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DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTH EAST ASIA AND THE
ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN)

314049 · 03.09.2012

- The Chair -

Ms Mara BIZZOTTO

Chair of the delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand

Sir Graham WATSON

Chair of the delegation for relations with India

Mr Herbert REUL

Chair of the delegation for relations with the Korean Peninsula

Mr Crescenzo RIVELLINI

Chair of the delegation for relations with the People's Republic of China

Mr Johannes van BAALEN

Chair of the delegation for relations with Japan

3.9.2012

Dear Colleagues,

In my capacity as "doyen d'âge" of the chairs of delegations for relations with Asian countries, I would like to propose a joint initiative to be undertaken by our delegations next year.

One of the major innovations in the international governance architecture of the last few years has been the establishment of the Group of the 20 major economies (G20). This Group has been meeting regularly at the level of heads of state or government since 2008.

The European Parliament has been exploring ways of including a parliamentary dimension in the functioning of the G20. The Presidents of the Parliament have therefore, in recent years, been developing contacts with their counterparts: i.e. the Presidents or Speakers of the parliaments of the countries concerned. This approach has some limitations, due mainly to the differences between the nature and power of legislative assemblies and, notably, the differences in the institutional position and role of the Speakers. For example, in the "Westminster model", which is most common in Commonwealth countries but has also influenced some others, the Speaker has no active political role.

The European Parliament - if it wishes to pursue this aim - needs to complement and reinforce what has been done in recent years by its Presidents. Steps should therefore be taken to explore additional ways of developing the parliamentary dimension of the G20.

In my view the European Parliament should begin this process by making use of the instruments that are already available, including its unique network of inter-parliamentary delegations. These delegations have over many years developed permanent relations with their national counterparts in third countries, including the vast majority of the 15 non-European members of the G20.

One possibility that might be considered is the organisation of a conference of the Parliaments of the G20 countries. However, this would have significant logistical and budgetary implications. Furthermore, it would also give rise to the issue of the relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the European members of the G20. I therefore consider that, at present, we should be both more modest in terms of means and more realistic in our political goals.

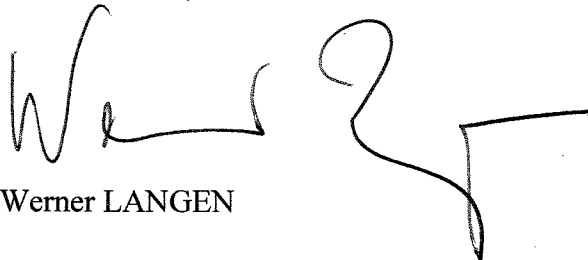
Consequently, I would argue that a regional approach, targeted towards Asia - the fastest developing region of the world - would be much more manageable. Six of the 15 non-European members of the G20 belong to this region (China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea and Australia). Most are established parliamentary democracies and half of them belong to the OECD.

The next G20 meeting is scheduled to take place in St Petersburg in September 2013. Careful coordination between the six interparliamentary delegations concerned, when planning the calendar of activities for 2013, could enable us to hold our IPMs with the parliaments of the G20 countries during the same week in Brussels. It would then be possible - at no additional cost - to organise a common meeting of all six delegations and their counterparts, lasting half a day and focussing on the St Petersburg meeting. A possible period for holding such a joint meeting in the European Parliament could be in June 2013.

I would be grateful if you could examine this proposal in order that such a joint initiative might be included in the programme of activities for 2013. The programme must be submitted to the Conference of Presidents before the end of the year.

I am copying this letter to the President of the European Parliament for his consideration. This is in view of the fact that we will need his support for the successful implementation of this proposal, which has implications that go beyond the activities of our interparliamentary delegations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Langen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Werner LANGEN

c.c.: Mr Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament