

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

Zagreb, Croatia, 20 May 2020

(held through videoconference)

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

CHAIR: Mr Domagoj Ivan MILOŠEVI , Chairman of the European Affairs Committee, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*.

Ms Satu HASSI, Chairperson of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*; Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs, German *Bundestag*; Ms Mairead McGUINNESS, First Vice-President, European Parliament.

(Mr Guido Wolf, Chairman of the Committee on European Union Questions, German *Bundesrat*, was unable to attend and submitted a written statement.)

AGENDA

- 1. Adoption of the agenda of the Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC**
- 2. Convocation of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC via videoconference and approval of the draft agenda of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons**
- 3. Draft Conclusions of the COSAC**
- 4. Presentation of the 33rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC**
- 5. Letters received by the Presidency**
- 6. Any other business**

PROCEEDINGS

1. Adoption of the agenda of the Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC

Mr Domagoj Ivan MILOŠEVI , Chairman of the European Affairs Committee, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika") and referred to the agenda of the meeting of the Troika, which was adopted without amendment.

2. Convocation of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC via videoconference and approval of the draft agenda of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons

Mr MILOŠEVI then referred to the programme of the meeting of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons, which would be convened on 16 June 2020, and would cover the following topics:

-) common European response to the corona virus outbreak;
-) Conference on the Future of Europe;
-) the Multiannual Financial Framework;
-) and the Relations with the United Kingdom and the Western Balkans.

He noted some of the challenges that could be faced during the meeting, not least the language regime to be employed, and asked colleagues for their input.

In a statement read by Mr MILOŠEVIĆ, Mr Guido WOLF, Chairman of the Committee on European Union Questions, German *Bundesrat*, strongly supported the convening of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC, that would provide an opportunity to exchange views on current important European policy issues, and to make the voices of national Parliaments heard, after a period of very limited national parliamentary involvement at the onset of the crisis caused by the covid-19 pandemic. Mr WOLF welcomed the proposed agenda of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC.

Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs, German *Bundestag* noted time limits. Mr KRICHBAUM noted the importance of discussing Brexit, but doubted that there would not be enough time for this topic. He therefore suggested holding an extra conference to deal solely with this matter, with Mr Michel BARNIER, Head of the Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom, invited as guest speaker.

Ms Mairead McGUINNESS, First Vice-President, European Parliament, also raised concern with regard to time available, and suggested to group topics together in order to get around this limitation. She proposed to have a speaker from the European Parliament on the COVID-19/MFF topics and also welcomed a meeting on Brexit with Mr BARNIER.

Ms HASSI also agreed with the idea of having a separate meeting on Brexit.

In light of this, it was decided the agenda of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC would consist of the following sessions:

-) Session I: The Common European Response to the Coronavirus Outbreak and the Repercussions on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021 - 2027;
-) Session II: The Conference on the Future of Europe;

The issue of Brexit would be addressed during a separate conference dedicated solely to the topic.

It was agreed by everyone that the Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC would be conducted in English and French only, whereas the videoconference on Brexit would be conducted in English only.

Mr KRICHBAUM expressed his view that given the circumstances of the upcoming Extraordinary Chairpersons' meeting, the floor should be given to COSAC Members only. Ms McGUINNESS and Ms HASSI agreed that priority should be given to Members. It was agreed that the floor would be given to the COSAC members only.

The draft programme of the LXII COSAC was thus approved with one amendment.

3. Draft Conclusions of the COSAC

Mr MILOŠEVIĆ turned to the topic of written outcome of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC.

Mr KRICHBAUM raised some reservations with regard to any possible Conclusions, given the circumstances, and suggested to find other ways to provide a written outcome of the conference, such as a letter.

All colleagues agreed with this proposal and decided to adopt a letter, open for signature to all participants.

Mr WOLF had also backed this idea in his written statement.

4. Presentation of the 33rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC

Mr MILOŠEVI presented the 33rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC, which was drafted based on replies to the related questionnaire circulated to national Parliaments/Chambers on 7 February 2020.

5. Letters received by the Presidency

The Chair referred to the following letters received by the Presidency:

- Letter from Mr Pere LÓPEZ, Chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee, Andorra *Consell General*; and Mr Armend ZEMAJ, Chair of the Committee on European Integration, Assembly of Kosovo* requesting participation in COSAC meetings.
- Letter from Sir William CASH, Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee, UK *House of Commons*, requesting participation in any COSAC related meetings or exchange of views, and committing the Chamber to the co-financing of the COSAC Secretariat for the period up to 31 December 2020. Mr MILOŠEVI proposed that, given its particular status, the UK be treated differently from the other observers during the Extraordinary Conference, a proposal which was welcomed by all colleagues from the Troika.
- Letter from Mr Jean BIZET, French *Sénat*, urging COSAC to pursue and maintain a deeper relationship with the United Kingdom.
- Letter from Mr Guido WOLF, Chairman of the Committee on European Union Questions, German *Bundesrat*, informing the Presidency of his absence during the Presidential Troika videoconference, and presenting his proposals in written form instead.

6. Any other business

Mr MILOŠEVI stressed the intention of the Croatian Presidency to support any reform of the COSAC meetings.

Ms McGUINNESS stressed the value of informal exchanges between the Troika members using the videoconference technology.

Mr KRICHBAUM pointed out that the European Union had developed a number of tools during the Coronavirus crisis and underlined the difficulties that the Croatian Presidency faced, commending the Presidency for its work. Mr KRICHBAUM also announced that the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC during the German Presidency, originally planned to take place in July, would have to be cancelled due to the pandemic. In light of this, the incoming German Presidency, as explained also in Mr WOLF's statement, planned to convene a meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC via videoconference in July to discuss, amongst other matters, the postponement of the Chairpersons' Meeting to mid-September.

Ms HASSI pointed out the videoconference format might remain a useful tool in the future.

Mr MILOŠEVI concluded the meeting by expressing his hope that the Union would find the way to resist to all economic and social challenges it was facing, and turn the situation around.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with Resolution 1244 of the United Nations Security Council and to the opinion of the ICJ on the declaration of independence of Kosovo.