modern technologies for energy efficiency. He also encouraged Members to exchange views on best practices in Member States.

In conclusion, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ reminded that in only six months' time at the COP 21 meeting, important decisions on how to address the climate change would have to be taken. He stressed that there was no plan B as there was no planet B. He was convinced that Europe would remain a leader, making sure that the result would be positive and ambitious global agreement.

Mr Jerzy BUZEK, Chair of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy of the European Parliament, stated that the common energy policy was prompted by the 2006 and 2008 disruption of gas supply to Eastern Europe. He further noted that the idea of the European Energy community was launched in 2010 and gradually evolved towards a much broader Energy Union. He added that the Lisbon Treaty included important provisions on the sustainable use of energy resources, indigenous resources and energy mix and solidarity.

From the European Parliament's perspective, internally, the EU had to set up the EU energy market, which would bring about opportunities such as security of energy supplies, lower energy prices, a wider choice for consumers, full use of indigenous resources and effective infrastructure. He underlined the importance for the internal energy market of non-EU members of the Energy Community, namely six Western Balkans countries, Moldova, Ukraine, as well as Georgia and Turkey which had observer status.

Mr BUZEK stressed that externally the main issue to be addressed was diversification of sources and routes of energy supply. He mentioned that joint purchasing would be the goal for the years to come, explaining that the Energy Union was neither created against anyone, nor to the benefit of any supplier, since only open and transparent competition could be the rule. He referred to a recent EU - US meeting on opening the liquefied natural gas (LNG) market between US and Europe by the end of 2015, before concluding an agreement on TTIP.

He presented climate challenge as a global challenge. In his view, although the COP21 meeting might prove insufficient to stop global warming, he stressed the need to think beyond it and determine how the EU could remain an ambitious, but a realistic leader.

Mr Petr HLOBIL, Chair of the Green 10, referred to the Energy Union as a key issue and to energy efficiency as the most important element in its framework. He informed that, according to the assessment of the European Commission, every 1% of energy savings could reduce gas consumption by 2.6 %. This would contribute to the necessary reduction in spending and in supply.

Twenty members took part in the following debate.

Ms BIRCHALL called for reduction of energy dependency of Eastern European countries from third countries. She also encouraged development of local energy networks and better use of resources coming from the small plants and increased flexibility for consumers.

Ms Kathy RIKLIN, Swiss *Bundesversammlung*, expressed her Chamber's willingness to cooperate with the EU in the framework of the Energy Union and regretted that the negotiations on Switzerland's integration into the common EU electricity market were stopped. She pleaded searching for a common solution.

Ms Tineke STRIK, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, asked why in the draft text of the Energy Council conclusions of 8 June 2015 there was no reference to the support for the North Sea grid and whether Vice-President ŠEFČOVIČ was ready to lobby this project during the next Presidencies.

Mr Azmani MALIK, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, informed COSAC participants that, during the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the European Union, one of the interparliamentary conferences would be dedicated to Energy policy issues.

A concern about EU return to the nuclear energy was expressed by Mr Stefan SCHENNACH, Austrian *Bundesrat*, who referred to the relevant Commission communication stressing that the EU Energy Union had to focus on renewable energy sources. Ms Theodora TZAKRI, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, recalling that the best way to reduce dependency was to use more renewables, called upon the European Commission to create more incentives in the field of renewables, as without further investments, Member States could not reach their climate change goals by 2020. She also appealed for more cooperation inside the EU by better integrating grids and boosting the search for new energy resources.

Several Members highlighted the crucial need for diversification of energy resources in the EU. Mr BIZET underscored France's and Germany's driving role in the EU Energy Union implementation, reminding that both countries were the main producers of renewable resources, as well as the main consumers of the energy in Europe. Mr Andrzej GAŁAŻEWSKI, Polish *Sejm*, asked if the European Commission was preparing legislation intended at facilitating the search for new energy resources. Ms Riitta MYLLER, Finnish *Eduskunta*, recalled that a new European energy policy must comply with EU climate change goals. She explained that a higher energy security could be achieved by further diversifying the energy sources, building up a circular economy, making the subsidies for fossil fuels more transparent and fostering renewables. She concluded asking how the EFSI would take into consideration the energy transition.

Mr Tibor BANA, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, argued that the shale gas extraction in Europe was much more expensive and possessed greater environmental risks in comparison to the US.

Mr Peđa GRBIN, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, stated that in short and medium term perspective it was difficult to achieve energy efficiency in Europe reminding that security of energy supply would not be achieved without close cooperation with non-EU Member States; in this regard, solidarity and unified stance from the EU towards third countries was needed.

Mr Maximos CHARAKOPOULOS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, pointed out that the EU energy policy needed a more political dimension. He stressed that the exploitation of hydrocarbon reserves in EU Member States, such as Cyprus and Greece, could help alleviate the risks of Europe's energy dependency. Emphasising the importance of deepening regional cooperation around the Mediterranean, he invited to promote the pipeline project IGI-Poseidon, which would link the offshore gas reserves of Cyprus and Israel with Greece, and then with the rest of Europe, through Italy.

Ms Marina BERLINGHIERI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, highlighted that the Energy Union was necessary to achieve some of the main goals of the EU, making it more competitive and reducing energy prices. She reminded that some energy sources in the Mediterranean could be better used through regional partnerships.

Mr Rainer ROBRA, German *Bundesrat*, stressed that climate change and energy policies were closely interlinked. In order to facilitate a European energy policy, Europe needed stable and intelligent energy grids as well as new programs to increase energy efficiency. As for the question of decarbonisation, he pointed out that for those countries having abandoned nuclear energy, coal power plants would be necessary in the interim to maintain the supply. He questioned the ability of the EFSI to create enough incentives for private investments.

H.E. Ms Christine DEFRAIGNE, President of the Belgian *Sénat*, asked for further explanations from the European Commission concerning its intentions to limit energy dependency, the impact of the Ukraine crisis on EU's energy supplies and the creation of "gas diplomacy" and its position on nuclear energy.

In his response, Mr ŠEFCOVIČ referred to regulatory stability as a key condition to attract investments with a particular focus on avoiding retroactive measures. The EFSI should create the necessary environment to attract investments. On regional cooperation, he stressed that the framework package contained an obligation to achieve 10% of interconnection by 2020 and 15 % by 2030. He reckoned the advantage of creating a Mediterranean platform including new gas fields in Cyprus.

He then highlighted Europe's achievement in energy efficiency pointing out that Europe was the only continent that grew by 40 % since the signing of the Kyoto Protocol, while at the same time reducing CO² emissions by 90 %, and underscored the higher energy efficiency of European companies in comparison to companies of other regions.

He mentioned circular economy as one of the projects of the future, stating that Europe needed to invest in human capital to be able to profit from these new technologies, and underlined the readiness of the European Commission to create the necessary framework for its development.

He stressed close interrelation of both internal energy market and security of supplies. One of the key elements of an internal energy market was the cooperation between national regulators, as well as with the European Agency for Regulators in order to resolve cross-border issues. He again mentioned the importance of regional cooperation to meet the energy challenges and to remove administrative and physical barriers. He reckoned that Ukraine-Russia relations must be improved in order to guarantee security of supply for the EU, also stressing that investments were needed in Ukraine to secure the transit of gas. Russia would

remain an important energy partner for Europe, therefore Europe must work with Russia in a balanced, open, transparent and predictable way. On new energy sources, he concluded that the first opportunity was the Caspian gas by 2020, second in line was LNG, and third was to consolidate the relations with neighbouring countries.

Mr BUZEK welcomed the fact that all the participants expressed their support to the creation of an Energy Union and regarded this as an opportunity. He recalled the importance of the energy triangle consisting of more secure energy supply, a healthier environment and cheaper energies and explained the challenges lying ahead in order to achieve this. In this regard, he identified one of the key issues as being the problem of infrastructure and interconnections between the Member States particularly in the context of reaching the goal of 10% supply for electricity and on ensuring the security of gas supply and as foreseen by the 2011 regulation in this field. He called upon the national Parliaments to make sure that European legislation was implemented correctly by the Member States in order to create the necessary framework for a functioning energy trade. He also pointed out the problem of divergent incentives for renewables from one Member State to the next and urged to abandon them in favour of real market; he also referred to regulated prices. He urged the EU to focus more on joint purchasing and "LNG diplomacy", namely opening EU's market for LNG supply from the US. He underscored the relevance of the indigenous energy resources, of renewables and the necessary technological development for their use. Finally, in the context of the COP21 meeting, he considered that the EU should not act as the lonely frontrunner in climate action.

Mr HLOBIL made a final remark on the price of energy implying that if a level playing field was created between the subsidised fossil energies and the subsidised nuclear energy, renewables would be as attractive as other sources.

5. EU Trade Policy for the Next Five Years: Focus on the EU-US TTIP negotiations

Keynote speakers: Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM, EU Commissioner for Trade, Mr Artis PABRIKS, Member of the Committee on International Trade of the European Parliament.

Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM, Commissioner for Trade, focused on three key points: first, the economic and strategic benefits of TTIP; second, how the EU was currently addressing people's concerns; and finally what further steps could be taken to deliver sustainable solutions to people's concerns and expectations.

Ms MALMSTRÖM indicated that TTIP was a major part of Europe's strategy to re-energise the European economy by opening markets and creating jobs through trade. More open markets would bring manifold advantages, such as new export opportunities that required new workers, extra benefits for consumers, who could gain access to a wider choice of goods and services at lower prices, which would make European companies more competitive.

The Commissioner gave several specific examples of the potential economic benefits stemming from TTIP: first, TTIP would help companies bidding for public procurement contracts in the US, by getting rid of current barriers. Second, TTIP would reduce or eliminate almost all tariffs, which would especially benefit small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), since by lifting those tariffs, European producers would offer their products and services at a more attractive price, and therefore become able to sell more. Third, TTIP would make EU and US regulation more compatible without reducing protections for either people or the planet.

As to the strategic benefits of TTIP, the Commissioner stressed getting Europeans a stronger voice in a globalised world through technology and international value chains at a time when the world economy was becoming more integrated. She underlined that the same expectations from global rules existed on both sides of the ocean: strong regulatory protections for the environment, consumers, health and safety and other such interests, as well as open markets for goods, services, raw materials and energy. She also pointed out that the crisis over Ukraine had reminded of the importance of transatlantic cooperation.

As for people's concerns, Commissioner MALMSTRÖM reassured of her determination to listen to and to address those concerns. By way of example, she mentioned a number of points. First, she talked about setting a framework on regulatory cooperation, in the proposals made to the United States, by underlining that nothing could water down EU regulation in favour of people or the environment, now or in the future. Cooperation among regulatory authorities would be very close, but only when there was agreement. Second, she referred to replacing the current private tribunals with a modern, transparent bilateral investment protection system in the TTIP, and beyond it, work on an international investment court with a full-fledged system of appeals. Third, she referred to fully protecting public services like healthcare and education. Last, she was happy to have been in a position to make these negotiations more transparent than any other bilateral agreement in the EU's history.

In conclusion, the Commissioner suggested how Parliamentarians across the EU and the Commission could work together in the future. First, by ensuring solid understanding of what this agreement was, what it covered, and what it was not. In this respect, she informed that all of the EU's negotiating proposals and other information were online and that there was access to any information needed to monitor the process. Second, by discussing all aspects of this future agreement in a variety of fora, as well as by bringing citizens' views to the forefront of the debate. Finally, by playing the role of 'voices of reason' in the public debate, as currently too much of that conversation seemed to be focused on issues that were really non-issues.

Mr Artis PABRIKS, Rapporteur for the Canada/EU free trade agreement (CETA) in the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA), referred to the following points: first, why international trade and hence, free trade agreements such as TTIP or CETA were important for us; what the pros and cons were; and what the next steps could be.

He stressed that experience gained from bilateral trade agreements so far showed that international trade helped our economies, our welfare, and broadened the scope and reach of our international influence. Each free trade agreement (FTA) resulted in more investment, more cooperation, and more growth. As Europe was heavily dependent on exports, its competitiveness was linked to its free ability to export. Trade agreements such as TTIP and CETA would not change the world, but would improve people's everyday lives. He also reminded that North American countries were the best possible trade partners for Europe, since they were like-minded nations with a culture broadly similar to Europe's, enabling us to uphold and maintain high standards.

Mr PABRIKS considered that TTIP critics were either anti-American by nature, or motivated by superstition and fear. Such misunderstandings needed to be dispelled. For instance, the European high standards in some areas (such as GMOs, hormone free meat) would not only not be lowered, but rather extended to other countries.

He defended the need of inclusion a clause on ISDS in TTIP in its latest, up-to-date version, and argued that TTIP will mainly benefit SMEs, as the big corporations with big money were already present everywhere, without a further need for FTAs.

Mr PABRIKS then indicated that the resolution containing European Parliament's Recommendations to the European Commission on the negotiations for TTIP, to be voted in Plenary, was adopted by the European Parliament's INTA Committee the previous week, and that a deal had also been reached on the controversial ISDS.

As for the next steps ahead for CETA, he indicated that work on its legal scrubbing and translation would be finalised by September, and that an agreement with the Canadian side should then follow during the first half of 2016.

He concluded by wishing that all Parliamentarians would frame their discussions within their respective parliaments on facts, rather than fears and groundless assumptions and/or superstitions.

During the debate, 27 speakers took the floor.

Ms HÜBNER, European Parliament, stated that the positive vote by the INTA Committee on the resolution containing European Parliament's Recommendations to the European Commission on the negotiations for TTIP, on which 13 Committees adopted opinions, showed that the prospect of enhancing growth in Europe through trade could unite political forces.

Ms HÜBNER thanked the Commissioner for bringing back in the public discourse the narrative on the importance of trade, which was necessary if the EU wanted to keep growth, generate employment, remain competitive and preserve its social model. She argued that the TTIP was of key importance from economic, but also strategic and geopolitical standpoints and referred to the transatlantic global leadership.

She pointed out that any negotiations between two major global trading partners could not possibly proceed easily and that all benefits would neither be distributed evenly nor be tangible on the short term. Moreover, in order to be able to fully benefit from this forthcoming trade agreement, SMEs had to start preparing themselves. Ms HÜBNER underlined that the agreement went beyond trade, because trade was no longer only about tariffs, but mostly about regulatory cooperation, harmonisation of rules, mutual recognition, and dialogue at various levels.

Ms BIRCHALL backed the need for TTIP reminding that this was the most ambitious and complex FTA ever negotiated, planning to remove not only custom tariffs, but also non-tariff barriers. She argued in favour of a fair agreement, benefitting all Member States, also in their security interests.

A number of speakers called for ratification of this agreement by the national Parliaments.

Ms STRIK focused on the issue of how to apply CETA and TTIP in case they were approved by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliaments, but not yet ratified by national

Parliaments. She asked if the Commissioner would be ready to treat the agreements under discussion as mixed agreements. Moreover, Mr VAN BOMMEL, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, referred to the letter of 25 June 2014 initiated by his Chamber and signed by the Chairs of relevant Committees in 20 Chambers asking former Commissioner De GUCHT to consider agreements such as TTIP as mixed agreements and called on Parliaments to act jointly, if necessary, in the finalising phase of the negotiations.

Mr SCHENNACH called for a response to the great deal of concern that TTIP caused among the public. In order to alleviate those concerns, full transparency was needed. He also called for not lowering any of the existing EU standards, as well as for excluding local authorities' services, issues related to energy supply, and the like, from the scope of the agreement. Mr Kamal Izidor SHAKER, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, advocated the greatest possible transparency in the ongoing negotiations, and in favour of keeping to the highest possible standards in all key areas. He stressed the importance of content over speed by which the negotiations would be concluded.

Mr BANA criticised the fact that negotiations were conducted behind closed doors, with only big companies having access to the information. He also mentioned that numerous studies forecast insignificant growth flowing from TTIP and expressed his concern that TTIP could reopen the chapter on GMOs.

Mr BLAHA expressed growing concerns over these negotiations, as parliamentarians in Slovakia were excluded from the process, with no access to the reading rooms at the US Embassy. This was viewed as curbing the ability to protect his Slovak citizens' interests. He called for safeguarding the European social model.

Mr BIZET asked, among others, whether European public procurement would also become open to federal states, what would happen to designation of Origin and Protected Geographical Indication and whether the ISDS would be based on the WTO dispute settlement body. Finally, he asked how the future of the multilateral system was envisaged.

Mr Carl SCHLYTER, Swedish *Riksdag*, asked, among others, what studies, if any, justified the claim that more jobs would be created by adding ISDS to TTIP and how would the negative list included in CETA uphold and guarantee the right to regulate.

Mr Marc ANGEL, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, asked whether it was possible to split TTIP up into two parts, adopting first those parts which have already been agreed upon, so that the citizens started seeing tangible benefits from this agreement, and then carrying on with negotiations on the more difficult points. He also wanted to know whether the ISDS clause, if agreed as proposed by the Commission, would retroactively affect the already concluded CETA agreement. If not, would there be two different models?

Mr Raúl ALMEIDA, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, stated that Portugal strongly backed TTIP since it would help bring back economic growth. He hoped for a speeded up negotiation process in the course of the year. Expressing concerns related to the ISDS clause, he nevertheless deemed the full use of the mandate given to the Commission as vital, thereby keeping ISDS as a constituent part. He also wanted to know the impact on EU economy, in particular, in Portugal and also the impact of Russia's behaviour on TTIP.

Several speakers outlined the importance of the estimated benefits flowing from TTIP, provided it respected European values and high standards in terms of, among others, consumers' protection, services of public interest, intellectual property, environmental protection, cultural diversity, personal data, public health, and education. Ms HAYDEN, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, recalled the value of exports to third countries and Mr Gediminas KIRKILAS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, referred to the growth in GDP which could result from TTIP and contended that the EU could not afford to miss this opportunity, an opinion also shared by Ms BERLINGHIERI. Mr CHARAKOPOULOS called for protecting the denominations of origin and geographical indications of agricultural products. Ms Angelica SCHWALL-DÜREN, German *Bundesrat*, warned that culture should not to be treated like any other public good, as pluralism and diversity had to be maintained in Europe. Mr Fidiás SARIKAS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, argued that free trade agreements with the US would allow economies to move forward, provided standards were upheld and SMEs protected, so that they could respond to challenges caused by the opening up the markets. Ms VIROLAINEN, Finnish *Eduskunta*, expressed Finland's strong support for how the Commission was conducting the negotiations, urging it to keep up the momentum and progress as far as possible in 2015. Mr CANAS, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, described TTIP as important for geostrategic, political and economic reasons and called on the Commission to negotiate well and consult with EU governments, national Parliaments and citizens who might hold diverging views. Ms Véronique JAMOULLE, Belgian *Sénat*, argued that stakeholders were not fully aware of the importance of trade and stressed that the US was an important partner and ally.

Various speakers referred to the active role of their Parliament/Chamber in monitoring TTIP negotiations and stressed that trade agreements needed to be based on sustainable development and make the well-being of people a priority; most of the red lines set by the national Parliaments echoed public concerns and related to issues within the agricultural sector, the effects of trade agreements on SMEs, workers and consumers, and to the ISDS. Ms TZAKRI quoted reservations on intellectual property, ISDS, the energy sector, the impact on telecom companies, the lack of transparency in the negotiations, the environmental impact and stated that there should be no loss of sovereignty on these issues; Ms HAYDEN, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, mentioned a possible need for transitional agreements as well as support to protect SMES within vulnerable sectors, and recalled that in the internal market a fit-for-purpose environment for SMEs did not exist yet. Mr ROSSMANN, Austrian *Nationalrat*, called for TTIP negotiations to start afresh and for social services to be excluded from the talks, while Mr Börje VESTLUND, Swedish *Riksdag*, called for not following the US's approach on industry, services and agriculture.

On the ISDS, Mr Veli YÜKSEL, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, wanted to hear more from the Commissioner about the new proposal on the ISDS clause, voicing fears that private companies could go to arbitration against the State. Mr Bruno ROSSMANN, Austrian *Nationalrat*, argued that the new Commission's proposal did not go beyond the safeguards of normal democratic systems and that with the ISDS mechanism the right of all to fair jurisdiction was watered down. Ms SCHWALL-DÜREN, German *Bundesrat*, expressed similar concerns and both speakers also referred to the problematic aspects of regulatory committees competent for rules and standards that encroach on trade, arguing that guarantees were necessary for democratic legitimacy not to be weakened. Mr Touko AALTO, Finnish *Eduskunta*, inquired how the Commission intended to ensure investment protection and avoid transferring authority from governments to companies and lawyers. Mr Vaclav HAMPL,

Czech *Senát*, questioned the need for including ISDS within TTIP, as it was deemed a protection for countries with poor law enforcement, not historically applicable to either the EU or the US. Similarly, Mr Jérôme LAMBERT, French *Assemblée nationale*, questioned the necessity of the ISDS designed to protect foreign investors in countries with proper legal systems and the rule of law. He stressed the need to ensure the consistency of the EU trade policy and, like Ms SCHWALL-DÜREN, German *Bundesrat*, and Ms JAMOULLE, Belgian *Sénat*, raised the issue of TTIP's impact on developing countries. Both he and Mr Andrej HUNKO, German *Bundestag*, referred to a US study which pointed to jobs losses, reduction in terms of GDP, salaries and general added value.

Several speakers referred to the Commissioners' visits to national Parliaments and there was broad consensus on the need to continue current efforts to ensure transparency. Among them, Ms BERLINGHIERI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, echoed the call of the 2015 Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments for access of national Parliaments to documents and updated information. Ms Ingrid ANTIČEVIĆ MARINOVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, argued that, in some countries, the public debate was being dominated by groups emphasising the negative effects of TTIP on the EU and national economies and that the media did not cover it sufficiently. Mr Svetlen TANCHEV, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, mentioned that in Bulgaria euroscepticism was rising also as a consequence of the lack of information on TTIP which gave the impression that sovereignty was given up to overseas interests.

Mr Slavtcho BINEV, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, called for free movement of people between the EU and the US to be a mandatory part of the negotiations. Ms Sylvi GRAHAM, Norwegian *Storting*, stressed the need to avoid creating new trade barriers between EFTA and the EU and to ensure the homogeneity of the Single Market. Mr Yildirim Mehmet RAMAZANOĞLU, *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, stated that in light of its Customs Union with the EU and its trade relations with the US, Turkey would be more affected by TTIP than other countries and called for support from the EU to ensure that Turkey was part of TTIP or alternatively signed a bilateral agreement with the US.

In her replies, Commissioner MALMSTRÖM explained that as *mixity* was not very well defined in the Lisbon Treaty, legal analysis would ultimately determine if TTIP was a mixed agreement; although she mentioned that politically it was highly likely for TTIP to be considered a mixed agreement given its broad character and complexity, she stressed that the Commission could not yet contend that, as the text of the agreement was not yet available. She recalled that once concluded, following the vote by unanimity of Member States and in case of a positive vote of the European Parliament, the agreement would apply provisionally; in case of a mixed agreement, any negative vote in a national Parliament would lead to the repeal of the *mixity* parts from the agreement.

Concerning ISDS, the Commissioner clarified that it was not an innovation, but a standard clause introduced into Member States' investment and trade agreements, with an aim to protect investments from discriminatory behaviour; she agreed that it was necessary to review these agreements, an initiative undertaken by the former Commissioner in charge for CETA. In its proposals, the Commission introduced an appeals mechanism, a clarification of what the domestic route covered, a clear statement that the state retained the right to regulate and the provision of an international court with permanent judges and not *ad hoc* lawyers. She stressed the importance of discussions between governments and national Parliaments in all of these proposals. She added that the ISDS chapter was currently frozen and that it would be

discussed with the US, by next fall, once the EU had a full overview of how ISDS mechanisms should work in all future trade agreements. The Commissioner made clear that the CETA agreement was not going to be re-opened, but minor adjustments could be made and its review clause thus put to use.

She concurred with Ms HÜBNER that future trade agreements were less about tariffs and more about regulations adapted to technological changes and aimed at protecting the environment and safety considerations; she stressed the importance of transparent and open cooperation, in a purely advisory nature, between the best regulators in the world in the process of devising global standards. She firmly rejected the suggestion that negotiations on TTIP were undemocratic, and defended the unprecedented level of transparency on hand, mentioning the thousands of documents on TTIP on the Commission's website (with the exception of the ones related to tariffs offers). She reminded the audience that discussions held with the European Parliament, the Member States and an advisory group representing stakeholders preceded every round of negotiation and that the Commission systematically reported to the same group and published online summaries of the discussions. This practice would be continued and access to sensitive documents would further be ensured to MEPs and members of government. She therefore urged national Parliaments to ask their own governments for access to documents.

She welcomed the on-going public debate in the Member States and referred to the overall strong support for TTIP. She stated that benefits were hard to precisely quantify, but that the study commissioned by the Commission showed that TTIP would bring about growth, more jobs and investments, a conclusion supported by all other similar studies, with the exception of the one using Turf-type analysis. She welcomed the national studies and encouraged Parliaments to ask their respective governments to commission them in order to identify gains but also any potential downsides and hence any necessary precautionary measures.

In terms of culture, she mentioned the clause on the exception on audio-visual services. She explained that social services were excluded from the agreement unless a country wished to open them up to competition; she expressed the hope the agreement would include a special chapter on SMEs, and mentioned that one-stop websites would be created providing SMEs with all the requisite information for doing business in the US. The Agreement would include a specific chapter on sustainable development; energy was also included in the negotiation mandate, so that willing countries could have access to for US gas and oil. She clarified that discussions on visa waivers were not part of the TTIP negotiations, but followed a parallel track.

With regard to the timeline, the Commissioner stated that the 10th negotiation round foreseen in July might allow for technical work to be concluded; provided that the US was granted its mandate by the summer, political negotiations could start in September, with a goal to conclude the agreement during President's Obama mandate. Among the pending issues, she mentioned geographic indications, public procurement and opening up markets considered protectionist by the EU.

Referring to third countries affected by TTIP, she recalled President's Putin opposition to it and the opportunity afforded by the events in Ukraine to further strengthen values shared with the US; she also mentioned that preliminary impact assessments on the impact of TTIP on

developing countries hinted at minimum effects. Although the EU supported the idea of an agreement open to Norway and Turkey, this needed to be accepted by the US.

Mr PABRIKS argued that the European Parliament and the Commission were not adversaries of national Parliaments and governments. He also mentioned that TTIP, although comprehensive, could not accommodate aspects such as visas, but nevertheless would facilitate these negotiations. Although Turkey and Norway cannot be active participants in the negotiations, given their geostrategic importance, their interests need to be taken into account. He stated that TTIP negotiations were more transparent than any other national negotiations with third countries, and called on national Parliaments to refrain from asking the Commission things that were never asked from national governments. He highlighted the need for transparency in the public's interest, but called into question the content of some petitions, which in his view were not always the expression of the free will of the citizens. While agreeing that ISDS mechanisms were perfectible and subject to future changes, he called for the inclusion of the best systems in the existing agreements. He argued that benefits could not be quantified before the agreement was enforced, but that the experience with other trade agreements confirmed them. He warned against the risk of missing the opportunity to conclude an advanced agreement between advanced nations and concluded that Russia's current government did not want to see a strong EU, and therefore opposed agreements such as TTIP and CETA which would strengthen the EU.

6. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

The Chair informed the Chairpersons that, following the Troika meeting that had taken place the previous day, they had received a document which incorporated in the original draft of the Contribution, proposals recommended for approval by the Troika, as well as the complete list of the amendments tabled both before the meeting and until the deadline of 12 pm of that day. Ms ČIGĀNE then invited the Chairpersons to discuss all the amendments paragraph by paragraph. Following a long debate and voting in cases of controversy, a further amended text of the Contribution of the LIII COSAC was agreed by the Chairpersons.

7. Future of the Parliamentary Scrutiny of European Union Affairs

7.1 National Parliaments' Involvement in EU Decision-making: State of Play and Overview of Existing Instruments

Keynote speakers: Mr Herman DE CROO, Member of the Flemish Parliament, Mr Gunter KRICHBAUM, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the German *Bundestag*.

Introducing the session, Ms ČIGĀNE mentioned a “focus paper” prepared by the Presidency, which had been distributed to the delegations in advance of the meeting and asked to consider a number of specific questions under each topic, in order to focus debates and identify, on the one hand, those areas where common ground was shared and, on the other, those where we may stand further apart. She stressed, that the EU as a whole was going through challenging times having to reconsider many of its founding principles. She invited the participants to reflect on the idea of an “ever closer Union”, closer interparliamentary cooperation and the means to achieve it.

Mr Herman DE CROO, Member of the *Flemish Parliament*, was convinced that without past there was no decent future. He reminded the times when Members of national Parliaments

had been Members of the so-called European Assembly simultaneously, just as it was still the case for the Members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Mr DE CROO explained that the fundamental thinking behind the construction of Europe was the political motivation to secure peace and freedom in Europe but also democratic values, thus the need for parliamentary expression had grown since. He recalled how the European Parliament had gradually been born, thus ensuring the direct democratic representation behind the European political structure.

He stressed that Europe was diversified and that it had to recognise the need for political control over different constructions, mentioning Schengen and the Euro.

Asking rhetorically what the national Parliaments and the EU institutions were, he expressed the view that the idea of a third chamber of national Parliaments at the EU level (EU Senate) would be too heavy for the common EU construction. However, the question remained how to bridge the gap between citizens and the EU.

He also reminded the meaning of the abbreviation "COSAC" and came forward with a new term, "*de-COSAC-isation*", referring to the new forms of cooperation among national Parliaments (such as the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Common Foreign Policy and Security Policy (CFSP) and on Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the Interparliamentary Conference under Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union, different cluster meetings and working groups). The aim of such developments was to bring Europe closer to its citizens.

Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, German *Bundestag*, noted that the EU was the only international organisation that had so much democratic legitimacy. He talked about the EU integration process and how it was established, referring also to the first direct elections of the European Parliament in 1979. He stressed that with every EU treaty Parliaments became more powerful, especially with the Lisbon Treaty, which was the "treaty of the Parliaments".

Mr KRICHBAUM informed the delegates about the EU scrutiny system in the German *Bundestag* and their work on EU affairs. He stressed that the role of the EU Committee had become more important over the last few years. He thought that the level of transparency of the European Commission's work during the early stages of the legislative cycle was satisfactory enough. He also noted the role played by the German regional states' representation in Brussels.

He stressed that COSAC was an excellent forum for mutual exchanges between national Parliaments, provided all tools available were used to their fullest extent. He called for more lively debates, and was convinced that there was no need for instructions from the executive, since Parliaments were holding control over governments, not the other way around.

He pointed out that the "green card" was an excellent initiative; however, the treaties, as well as the right of the European Parliament to submit proposals, had to be respected. He said that national Parliaments had to avoid disruption of the institutional balance.

The Chair invited Ms POMASKA to summarise the discussions of the informal working group that had taken place in Warsaw on 13 May 2015. A detailed summary of the discussions had been circulated to the delegations.

The Chair invited the delegates to submit quick questions to the keynote speakers. Two members addressed Mr KRICHBAUM. Mr Krzysztof SZCZERKI, Polish *Sejm*, wanted to

know the practical aspects of the consequences of the German Constitutional Court's decisions, extending the Bundestag's powers over legislation on the fiscal pact and all the post-crisis legislation. Mr WITTBRODT commented that the procedures in the Polish Sejm were similar to the ones in the German Bundestag and stressed the importance of Commissioners' visits to the national Parliaments.

On the German Constitutional Court issue, Mr KRICHBAUM explained that, following the decision, additional modifications in the legislation had been made in order to guarantee the extended rights of the Parliament; this meant, according to him, that there was concurrent legislation alongside the Lisbon treaty. In practical terms, the Federal Parliament had to be informed as early as possible about any EU legislative proposal and/or policy planning document on the part of the Commission as soon as possible. The EU Affairs committee had to give its opinion before further work could proceed. He added that each legislative proposal related to EU budget issues had to be first approved by the Bundestag. Mr KRICHBAUM agreed with Mr WITTBRODT that Commissioners' visits to national Parliaments were important and necessary.

Fourteen members took part in the debate which followed.

Mr AZMANI informed that the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* had prepared an overview on the proposals intended to be scrutinised by national Parliaments. He invited national Parliaments to engage in this exercise on a permanent basis and proposed, by way of example, to ask the Parliament holding the Presidency the first half of the year to prepare a detailed table with the topics chosen by national Parliaments for scrutiny from the Commission Work Programme (CWP). He also welcomed the drafting of informal non-binding guidelines, which would help to draft reasoned opinions and contributions in the framework of political dialogue; this, he added, would enhance the communication process with the Commission.

Mr Simon SUTOUR, French *Sénat*, stated that the role of the national Parliaments was enhanced during the last years. He wished for even better instruments for the national Parliaments, namely "orange" and "red cards". He noted, that indeed Europe was legislating less in recent years, but it remained to be seen whether efficiency had increased.

Ms HÜBNER praised the increase in frequency and complexity of interparliamentary meetings at committee and at political groups' levels, as well as Conferences. National Parliaments' and the European Parliament's joint efforts had to contribute to ensure the double democratic legitimacy, especially in the field of economic governance. She also mentioned the work of the European Parliament's AFCD Committee in exploring the future institutional developments of these issues beyond the framework of the existing treaties which might lead to a new treaty and called for the *ex-ante* involvement of national Parliaments in this process.

Mr Joan SABATÉ, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, was of the opinion that national Parliaments should work more closely with the European Parliament; confidence in the EU institutions had to grow so as to lend more democratic legitimacy to the EU institutions.

Ms BIRCHALL welcomed the Commission's approach to further involve national Parliaments in the EU decision-making process. Both she and Ms TZAKRI supported the elaboration of informal guidelines on subsidiarity. In addition, Ms TZAKRI welcomed the increased number of meetings between national parliamentarians and Commissioners and also supported strengthening the political dialogue between the European Parliament and national Parliaments.

Mr Jozef HORVAT, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, said that each national Parliament contributed to the EU decision-making process in its own way, and that the new ways for Parliaments to contribute to the decision-making process should not lead to a re-nationalisation of policies already decided at the EU level. New ways of doing things were welcomed and had to contribute to the credibility, effectiveness and efficiency of the EU.

Mr Johannes HUEBNER, Austrian *Nationalrat*, disagreed with Mr KRICHBAUM, expressing the view that national Parliaments did not have direct access to EU institutions and could not be deemed full partners, but only partners available for exchange of information; it was important for national Parliaments to retain their influence on EU institutions.

Mr Paulo MONTA PINTO, Portuguese *Assembleia da Republica*, welcomed subsidiarity checks, but was not in favour of proportionality checks, as the latter could lead to re-nationalisation of some areas of competences. He also stressed that the European Parliament had a major role to play in the fields of EU taxation policy and the EU own resources.

Mr BANA stated that there was a need for a "Europe of nations", as opposed to the current trend towards a centralised decision-making process, whereby Member States could decide upon their own fate.

Mr Jean BIZET, French *Sénat*, pointed out that national Parliaments needed more issue-specific, precise and prompt responses from the European Commission, stressing the importance of political dialogue.

Mr Peter LUYKX, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, said that Belgium was not such a good student regarding subsidiarity, and, addressing Mr DE CROO, asked if this was caused by the complexity of Belgium's administrative and political structure.

Mr ANGEL underlined the need for better law-making within national Parliaments, with an aim to exerting due influence at ministerial level. He welcomed the formalisation of the working group on subsidiarity during the Luxembourgish Presidency, as per the agreement in the Contribution of the LIII COSAC meeting. He informed that the topic of strengthening political dialogue and the introduction of the "green card" were agenda items at the COSAC Chairpersons meeting in Luxembourg, and confirmed Vice-President TIMMERMANS' participation in the meeting.

In response, Mr De CROO specifically referred to the federalisation in Belgium, which was something unique. He informed that in policy areas such as fisheries, agriculture, culture, youth, suburban planning, the regional parliaments and governments were the key decision makers, and it was thus essential that good cooperation between civil servants at the EU, federal and regional levels be upheld. He mentioned the involvement of Members of the European Parliament who were also members of the Federal Advisory Committee on European Matters. He agreed that there was no need for a "Europe of Nations"; lest the democratically strong union be destroyed. He urged to keep Europe united, strong and not divided.

In his reply, Mr KRICHBAUM agreed with Mr HÜBNER that there were limits to the national Parliaments' involvement in the EU decision-making process, but also stressed that national Parliaments could influence national governments. The "green card" proposal, the "yellow card", and the "orange card" were examples of direct influence, he said, but there were other forms of indirect influence such as recent interparliamentary conferences, whereby national Parliaments were able to exert more influence. He believed that COSAC was the best platform for exchange and cooperation between the national Parliaments and the European Parliament, both multilaterally and one on one.

In conclusion, Ms POMASKA underlined that closer cooperation with the aim of cutting distance between national Parliaments and EU institutions was needed, thus making the EU and its society more European.

7.2 Green card: Towards an Enhanced Political Dialogue

Keynote speakers: Mr Dominic HANNIGAN, Chair of the Joint Committee on European Affairs of the Irish Houses of the Oireachtas, Mr Paolo TANCREDI, Vice-Chair of the EU Policies Committee, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*.

Ms ČIGĀNE opened the discussion on this agenda item underlining that the question of the "green card" had triggered a wide range of reactions ranging from enthusiasm to scepticism. She then gave the floor to the keynote speakers representing both sides, while regretting that the European Commission was not able to intervene.

Mr Dominic HANNIGAN, Chair of the Joint *Oireachtas* Committee on European Union Affairs, started by thanking the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, the Danish *Folketing* and, in particular, the UK *House of Lords* for their respective roles in launching the debate on a greater role of national Parliaments in the EU.

He noted that a majority of Parliaments did not see the green card challenging the European Commission's right of initiative, nor the role of the European Parliament. In this context, he welcomed the position expressed by the European Parliament's AFCO Committee, who considered the "green card" proposal positively as long as it did not amount to a real right of initiative. Furthermore, he reckoned that the "green card" would only give a limited role to a group of interested national Parliaments in the agenda-setting, given the fact that the number of green cards would be relatively low and it would be up to the European institutions to react on these.

Mr HANNIGAN noted that a majority of Parliaments supported² the idea of introducing a "green card". A wide consensus seemed to be emerging on key issues, such as the scope, the threshold, the timescale, and the role of the European Parliament. He stressed that the next logical step would be to launch a pilot project. In this regard, he proposed to consider the proposal by the UK *House of Lords* on food waste. Finally, he expressed his hope that the European Commission and, in particular, Vice-President TIMMERMANS would give this initiative the attention it merited and would respond to it.

² A majority of parliaments that responded to the Questionnaire for the 23rd Bi-Annual Report of COSAC.

Mr TANCREDI voiced a critical position towards the introduction of a green card. He introduced three main questions to consider: was the "green card" consistent with the role of national Parliaments as currently foreseen by the Treaty and within the current institutional balance? Did the green card enhance assemblies' prerogatives? Who would decide how the green card would be applied?

Referring to the first question, Mr TANCREDI stated that, under Article 10.2 TEU, the main role of national Parliaments in the EU was the scrutiny on their national governments. He questioned therefore the introduction of a "green card" in the context of the necessity to respect the right of initiative of the European Commission, as well as the role of the European Parliament, as foreseen by Article 225 TFEU. He explained that the political dialogue was a flexible procedure allowing national Parliaments to communicate individually with the European Commission, whereas the proposed "green card" provided a rigid framework, suggesting that the political dialogue should be enhanced without further formalising it.

Concerning the second question, Mr TANCREDI stated that the "green card" would not strengthen the powers of national Parliaments to intervene on major European issues, because of the rising influence of the European Council in setting the EU political priorities and agenda which affected the right of initiative of the European Commission. He encouraged therefore national Parliaments to continue discussions on how to enhance scrutiny of their respective Government's action.

Referring to the third question, he stressed that it was appropriate to continue discussions on the "green card" and similar initiatives within COSAC, however a final decision on the launch of the "green card", which would involve national Parliaments as such and not only their European Affairs Committees, had to be taken by the Conference of Speakers taking into account its coordinating role of interparliamentary cooperation.

He concluded that, instead of introducing a new procedure through deadlines and thresholds, it would be more appropriate and effective for national Parliaments to submit to the European Commission individual or collective requests for new initiatives by using the existing political dialogue.

Sixteen participants intervened in the following debate.

A majority of speakers supported the idea of enhancing the political dialogue by introducing a "green card" and several agreed to launch a pilot project.

Mr Dorin Silviu PETREA, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, underlined that the Romanian Parliament supported the further increase of the role of national Parliaments in European decision-making, provided this would not increase the bureaucracy and slow down the legislative process.

Mr Alberto COSTA, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, stressed that the subsidiarity checks had not achieved the goals set by national Parliaments. In comparison to the present political dialogue, the "green card" would lead to a more structured dialogue between national Parliaments and the European Commission, but also would give more ground for finding a common understanding between them, and also with the European Parliament.

Several speakers underlined that the existing mechanisms, like the "yellow" or "orange card", gave national Parliaments a defensive, negative and reactive role, whereas the introduction of a "green card" would provide for a more constructive, positive and proactive role for national Parliaments. Mr SUTOUR acknowledged that, even if the "green card" did not exist in the treaties, the European Commission would have to react if a certain number of national Parliaments submitted a proposal. He and Mr ZAMMIT DIMECH, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, recommended launching the pilot project without waiting for a formal implementation of the new mechanism, because it could be embedded in the law later. Mr DAEMS encouraged COSAC to extend the existing protocols on subsidiarity in order to create a positive and proactive mechanism fully respecting the powers of the European Parliament and the European Commission.

Ms HÜBNER explained that the European Parliament, since the beginning of the new legislature, had engaged in shifting its focus from legislating to implementation and enforcement. In this context, the European Parliament had been strengthening the parliamentary scrutiny of the, so-called, input and output legitimacy, a topic which would also be addressed at an upcoming interparliamentary meeting organised by the European Parliament's AFCO Committee. She highlighted the role of national Parliaments in the transposition, the enforcement and the evaluation of European acts at national level and stressed the need for a better cooperation between European Parliament and national Parliaments in this field. In her view it was up to national Parliaments to decide how to influence European affairs, either via their national governments or liaising directly with the European Parliament, through individual or collective initiatives; she declared that the European Parliament was open to suggestions from national Parliaments on how this cooperation on overall democratic scrutiny could be shaped, under the condition that the checks and balances would be respected.

Among those supporting the "green card", Mr Vydas GEDVILAS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, pointed out that European Commission would be encouraged to act in order to amend or to repeal existing legislation and welcomed the proposal to run a pilot project, underlining that COSAC was the right forum for this. Mr AZMANI invited COSAC to endorse the "green card" as a new form of political dialogue and launch a pilot project; a set of informal guidelines could be formulated as long as they facilitated the work of national Parliaments. Mr WITTBRODT explained that the transition from an informal to a formal procedure while incorporating a voluntary approach was the central question to be solved. Ms AUROI stressed that oversight over the subsidiarity issues could not just be a negative thing and added that the "green card" should be political in nature. She would propose to issue a "green card" on vigilance of big companies and their subsidiaries or directive on seconded workers. Mr ANGEL underscored that the "green card" was not about giving the national Parliaments a right of initiative, but rather a procedure in which the national Parliaments could play a more proactive role at European level.

In addition, Lord Timothy BOSWELL, UK *House of Lords*, stressed the importance of cooperation rather than confrontation with the European Parliament and other European institutions. He emphasised that the "green card" was an expression of a collective interest of national Parliaments and of solidarity in achieving a certain objective. He pointed out that the discussions on the possible procedure should continue, but also called upon the national Parliaments to launch a pilot project on the basis of a letter already circulated by the *House of*

Lords concerning food waste, as it would provide an opportunity to gather some practical experience.

Mr SHAKER welcomed the idea of the "green card", but also expressed some reservations, namely about its compatibility with the Treaty, the institutional possibilities of the national Parliaments to take full advantage of the new mechanism, and the card's the transposition into national law. He concluded by confirming the Slovenian parliament's readiness to take part in the pilot project.

Mr Karim SAJJAD, European Parliament, emphasised that the disconnection between the national Parliaments and the EU institutions was obvious and that it was necessary to bridge that gap to the benefit of the citizens. He underlined that the European Parliament had taken various measures in this respect, referring to the "yellow card", impact assessment and discussions with national Parliaments from the outset of the legislative process dialogue with the European Parliament. As to the "green card", he stressed the willingness of the European Parliament to engage with national Parliaments in order to close that particular gap. He concluded that the "green card" was one of the avenues that could be further explored.

Mr MOTA PINTO considered that the introduction of the "green card" would need a treaty change and that the institutional balance would be affected. He added that key question concerning the "green card" was the degree of formalisation of this new mechanism that, in his view, had to be discussed with the European Commission.

Ms ČIGĀNE concluded that there seemed to be an emerging consensus on enhancing the role of political dialogue by introducing a "green card", and this consensus would be reflected in the COSAC contributions. She also suggested as the next step engaging into discussion with the European Commission about the introduction of a "green card".

Mr HANNIGAN pointed out that keeping the *status quo* was not an option and that national Parliaments needed to become proactive. He called upon the national Parliaments to launch the pilot project and to include the lessons drawn from this test into the discussions on the modalities of the "green card".

Mr TANCREDI noted that the participants in the debate were all in favour of a greater involvement of national Parliaments in the EU agenda-setting process; however, the challenge would consist of reconciling the role of national Parliaments with that of the European Parliament, in order to avoid overlaps or diluting the legislative proposals. He repeated that the green card had currently no legal basis and called upon the national Parliaments to make better use of the existing instruments under the treaties while trying to introduce new procedures.

7.3 The European Commission's Multiannual Work Programme and the Role of Parliaments

Keynote speakers: Ms Maria João RODRIGUES, Member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament, Ms Danielle AUROI, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*.

In her introductory remarks, the Chair referred to the letter which the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* had sent to the Presidency. It provided an overview of the priorities for the 2015 European

Commission's Work Programme of 14 Parliaments/Chambers. She welcomed the results of this first collective scrutiny of the Commission's Work Programme and encouraged participants to continue their reflection on an early involvement of Parliaments, possibly within the framework of the Commission's multi-annual work planning, foreseen in Article 17 TEU.

Ms Maria João RODRIGUES, Member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament, explained that the European Commission's Multiannual Work Programme had major implications for national policies, hence the importance of keeping up discussions with national Parliaments on how to improve their role in this process. In order to organise their joint work, she believed it was necessary to identify common challenges. She acknowledged the current gap between what the EU should be delivering and the expectations of its citizens, and underlined the need for common work in order to close this gap. In this respect, Ms RODRIGUES referred to internal discussions within the European Parliament on the need to encourage investment, and the European Parliament's active support for the EU Investment Plan. The Plan would require significant joint action with national governments and Parliaments during its implementation phase, thus providing a good example of an area where joint action of European and national parliamentarians was necessary and in which the Annual Programme should be specific. She mentioned the limited levels of public investment available, due to the commitment to common fiscal discipline, especially within the Eurozone and explained that in the next phase of the Work Programme, a discussion would be undertaken on the possibility to complement the national fiscal capacity of the Member States with a new fiscal capacity within the Eurozone. She mentioned another key issue in the Commission's Multiannual Work Programme, namely demand, an essential feature of recovery; she focused on the role of aggregate European demand and the need for improved coordination between Member States to make the best of it. Ms RODRIGUES explained that domestic demand within the member states was kept low which led to increasing social inequalities, an issue that needed to be tackled by ensuring the sustainability of the welfare system and by appropriate negotiations on wages and productivity.

In terms of economic governance, she recommended a division of labour between national Parliaments and the European Parliament throughout the European Semester. Mentioning the Commission's annual proposals for integrated guidelines for economic and employment policies, and the priorities for the Annual Growth Survey, she announced that the Commission intended to increase its ownership of National Reform Programmes, and undertook to send the country reports to Member States much earlier. In this respect a discussion of the National Reform Programmes should be organised by national Parliaments, in order to discuss their relevance and possible omissions; national Parliaments could play a critical role when reacting to National Reform Programmes presented by governments at the European level, and also have the opportunity to react to the Commission's country-specific recommendations. This ongoing interplay between national Parliaments and the European Parliament could further enrich the decision-making process. She concluded by highlighting the central role played by the committees for European Affairs in encouraging other committees to take part in this process and in maintaining a permanent dialogue with MEPs.

Ms AUROI, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée Nationale*, informed participants that the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée Nationale* scrutinised the CWP for the first time in 2015, which led to the adoption of a

European resolution on that topic. While welcoming the fact that the Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the Commission provided for a direct link between the European Parliament and the CWP and also ensured a fair balance of powers, she stressed the need for national Parliaments to be able to also avail themselves of this tool. She argued that scrutiny of the Commission's Annual and Multi-Annual Work Programmes yielded significant added-value: it gave national Parliaments the possibility to comment, and give input on priorities as far upstream as possible. This would lead to increased EU effectiveness, and also to identifying possible gaps and questioning the proper choice of priorities.

She went on to mention the Commission's willingness to lighten its legislative burden and bring about simplification by dealing with fewer legislative proposals in the future and withdrawing several ones currently under negotiation. In her view, avoiding over-legislating and legislating better should not mean legislating less and she mentioned specific examples of areas where a lack of legislation translated into less protection for consumers, the environment, and workers. These gaps in the Commission's programme could lead national Parliaments to use "green cards", and in this respect she welcomed the House of Lords' initiative on food waste.

She called on the Commission to present its annual Work Programme in a way that allowed each national Parliament to let its priorities be known, and thus become involved in the European debate and law-making. For this reason, it was important that the overall context of the Commission's Annual Work Programme be discussed, and COSAC offered a suitable platform to that end. The Commission's Multi-Annual Work Programme should also be debated, and she welcomed the presentation of the 2014-2019 Multi-Annual Work Programme to the European Parliament, which set forth a long-term strategic vision. In her view, Member States should also work together to define the EU's vision, and to work jointly with their governments and the EU institutions.

She supported the idea of the CWP becoming a tool for national Parliaments by which they could express their views collectively, in a cooperation process that would also take into account their diversity. She invited national Parliaments to share their experiences and ideas regarding the scrutiny of the CWP.

Five parliamentarians took the floor in the subsequent debate.

Mr HÖRCSIK stated that the regular, yearly discussions of the CWP should gain in importance, and welcomed the idea of the deadline set by the end of March; he expressed the view that regular discussions at the COSAC Chairpersons' meetings held in the first semester would enable the timely selection of prioritized proposals.

Mr BIZET referred to the added value national Parliaments could provide and mentioned that the French resolution pointed out that the EU should act when necessary, confining itself to acting in key areas such as Energy Union, digital market, fight against terrorism, internet governance, European industry, rather than producing laws that interfere with the daily lives of citizens.

Mr ROBRA mentioned that in relation to the Commission's Multi-Annual Work Programme a distinction needed to be made between the Multi-annual financial framework and the Interinstitutional Agreement; the recent Commission's proposal to improve cooperation

between the Commission, the European Parliament and Council and to ensure these institutions to have an exchange of multiannual programming was a development which, he argued, might lead to giving up the Multi-Annual Work Programme.

Mr ANGEL inquired if, in addition to the European Affairs committee, other select committees were involved in the scrutiny of the CWP and whether a debate preceded the final vote of the resolution allowing the public to be involved.

In her reply, Ms RODRIGUES, argued that organising ongoing and/or regular exchanges of views enabled access to better information on the concerns of citizens, which was an important basis for proper European political decision-making; national Parliaments could provide broad assessments and also focus on priorities where their input could be useful; she added that the upcoming work programme would be different, because its focus, put by the Commission in the first year on the Energy Union, Digital Agenda, and TTIP, would shift to mobility, migration, Eurozone issues, and neighbourhood policy.

In her reply, Ms AUROI mentioned the increasing interest taken by national Parliaments in the Commission's Annual Work Programme; within the *Assemblée nationale*, an internal reflection was conducted before the endorsement of the report by the plenary and political groups within the European Affairs committee played an important role, using a transversal approach in an otherwise rather vertical institution. She confirmed that there was a growing understanding of the importance of European issues, and mentioned the fact that Vice-President TIMMERMANS visited several specialised committees. In the preparation of the COP21 meeting, various committees worked together.

The Chair concluded that there seemed to be broad agreement that Parliaments would like to better use the currently existing instruments for parliamentary scrutiny and involvement, and build on the existing procedures; she welcomed the growing cooperation and experience-sharing among national Parliaments. She believed national Parliaments were prepared to become positively involved in EU decision-making by using the "green card", which would allow for bridging gaps between national Parliaments, EU citizens and the European institutions. She called for exploring further ways to implement this mechanism. Regarding the proposal for a trial of the "green card", she called for the launch of a pilot project on the proposal on food waste.

8. Adoption of the Contribution of the LIII COSAC

Ms ČIGĀNE mentioned that the first draft of the Contribution had been sent to the delegations on 18th May, while the second draft had been sent on 29 May 2015. The second draft, as revised by the Troika, had been approved by the Chairpersons. The text of the Contribution of LIII COSAC was adopted, as amended by the Chairpersons.

The statement on the recent entry bans imposed by the Russian Federation, proposed by the Troika, was adopted as amended by the Chairpersons.

Ms ČIGĀNE informed the plenary that the Presidency had received an individual opinion from Mr Igors PIMENOVŠ, a member of the Latvian delegation, on the abovementioned statement, which was available at the meeting documents' table.

Then, Mr NEOFYTOU briefly reported on the lunch session debate on "Dealing with the Security Concerns in the Middle East and North African Region" and Mr CASADO reported on the informal morning session on "EU Passenger Name Record proposal: taking stock".

Finally, Mr ANGEL announced that the next meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons for which the First Vice-President of the European Commission, Mr TIMMERMANS, had been confirmed as a keynote speaker would take place on 12-13 July 2015 in Luxembourg. The LIV COSAC meeting would take place on 29 November - 1 December 2015 in Luxembourg.