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COVER NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: National Parliaments

Subject: Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of
Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC)
- Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC
(Nicosia, 16 March 2026, held through videoconference)
- Interparliamentary Videoconference in the framework of COSAC
(Nicosia, 16 March 2026)
= Minutes

Delegations will find in the Annexes the minutes from the abovementioned meetings as prepared by the Secretariat of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC).



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

NICOSIA, CYPRUS, 16 MARCH 2026

(HELD THROUGH VIDEOCONFERENCE)

Note: The in-person meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC scheduled to take place ahead of LXXV COSAC in Nicosia on 15-17 March 2026 was cancelled, together with the LXXV COSAC itself, in light of developments in the wider Eastern Mediterranean region. An Interparliamentary Videoconference in the framework of COSAC was held on 16 March. To ensure a certain degree of continuity, the Presidential Troika of COSAC decided to also hold a videoconference ahead of the Interparliamentary Videoconference on the same date.

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

CHAIR: Mr Harris GEORGIADES, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs of the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*;

Mr Barry WARD, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*;

Mr Søren SØNDERGAARD, Member of the European Affairs Committee of the Danish *Folketing*;

Mr Charles GOERENS, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Mr Harris GEORGIADES opened the meeting by explaining that, in light of recent geopolitical developments and uncertainties regarding flights to Cyprus, the Presidency had decided, approximately ten days earlier, to cancel the LXXV COSAC, scheduled to take place in Nicosia on 15-17 March 2026. The Presidency took the decision to organise the Interparliamentary Videoconference in the framework of COSAC on the same date, 16 March. He underlined that the situation in Cyprus was safe and normalcy had returned. Mr GEORGIADES thanked participants for their understanding and for their participation in the videoconference.

ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

Mr GEORGIADES introduced the [agenda of the Troika Meeting](#), which had been circulated to delegations on 11 March, and which was adopted without amendments.

INFORMATION ON THE 45TH COSAC BI-ANNUAL REPORT

Mr GEORGIADES informed that the COSAC Secretariat had prepared the [45th Bi-annual Report of COSAC](#), and gave the floor to Mr Jakob SJÖVALL, the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, to briefly present its main findings to the Troika. Mr SJÖVALL provided an overview of the background and contents of the 45th Bi-annual Report of COSAC, and informed that it had been shared with all delegations on 27 February and uploaded to IPEX.

INFORMATION CONCERNING THE COSAC VOTING GUIDE

Mr GEORGIADES reminded the Troika that the COSAC Secretariat had been tasked to write a voting guide that specifies how draft contributions and conclusions, and amendments to them, should be examined and voted on in COSAC as per the [Conclusions of the LXXIV COSAC](#) adopted in Copenhagen. He then gave the floor to Mr SJÖVALL to further elaborate. Mr SJÖVALL explained that the COSAC Secretariat had adjusted an internal administrative document on proceedings into a [COSAC voting guide](#), which had been circulated, together with a [cover note](#), to all delegations on 27 February. He further underlined that despite the voting guide, some uncertainties remained in the Rules of Procedure of COSAC, which the COSAC Secretariat had tried to map out to help make the process more streamlined and seamless in the future.

BRIEFING ON THE CO-FINANCING OF THE PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE COSAC SECRETARIAT

Mr GEORGIADES provided an update on the situation regarding the co-financing of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for the period 2027-2028, following the changes proposed during the previous Danish Presidency. In light of the proposal put forward during the Danish Presidency, national Parliaments/Chambers had been invited to renew their engagement in the co-financing agreement through letters of intent for the 2027-2028 period. As of 16 March, 33 out of 39 letters had been received, indicating the willingness of these Parliaments/Chambers to contribute to the co-financing under the new scheme. Responses from the remaining Parliaments/Chambers were expected shortly.

Mr GEORGIADES noted that the follow-up on the new co-financing scheme would be handled by the incoming Irish Presidency.

BRIEFING ON THE STATE OF PLAY OF THE COSAC RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr GEORGIADES informed the Troika about the state of play on the proposal to amend the [COSAC Rules of Procedure](#) put forward during the previous Danish Presidency. He indicated that the matter would be referred to the incoming Irish Presidency. Furthermore, he recalled that the proposal aimed to lower the threshold of votes required to adopt COSAC contributions, and amendments to these, from a three-quarters majority to a two-thirds majority. Mr GEORGIADES informed that unanimity within COSAC had not yet been achieved, as Hungary maintained its opposition, as laid out during [LXXIV COSAC in Copenhagen](#).

Mr GEORGIADES noted that the issue thus remains open and that it would be up to the incoming Irish Presidency whether it wished to review the Rules of Procedure during its Presidency.

LETTERS RECEIVED BY THE PRESIDENCY

Mr GEORGIADES informed the Troika of letters received by the Presidency regarding requests for participation in the COSAC meetings during the Cyprus Presidency. He recalled that all received letters had been consulted with the Troika and had been replied to positively.

All letters received and replied to by the Presidency can be viewed on [IPEX](#).

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Barry WARD took the floor to congratulate Mr GEORGIADES on the organisation of the online meeting and the Cyprus Presidency in general. He further thanked Mr SJÖVALL and the COSAC Secretariat for their support. Mr WARD confirmed that the Irish Presidency would be happy to engage with the items referred to on the agenda and continue the work together with the Presidential Troika. On the take-over of Presidency, Mr WARD extended “céad míle fáilte romhat” - a hundred thousand welcomes - for COSAC to come to Ireland. He informed about the dates for the upcoming COSAC Chairpersons meeting and COSAC Plenary to be held during the second semester of 2026.

Mr Charles GOERENS took the floor to express solidarity with Cyprus in its current situation and underlined that the security of Cyprus was the security of the EU, and that Europe stood firm and united. Furthermore, Mr GOERENS thanked the Cyprus Presidency for conducting the online videoconference.

Mr Søren SØNDERGAARD took the floor to pass on greetings from the Chair, Ms Brigitte KLINTSKOV JERKEL, and the Vice-chair, Mr Henrik MØLLER, from the Danish *Folketing*'s European Affairs Committee, who unfortunately could not be present due to parliamentary elections. Mr SØNDERGAARD said he was pleased to be present and anticipated a successful videoconference.

**MINUTES OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY VIDEOCONFERENCE IN THE
FRAMEWORK OF COSAC****NICOSIA, CYPRUS, 16 MARCH 2026****(HELD THROUGH VIDEOCONFERENCE)**

Note: The LXXV COSAC in Nicosia on 15-17 March 2026 was cancelled in light of developments in the wider Eastern Mediterranean region. An Interparliamentary Videoconference in the framework of COSAC was held on 16 March. Although formally a Presidency event, the COSAC Secretariat supported the Presidency by writing these minutes from the Interparliamentary Videoconference.

A video recording of the full meeting is available via the [webpage](#) of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Cyprus Presidency.

OPENING OF THE MEETING

CHAIR: Mr Harris GEORGIADES, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs of the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*.

The meeting started with words of welcome by Mr GEORGIADES, who expressed his regret at having to cancel the LXXV COSAC in Nicosia and remarked how this shed light on the disruptive role of the Iranian regime and its proxies in the region. Fortunately, he noted, the security situation in Cyprus was now normalised, following the single drone incident at a British base on the island. Security and defence measures had been enhanced, including through the deployment of air and naval forces from several EU partners, including Greece, France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, as well as the UK. He expressed gratitude for this tangible act of support. This crisis, just like the Russian invasion of Ukraine, highlights the need for a stronger, cohesive and strategically autonomous Union able to safeguard freedom and security throughout the continent and effectively act on the global stage, he underlined. This is exactly why we took the initiative to call for this conference, he continued; the importance of developing a strong Common Foreign and Security Policy based on our values becomes urgent in the face of rising geopolitical tensions and authoritarian and revisionist powers.

Mr GEORGIADES then went on to present the programme and main speakers of the meeting.

Opening speech by Ms Annita DEMETRIOU, President of the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*

Ms DEMETRIOU began her intervention by noting that what affects one Member State affects us all. We are living through a turbulent period, linked to the influence and challenges of social media, misinformation and toxicity. We need to act with seriousness and responsibility, she went on, and inspire trust among citizens. She noted Cyprus' strategic location at the crossroads

of Europe, Asia and Africa, making it a hub for trade, energy and defence. In a region often marked by instability, Cyprus remains a pillar of stability. She noted that the country is implementing plans to evacuate European citizens from the Middle East, as the situation there escalates.

Ms DEMETRIOU went on to note that the Presidency offers the chance to address key issues including geopolitical conflicts, migration, energy and security, and economic instability. Coordinated European action is essential, she underlined. In the Middle East, Cyprus contributes to regional stability, and helps foster relations between the EU and Middle Eastern countries, while emphasising that the EU must lead and turn plans into tangible action. She underlined the importance of the Pact for the Mediterranean and its implementation. The current crisis calls for solidarity and action to build a stronger and more secure Europe, and adherence to international law and territorial integrity, she remarked. Ukraine and Cyprus both exemplify territorial violation; she reminded delegations that over 36 percent of the Republic of Cyprus has been under illegal military occupation since 1974. She called on urgent diplomacy to prevent a widening of the current crisis in the Middle East, to protect civilians and safeguard energy supply chains. Responsible, coordinated European action is essential at this critical moment. She pointed out that COSAC presents an important opportunity for citizens' representatives to engage in dialogue, declare political commitments and define shared priorities. In unity, we can confront every challenge, she concluded.

Presentation on the implementation of the priorities of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Dr Nicholas A. IOANNIDES, Deputy Minister of Migration and International Protection of the Republic of Cyprus, presented an overview of progress in implementing the priorities of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union. He emphasised the role of national Parliaments in shaping and scrutinising European policies in a context of geopolitical uncertainty and regional instability in Europe's neighbourhood. He also highlighted Cyprus' role as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East, underlining the country's consistent contribution to addressing regional challenges and its continued humanitarian engagement. He reaffirmed Cyprus' commitment to dialogue, diplomacy and cooperation as key elements underpinning its role as an enabler of stability and security. He noted that the priorities of the Cyprus Presidency had gained increased relevance in the current context and confirmed that its work was proceeding as planned, with all meetings in Cyprus, from April until the end of the Presidency, taking place as scheduled. Mr IOANNIDES stated that the overarching objective of the Cyprus Presidency is a Union that is more autonomous and open to the world, adding that tangible results had already been achieved during the first three months of the Presidency.

Under the first pillar, autonomy through security, defence and readiness, he reported on progress in strengthening European security and defence, including the agreement reached with the European Parliament on the Ukraine Support Loan for the period 2026–2027. He also referred to ongoing work on defence readiness and military mobility, measures to enhance democratic resilience against hybrid threats and disinformation, and preparations for the full

operationalisation of the Migration and Asylum Pact by June 2026. Regarding the second pillar, autonomy through competitiveness, he outlined developments aimed at reinforcing economic resilience. In this context, he noted the adoption of Council decisions authorising the signing of the EU–Mercosur Partnership Agreement and the Interim Trade Agreement. He further reported on advances in simplification through the omnibus packages presented by the European Commission, as well as on progress concerning the single market and sector-specific legislative proposals, notably in the areas of agriculture and energy and in relation to the emissions trading system. Under the third pillar, a Union open to the world, he stated that the Cyprus Presidency had focused on strengthening international partnerships and advancing accession negotiations with Ukraine, Moldova and partners in the Western Balkans, in line with the merit-based approach. With regard to the fourth pillar, a Union of values that leaves no one behind, he referred to recent discussions and progress in the fields of social and health policy, including housing. Concerning the fifth pillar, a long-term budget for an autonomous Union, he provided an update on ongoing negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and indicated that the Presidency aimed to present further progress at the June European Council. In conclusion, he stressed the importance of close cooperation between Member States, EU institutions and national Parliaments, and underlined the role of COSAC in strengthening democratic legitimacy and supporting better legislation. He reaffirmed the Presidency’s intention to act as an honest broker in advancing solutions in the European interest, with the shared objective of strengthening a resilient, competitive and outward-looking Union grounded in its core values.

UKRAINE AND THE QUEST FOR EUROPEAN SECURITY

The session was chaired by Mr Harris GEORGIADES, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs of the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*.

Ms Ivanna KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE, Chair of the Committee on Ukraine’s Integration to the EU of the Ukrainian *Verkhovna Rada*, opened the session. She expressed regret that the meeting could not take place in Cyprus and underlined that Europe is currently facing recurring and interconnected security crises. While part of the international attention is directed towards developments in the Middle East, she stressed that the war in Ukraine continues unabated, referring in this context to recent missile attacks on Kyiv.

Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE emphasised that Ukraine had endured a particularly difficult winter due to systematic attacks on critical civilian and energy infrastructure. Despite these challenges, Ukraine had demonstrated resilience, supported by sustained assistance from the European Union. She stressed that Ukraine is fighting not only for its own survival and sovereignty, but also for the broader European project, recalling the fundamental principle of the freedom of nations to choose their own future and alliances. She further underlined that Ukraine should be regarded not only as a recipient of security support, but also as a provider of European security, highlighting contributions in areas such as innovation, battlefield experience, cyber capabilities, energy resilience and institutional endurance under wartime conditions. In this regard, supporting Ukraine was described as an investment in Europe’s

common future. She rejected the idea that Europe must choose between supporting Ukraine and advancing its EU accession, arguing that the accession process itself strengthens Ukraine's democratic reforms and resilience.

Mr Charles GOERENS, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament (AFCO), followed. He stressed that the war in Ukraine is not a distant conflict, but one with direct consequences for Europe. He stated that Russia's intention to destabilise the European Union and NATO was evident and recalled that Ukraine has stood firm since 2022 as a defender of shared European values and the rules-based international order.

Mr GOERENS underlined that the futures of Ukraine and the European Union are deeply intertwined and that the outcome of the war will have a decisive impact on Europe's own security and stability. He reaffirmed the EU's firm commitment to Ukraine, recalling the principle that nothing concerning Ukraine's future can be decided without Ukraine, and that nothing concerning Europe's security can be decided without Europe's political involvement. EU enlargement was described as an investment in European security, and he criticised attempts to undermine financial support for Ukraine as running counter to European interests. He also referred to the European Parliament's position that frozen Russian assets should ultimately be used to support Ukraine's defence, reconstruction and the compensation of victims, stressing that the aggressor must be held accountable and pay for the destruction caused. In addition, he highlighted the importance of strengthening the EU's own defence capacities and Europe's future security architecture, noting that Ukraine's military innovation and battlefield experience provide valuable lessons for Europe. He emphasised that close cooperation between the EU and NATO, as well as sustained transatlantic unity, remain essential, and recalled that the erosion of international law in one region inevitably weakens it everywhere.

During the following debate, 21 speakers took the floor.

There was broad agreement that the war in Ukraine does not constitute a regional or isolated conflict, but represents a direct challenge to European security and the rules-based international order. A number of speakers stressed that Ukraine is acting as a frontline defender of Europe, shielding the EU from further destabilisation and Russian aggression. The conflict was described as having far-reaching implications not only for Ukraine's sovereignty, but also for the credibility of international law and collective security arrangements. Several interventions underlined that Ukrainians are paying a very high price in defence of democratic principles shared across Europe, and that the defence of Ukraine is therefore inseparable from the defence of Europe itself.

A recurrent theme in the debate concerned the necessity of continued, long-term and comprehensive EU support for Ukraine, including political, financial, economic and military assistance. Such support was repeatedly characterised not as an act of charity, but as a strategic necessity and an investment in Europe's own security. Several speakers warned against any weakening of political resolve or fragmentation of European unity, particularly at a time when

other global crises, including developments in the Middle East, risk diverting attention and resources away from Ukraine. Maintaining sanctions against Russia and ensuring sustained financial assistance were highlighted as essential instruments in this regard.

EU enlargement also featured prominently in the debate and was closely linked to Europe's long-term security interests. It was argued that the accession process contributes directly to Ukraine's resilience by strengthening institutions, promoting reforms and anchoring the country within the European political and legal framework. Several participants called for a clear, credible and politically meaningful European perspective for Ukraine, warning that delays or ambiguity risk weakening reform momentum at a critical juncture.

Another key issue raised was the need for Europe to assume greater responsibility for its own defence. While NATO was described as indispensable, a number of speakers underlined that Europe must significantly strengthen its own defence capabilities and industrial capacity. Ukraine's experience in modern warfare was highlighted as a valuable asset, with references made to developments in areas such as air defence, counter-drone technologies, artificial intelligence and battlefield innovation. Cooperation with Ukraine was therefore seen as mutually beneficial, both in supporting Ukraine's defence and reconstruction and in strengthening Europe's own security preparedness.

In their concluding remarks, Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE and Mr GOERENS thanked participants for the strong solidarity and unity expressed during the debate. Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE recalled that the war against Ukraine has lasted for more than a decade and stressed the importance of accurately identifying the conflict as Russian aggression. She emphasised that unity, sustained pressure and determination are essential to bringing the war to an end and enabling a prosperous European future for Ukraine.

Mr GOERENS concluded by underlining that defending Ukraine means defending Europe's borders, values and democratic way of life. He warned that liberal democracy is under pressure globally and stressed the need for continued political leadership and commitment to standing with Ukraine.

The following speakers took the floor during this debate:

Barry WARD (Irish Houses of the Oireachtas), Ruth FIRMENICH (European Parliament), Pieyre-Alexandre ANGLADE (French *Assemblée nationale*), Erik OTTOSON (Swedish *Riksdag*), Giuliomaria TERZI DI SANT'AGATA (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*), Dimitrios KOUVELAS (Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*), Rasa BUDBERGYTĖ (Lithuanian *Seimas*), Tomasz GRODZKI (Polish *Senat*), Anton HOFREITER (German *Bundestag*), Ricardo CARVALHO (Portuguese *Assembleia da República*), Jelena MILOŠ (Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*), Saara-Sofia SIRÉN (Finnish *Eduskunta*), Zoltán TESSELY (Hungarian *Országgyűlés*), Peeter TALI (Estonian *Riigikogu*), Edward ZAMMIT LEWIS (Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*), Denis DOKSANSKÝ (Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*), Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbian *Narodna skupština*), Pawel BARTOSZEK (Icelandic *Alþingi*), Claude KERN (French *Sénat*), Ruairí Ó MURCHÚ (Irish Houses of the Oireachtas), Marcel SPATARI (Moldovan *Parlamentul Republicii*).

THE EU AND THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

The session was chaired by Mr Harris GEORGIADES, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs of the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*.

The session began with a keynote speech given by Mr Dimitris KAIRIDIS, Vice Chair of the Committee on National Defence and Foreign Affairs of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*.

Mr KAIRIDIS opened by highlighting the ongoing military conflict in the Middle East, before moving to discuss the potential scenarios and implications arising from this conflict for the EU. He asserted that given the probability of regime change, there appears to be two main scenarios. The first might entail the signing of an agreement to see a freeze on Iran's nuclear ambitions in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. While preferable, this scenario is considered unlikely. The second scenario suggests the possibility of a ceasefire which is likely followed by low intensity periodic breakouts. In this case a weakened but belligerent Iran would continue to disrupt the Gulf States.

Mr KAIRIDIS described the potential consequences highlighting in particular the likely economic, political and social impacts, alongside describing the potential for a renewed risk of hybrid threats.

Mr KAIRIDIS drew attention to the display of European solidarity evident in Member States responses to the unwarranted attacks on Cyprus, reminding participants of the existence of a common space which must be jointly defended. Due to the need to reconcile the views of all 27 Member States, the EU policy process is often accused of being cumbersome, bureaucratic and slow. However, this model may perhaps offer some hidden advantages when compared to the current US model, according to Mr KAIRIDIS. Members were reminded that diplomacy is inevitable, and this may be where the European contribution becomes essential if stability is to be restored. By virtue of historical experience, Europeans are more attuned to taking the long view and understand the need for a political framework if stability in the Middle East is to be achieved.

Finally, Mr KAIRIDIS observed that the current crisis should remind us of the urgency of building up Europe's strategic autonomy, accelerating the energy transition away from importing fossil fuels from unreliable sources and strengthening EU structures and procedures so that Europe can better withstand hybrid threats.

During the following debate, 18 speakers took the floor.

Across the contributions, a number of recurring themes emerged, including concern for the escalation of conflict, support for partners in Cyprus, the risks posed by instability in the Middle East and the importance of international law and principles of diplomacy.

Of most prominence was the deep concern around the escalation of conflict in the Middle East with reference made to the military intervention of the US and Israel in Iran, the ongoing situation in Gaza and the recent attack on Cyprus. Several contributions expressed clear and

strong support for Cyprus in the wake of the recent attack and emphasised the importance of solidarity and protecting the EU borders. During the discussion, speakers emphasised that the situation poses risks far beyond the immediate region.

The fragility of international security was underlined by several speakers, with several warning of the many dangers of further escalation, including global consequences such as economic impacts and risks to EU security. That stability in the Middle East is critical for the safety and security of the EU was emphasised by several speakers. A number of speakers also cautioned against the potential for Europe to be drawn into conflict unnecessarily and that the consequences will be most keenly felt by European citizens, for example, in increased energy costs.

It was noted that military escalation has rarely produced stability or democratic change. For this reason, many speakers considered it vital that Europe works towards de-escalation and places strong focus on diplomacy to prevent further escalation. Participants highlighted the importance of diplomacy with numerous interventions calling for the prioritisation of diplomacy above military action and a recognition of the historical knowledge and expertise held in Europe and the EU's role as mediator.

An overriding message among contributors was on the importance of international law. Many speakers noted that the current escalation is without UN mandate and in violation of international law, with some referring to what they perceived as a "double standard" or difference in approach towards certain conflicts. Members called for a consistent approach condemning all violations of international law wherever they occur. It was stressed that focus must be placed on democratic principles and dialogue, with a return to the founding principles of the EU, urging a focus on economic, social and democratic development. Above all the norms of diplomacy and international law must be upheld.

The following speakers took the floor during this debate:

Ruairí Ó MURCHÚ (Irish Houses of the Oireachtas), Barry WARD (Irish Houses of the Oireachtas), Pieyre-Alexandre ANGLADE (French Assemblée nationale), Kristian VIGENIN (European Parliament), Giuliomaria TERZI DI SANT'AGATA (Italian Senato della Repubblica), Marina NIKOLAOU (Cyprus Vouli ton Antiprosopon), Jantine ZWINKELS (Dutch Tweede Kamer), Jacek WŁOSOWICZ (Polish Senat), Vicente MONTAVEZ AGUILLAUME (Spanish Congreso de los Diputados), Radvilė MORKŪNAITĖ-MIKULĖNIENĖ (Lithuanian Seimas), Jelena MILOŠ (Croatian Hrvatski sabor), Ilona SZATMARI WALDAU (Swedish Riksdag), Edite ESTRELA (Portuguese Assembleia da República), Denis DOKSANSKÝ (Czech Poslanecká sněmovna), Života STARČEVIĆ (Serbian Narodna skupština), Olena VINTONYAK (Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada), Peeter TALI (Estonian Riigikogu), Ronan LE GLEUT (French Sénat).

THE EU AND THE MEDITERRANEAN: TOWARDS A STRONGER EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

The session was chaired by Mr Harris GEORGIADES, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs of the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*.

The session began with a keynote intervention by Ms Dubravka ŠUICA, European Commissioner for the Mediterranean. In her speech, Ms ŠUICA emphasised the importance of dialogue within and outside the EU, underlining the relevance of COSAC. The Commissioner stressed the need for de-escalation, diplomacy and dialogue, as well as the European Commission's support to the Iranian people. She highlighted the growing importance of partnerships in the EU's neighbourhood, referring in particular to the situation in Iran and its broader implications, including the impact on energy markets, maritime security and human cost: "Instability around Europe has a direct impact on Europe".

On the Pact for the Mediterranean, launched last November, Ms ŠUICA stressed its importance to reinforce partnerships, develop shared interests and concretely deliver tangible benefits for Europeans and Mediterranean partners, including in areas such as energy, security, migration and education. She also highlighted initiatives aimed at supporting youth, including the creation of a Mediterranean University and a Youth Parliamentary Assembly, with a view to expand skills development to better respond to the needs of the labour market and to give a voice to young people as an investment in the future.

Finally, the Commissioner stressed the importance of strengthening the engagement with the Gulf partners in order to support energy diversification, and to ensure security and stability in the region. Ms ŠUICA underlined the need for the necessary resources, mainly in the context of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and called on national Parliaments to support the continuation of the work.

Following the Commissioner's intervention, Mr GEORGIADES gave the floor to Mr KAIRIDIS, keynote speaker on the session "The EU and the Middle East Crisis". Mr KAIRIDIS emphasised the importance of learning from past interventions in Iraq, Libya and elsewhere. He highlighted that recent actions in the region often fall outside international law and may have unintended geopolitical consequences, such as strengthening Russia's position. Mr KAIRIDIS concluded by reaffirming the importance of European strategic autonomy, energy transition, strengthening EU readiness to address hybrid threats, underlining that collective European efforts are essential for achieving success in a volatile global context.

During the following debate, four speakers took the floor.

The debate centred on the current Middle East crisis and its implications for the European Union, underlining the need for continued engagement and discussion. Deep concern was expressed about the escalation of the conflict and its broader consequences. The need to contribute to de-escalation, promote a return to diplomacy and uphold human rights, and the international legal order was strongly emphasised, alongside expressions of solidarity with

affected Member States. The need to strengthen the Euro-Mediterranean partnership was highlighted as a strategic priority, through enhanced economic cooperation, sustainable development and improved transport and energy connectivity.

Some questions were also raised regarding the concrete implementation of the Mediterranean Pact. They addressed its link with the Global Gateway strategy and how these initiatives will be coordinated to ensure effective implementation, as well as the steps planned to promote deeper economic, transport, and energy connectivity between Southeast Europe and the Mediterranean, and how these priorities will be reflected in the new MFF.

In the concluding remarks, the Commissioner emphasised that the Mediterranean Pact is intended as a concrete and operational project, supported by an action plan with tangible results. She highlighted the proposed increase in funding under the next MFF, while stressing the need for support from Member States and the European Parliament, as well as the importance of mobilising private investment. Ms ŠUIČA underlined that implementation would be regularly monitored and reiterated that the EU's approach remains focused on diplomacy, dialogue and de-escalation, as well as on fostering investment, stability and prosperity in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The following speakers took the floor during this debate:

Barry WARD (Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*), Kristian VIGENIN (European Parliament), Claude KERN (French *Sénat*), Bastiaan VAN APELDOORN (Dutch *Eerste Kamer*).

CLOSING REMARKS

Mr GEORGIADES concluded the meeting by reiterating that the EU must insist on its agenda of peace and cooperation, and that to do so our Union must be a strong, effective and credible actor. He thanked the participants for their attendance and the interpreters for their work, and finished by giving the floor to Mr WARD. Mr WARD congratulated Mr GEORGIADES for a good meeting under difficult circumstances. He informed delegations that during the Irish Presidency, starting on 1 July, the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC will take place on 12-13 July and the LXXVI COSAC on 6-8 December. He looked forward to welcoming delegations to Ireland.