

President's opening address to joint parliamentary meeting

Brussels, 16.11.2009

Mr Speaker,
Honourable Members,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the first joint parliamentary meeting between the European Parliament and the national parliaments of this new term.

The European Parliament has always attached great importance to bilateral and multilateral relations with the national parliaments. Our assemblies are responsible both for making laws and for representing our citizens. Over and above the formal arrangements for cooperation within COSAC and the Conference of Speakers of the Parliaments of the EU, over recent years we have introduced a number of new methods and procedures to facilitate the exchange of views.

We are resuming our cooperation at a key moment, with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon – which for the first time gives the national parliaments an active role at EU level – only two weeks away. The subject of today's and tomorrow's discussions is highly topical, as the Swedish Presidency is keen to secure the adoption of the Stockholm Programme for an area of freedom, security and justice at the December summit.

Following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, we will be working together in new areas. The national parliaments will scrutinise all new legislative initiatives to determine whether they are in keeping with the subsidiarity principle, and will be entitled to deliver reasoned opinions. Next week, the European Parliament will adopt all of the rules required for cooperation with the national parliaments in this area. We will also be making the necessary changes to our Rules of Procedure prior to the new Treaty's entry into force.

Furthermore, Parliament's Bureau has put together a toolkit for strengthening cooperation between our parliaments, in particular at committee level.

I imagine that our first venture in this area could be related to our new joint responsibility for oversight and scrutiny of Europol and Eurojust.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The idea for today's meeting was arrived at in cooperation with the Swedish Presidency. The purpose of the meeting is to lay down new priorities for EU action in assessing and monitoring the area of freedom, security and justice, in keeping with the suggestions made during the Conference of Speakers of the Parliaments of the European Union held in Paris from 26 to 28 February 2009.

The meeting will be chaired jointly by representatives of the European Parliament and of the Swedish Parliament, the Riksdag.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Speaker of the Riksdag, Per Westerberg, for his valuable assistance with the preparations for today's meeting.