

CONTRIBUTION

XXXth Cosac, Tuesday, 7 October 2003

COSAC

1. Welcomes the results of the Convention and recognises the historical importance of the Convention as a method enabling parliaments to contribute to the definition of the draft treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe before approval by the IGC and ratification by National Parliaments;
2. Notes that thanks to its prevailing parliamentary component, the Convention managed to produce a balanced text which represents a fundamental step forward for the European construction and should be the basis for the IGC conclusions;
3. Welcomes the provisions of the draft constitutional treaty which strengthen the role of National Parliaments, transforming them into full-fledged actors of the EU process, and of the European Parliament. With particular reference to the provisions envisaged by the protocols on the role of National Parliaments and the protocol concerning the application of subsidiarity and proportionality principles:
 - stresses the significance of the provisions concerning the direct access of National Parliaments to consultation and planning documentation, as well as to legislative proposals that the Commission transmits to the European Parliament and the Council and the agendas and reports of Council sessions, including the minutes of meetings where the Council of Ministers is deliberating on legislative proposals; this will ensure transparency of the EU law-making process and will enable parliaments to effectively guide the action of their respective governments within European institutions;
 - acknowledges the great novelty represented by the so-called “early warning” system, which gives National Parliaments the power to send reasoned opinions to the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission concerning the compliance of proposed legislation to the principle of subsidiarity;
 - expresses appreciation for the provisions contained in the protocols on inter-parliamentary cooperation and welcomes the provisions concerning the COSAC activity, with special regard to the power to submit any contributions it deems useful to European Institutions, and to organise inter-parliamentary conferences on specific topics, in particular to debate matters of CFSP and ESDP;
4. Calls for a closer coordination between parliaments in the European debate. For that reason it proposes that all Parliaments within the EU as well as the European Parliament shall **take** simultaneous debates on the Commission’s legislative and work programme and on the main topics of interest for Europe as proposed in the Convention. This could be an effective instrument with a view to performing a preliminary control on compliance with the subsidiarity principle and helping raise a greater awareness of European issues among citizens, national policy-makers and civil society;
5. Hopes that IGC negotiations will be conducted at top political level and in a fully transparent manner, in conformity with the constituent value of the Convention, and expresses special satisfaction for the procedural approach adopted by the Presidency in office as well as the initiatives announced, aimed to ensure public access to all the

documents presented in the context of the IGC; believes, in relation to those initiatives, that adequate information should be provided both to the European Parliament, and to National Parliaments by the respective governments;

6. Welcomes the intention expressed by national parliamentarians participating in the Convention to continue to follow IGC proceedings and possibly hold further meetings between the opening of the IGC and the signing of the treaty; it also welcomes the invitation addressed by the European Parliament - with its Resolution of 24 September – to its competent committee to organise joint meetings with representatives of National Parliaments, so as to ensure the follow-up and evaluation of the IGC proceedings;
7. Expresses its appreciation to the Italian Presidency for its willingness to inform COSAC on the IGC proceedings and asks the Council Presidency to report to COSAC Chairpersons at their meeting to be held in within 2003.
8. Urges that the signing of the constitutional treaty will take place immediately after the final accession of new member states, on 1st May, and before the election of the new European Parliament.