



Joint statement

On Friday 17 April 2009, the Heads of Delegations of the upper chambers, members of the Association of European Senates, took part in the 11th Conference of the Association of European Senates on 'The Role of the Senates on the European Continent' in The Hague, the Netherlands.

The Heads of Delegations

- reaffirm that bicameral parliamentary systems continue to play an important role in national democracies and continue to contribute to the building of a strong Europe;
- emphasise the importance of a yearly exchange of views on matters related to the role of European Senates within bicameral systems and to interparliamentary cooperation, notably the exchange of best practices;
- affirm that better mutual understanding of the varying functions and structures of the European Senates contributes to a reinforced and improved cooperation;
- stress the important role Senates can play in respecting international law and national constitutions and in enhancing the quality of legislation in terms of its legitimacy, feasibility and enforceability, in line with citizen's needs.

The Heads of Delegations

- congratulate the Council of Europe on its 60th anniversary and the European Court of Human Rights on its 50th anniversary; these anniversaries and that of the European Treaties of Rome in 2007 and of the European Parliament in 2008 illustrate the extent to which Europe has developed and become united in recent decades;
- strive to strengthen awareness – both in intensity and scope – of the importance of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and European cooperation, particularly among younger generation;



- given that all European Union Member States have ratified the European Convention for Human Rights and support the Charter of Fundamental Rights, support the accession by the European Union to the European Convention for Human Rights.
- consider that the funding of international and interparliamentary bodies, like the Council of Europe, should be in proportion with the level of activities; they call upon governments and parliaments to do their utmost to ratify the Protocols and Conventions of the Council of Europe.

The Heads of Delegations

- emphasise the role that upper chambers can play in serving as a link between the regional, national and European levels, in strengthening cooperation on the European continent and in a better rooting of European democracy;
- acknowledge that a regular exchange of information on how the upper chambers discharge their responsibilities and perform their tasks within European and international organisations may improve the quality and effectiveness of their contributions;
- express their concerns about the financial and economic crisis and emphasise their willingness, within the bounds of their constitutional frameworks, to help alleviate and solve this crisis;
- take note of the efforts of the European Union and the international institutions for tackling the crisis and stress that concerted action and coordination are essential parts of the road to recovery;
- take note of the progress made in the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and in the European Neighbourhood Policy in cooperation with the neighbouring countries; they call upon governments and parliaments to promote participation of their citizens in the upcoming elections for the European Parliament.
- stress the role of national parliaments, and especially the upper chambers, in the improvement of the subsidiarity principle at the European level;
- stress their support for a stronger cooperation between national parliaments in close association with the European Parliament to develop the position of parliamentary democracy inside the European institutions.



The Heads of Delegations

- affirm their intention to organise the yearly conferences of the Association in such a way as to mark special national occasions or celebrations;
- express their appreciation to the Council of the Russian Federation for the report on the extraordinary session of the Association on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in Saint Petersburg, November 13-15, 2008;
- look forward to the extraordinary meeting of the Association to be held in Gdansk, Poland, from 22 to 24 October 2009 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the re-establishment of the Polish Senate;
- decide, in accordance with section 6, paragraph four of the Rules governing the Association of European Senates, that the XIIth annual conference of the Association will be held at the invitation of the Italian Senate in Rome in 2010; the XIIIth annual conference will be held at the invitation of the Spanish Senate in 2011;
- in reference to the bicentenary of this Senate, take note of the candidacy of the Senate of the Netherlands to host the annual conference of the Association in 2015.