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CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION PARLIAMENTS

24 – 25 April 2023
Prague, Czech Republic

CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRESIDENCY

Introductory remarks

The Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments (hereinafter EUSC) was held in Prague on 24-25 April 2023 and was attended by Speakers and Presidents or their representatives from 37 Parliaments/Chambers of 26 Member States, as well as by the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola. Presidents or their representatives from 8 EU candidate countries also participated; other 6 countries attended as observers. The conference was chaired by Mr Miloš Vystrčil, President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, and Ms Markéta Pekarová Adamová, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.

Recalling paragraph 5.1 of the Stockholm Guidelines, it is recognised that due to their constitutional position, certain Parliaments and Chambers cannot directly associate themselves with substantive political statements, and therefore should not be seen as indicating specific support for all sections.¹ Nonetheless, on behalf of their Parliaments and Chambers, they recognise the importance of the issues raised and the intentions of colleagues in proposing particular ways forward.

The Speakers commend the initiative of the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic to convene a roundtable discussion and a joint informal dinner of female Speakers and Presidents at the occasion of this EUSC meeting and they propose to consider hosting similar events even during future EUSC meetings.

I. Russian aggression against Ukraine and the EU response in a broader geopolitical context

The Speakers

1. note that 14 months ago the Russian Federation brutally and insidiously assaulted Ukraine militarily, further developing its military aggression of 2014 when it illegally seized

¹ According to the referred paragraph some sections of this Conclusions of the Presidency do not reflect the majority opinion of the Hungarian National Assembly.



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and subsequently annexed the Crimean Peninsula. This aggression is a flagrant violation of the UN Charter that codifies the major principles of the international law, including the prohibition of the use of force in international relations against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, and as such it is also a violation of the Russian Federation's own international legal obligations.²

2. state that the aggression by the Russian Federation is a direct attack against the foundations of the European security architecture built after the World War II and recall that eight EU Member States are direct neighbours of the Russian Federation or the invaded Ukraine. The Russian Federation has thus caused the most serious security crisis in Europe since the World War II. Since February 2022, Russian missiles have exploded several times just a few kilometres from the EU and NATO eastern border. In direct relation to the Russian missile attacks, on 15 November 2022, an unfortunate strike on Polish territory occurred in the village of Przewodów near the border with Ukraine, resulting in an explosion that killed two Polish citizens.

3. condemn in the strongest possible terms the illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, call for an immediate, complete and unconditional end to the illegal Russian military activities in Ukraine, the withdrawal of all Russian troops and military equipment from the territory of Ukraine. They reaffirm their full support for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, as well as Ukraine's inalienable right to self-defence against Russian aggression and to negotiate the end of the war on its own terms.

4. demand that the Russian Federation take full responsibility for war damage and crimes under international law it has committed on the territory of Ukraine. They call for the swift creation of a tribunal to prosecute the crimes of aggression against Ukraine, including the development of a comprehensive reparation mechanism for Ukraine. They unequivocally condemn the terrorist methods used by the Russian regime, including the deplorable practice of deporting thousands of Ukrainian children to the territory of the Russian Federation, which is being masked as a humanitarian programme. The Speakers are particularly concerned that these children are subjected to re-education and propaganda programs aimed at forcibly assimilating them into Russian society and that their civil status data are modified in order to

² Memorandum on security assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Budapest Memorandum) signed on 5 December 1994; Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation signed on 31 May 1997.



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prevent their Ukrainian families from ever being able to trace them. They ask that the European Union and the Member States provide all the material and human aid necessary for Ukraine in order to inventory the children deported or missing and to identify those responsible for these acts in order to initiate immediate sanctions and open the way to legal action. In this context, they acknowledge the decision of the International Criminal Court to prosecute Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, and to issue warrants of arrest for both.

5. call for continued pressure on the Russian Federation, including through the adoption of further sanctions packages aimed at minimising its revenues from trade with democratic countries and thus weakening Russia's war-fighting capabilities. Restrictive measures should also be imposed against Belarus, who is complicit in the aggression against Ukraine. They call on the Member States to maintain the sanctions pressure on Russia and step up their efforts to ensure the effective implementation of sanctions and to continue their diplomatic activities aimed at third countries not aligned with sanctions in order to prevent the spread of Russian false intelligence propaganda aimed at circumventing sanctions. The use of confiscated, frozen and immobilised assets for the reconstruction of Ukraine should also be considered. They strongly condemn Iran's support for the Russian Federation aggression. At the same time, they express their disappointment in the attitude of the People's Republic of China to the conflict and call on the PRC to continue to abstain from supplying any weapons to the Russian Federation.

6. categorically condemn the agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus on the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of the Republic of Belarus.

7. commend the arms supplies to a struggling Ukraine and note that thanks to these arms and ammunition supplies Ukraine has been able to effectively defend itself, in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, against unprovoked and unjustified Russian aggression so far. They therefore call on all members of the international community to continue their all-round support to Ukraine, i.e. political, military, humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for as long as Ukraine needs it, including urgent ammunition deliveries. They call for EU Member States and other allies to remain united in this support.

8. welcome the first Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform, jointly hosted by the Republic of Croatia and Ukraine in Zagreb on 25 October 2022, as a tool to consolidate and strengthen interparliamentary efforts aimed at reaching and the restoration of



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Ukraine's territorial integrity, including de-occupation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. They support the holding of a second summit hosted in the Czech Republic in autumn 2023.

9. welcome the opinion of the European Commission presented in June 2022, endorsed by the European Council, granting EU candidate status to Moldova and Ukraine and potential candidate status to Georgia, as well as the decision of the European Council made in December 2022 granting EU candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina. They appreciate the reforms that Ukraine has already carried out, even during the state of war, and continue to support its European orientation and progress in the EU association process, stressing that only the Ukrainian people and the democratically elected Ukrainian authorities have the right to decide on the country's political and social anchorage and its approach to international integration. They also stress that, despite the current international situation, the EU and its Member States must continue to proactively and decisively support the integration process of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and the Western Balkan countries with regular and deepened dialogue, as well as a clear timetable for granting EU membership, taking into account the progress made in implementing key reforms and meeting the necessary conditions

10. commend the solidarity of EU Member States and neighbouring countries, especially Moldova, and their citizens in hosting millions of Ukrainian refugees. They also welcome the Temporary Protection Directive being extended until March 2024. They note that the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine has shown the importance of the EU interconnections with the Mediterranean region in the fields of security, stability and prosperity. In the light of the new geopolitical scenario, EU Member States and the countries in their neighbourhood are facing the same common challenges now more than ever before, notably migration flows, climate change, sustainable development, and the fight against terrorism and international crime. The Speakers therefore believe that the European Union and neighbouring countries must strengthen the dialogue and cooperation in the field of parliamentary diplomacy with special regards to an effective response to illegal migration that can be used as an instrument to destabilise the EU.

11. welcome the continuation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI) and commend the role of Türkiye in brokering the original agreement and its current extension. Nonetheless, in view of the limited extension of the BSGI and the global shortening in food and raising costs of nourishments, the Speakers urge the Russian Federation to immediately stop hindering Ukrainian grain shipments and the export of food products in general.

12. call for the start of the reconstruction of Ukraine, with an emphasis on openness and broad participation of the whole of Ukrainian society in this process. They stress the crucial



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importance of the continued strengthening of the pluralistic and inclusive parliamentary democracy, respect for human rights, including the rights of national minorities, rule of law and the independence of the judiciary.

13. reaffirm that the transatlantic link and strategic partnership between the EU and NATO remain the backbone of Europe's collective defence and security, without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of any of their members. They underline the need to further strengthen the Alliance's defence and deterrence capabilities, for those Member States for whom NATO is the cornerstone of their collective defence, as well as to strengthen defence cooperation within the Union that is complementary to and interoperable with the Alliance's capabilities. The Speakers of the Parliaments of those countries who are members of both the EU and NATO reaffirm their unequivocal support for NATO enlargement and welcome the initiative of the Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament Ms Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen to convene a meeting of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the NATO Member countries in Vilnius in early June.

II. Role of the EU in global cooperation of democracies and the issue of EU member states' dependence on totalitarian regimes

The Speakers:

14. declare that, as representatives of directly elected bodies with the greatest democratic legitimacy, they will use all the opportunities provided by their constitutional status to promote shared values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law in their countries and abroad. They consider it crucial that democratic standards and principles are upheld in all EU Member States and at the same time recognise that a functioning democracy cannot be taken for granted and must be sustained, strengthened and promoted, especially in the current times of common, unprecedented and complex challenges and the changing political environment at global level. Therefore, they emphasise the key role of the Parliaments as the heart of democracy in the global cooperation of democracies and, in that regard, encourage COSAC to propose an exchange of best practices. In this context, they welcome the initiative from the European Parliament in COSAC to jointly advance on the role of Parliaments in a functioning democracy and to reflect on possible ways to strengthen modern parliamentarism, with a view to informing the next Conference of Speakers in Madrid about the results on this matter.



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15. commend the EU's activities within various multilateral organisations that promote a rules-based international order, democracy and human rights. They recommend that the EU more intensively engage with other European and non-European democratic countries and regions, in particular through regular dialogue and joint initiatives.

16. stress that supporting the civil society, independent media and organisation of election observation missions are appropriate mechanisms to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in relations with third countries. They also call for practical steps, such as special programmes for visa facilitation or speeding up the process of granting international protection status to persons facing political persecution in their country of origin.

17. emphasize that allowing the development or maintaining of dependence of the EU and its member states on totalitarian or authoritarian regimes in the field of the supplies of strategic raw materials, strategic products and technologies is a fundamental mistake. It is necessary to immediately recognise the potential impact of these mistakes on Europe's security, to learn from them, to strengthen the open strategic autonomy of the European Union and the whole democratic community to reduce this dependency and to focus more on cooperation with democratic countries and on ensuring common security and defence capacity, particularly within NATO. Therefore, in addition to the existing functioning relations within the EU and ensuring common security and defence within NATO, we need to focus more on expanding cooperation in these areas with other democratic countries.

18. point out that in the last three years the European Union has been exposed to unprecedented global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the brutal aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which have significantly affected global supply and value chains and exposed their vulnerability. Therefore, they appreciate that the EU's competitiveness, internal market and supply chains were a priority topic on the agenda of the European Council meetings in February and March this year, and that a strategic discussion was held on the geopolitical aspects of international trade to ensure EU competitiveness.

19. support measures to ensure diversification of supply chains, in particular to secure critical raw materials and strategic products. They underline that an open and ambitious trade policy is crucial to breaking away from strategic dependencies on totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, securing reliable access to raw materials and strategic products, and promoting economic growth, with an emphasis on better using European tools for responding to unfair commercial practices and expanding the network of free trade agreements, mainly with Indo-Pacific and Latin American countries, provided that these agreements help promoting European values and contain firm and verifiable commitments on the



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implementation of the Paris climate agreement, guarantee compliance with environmental and health standards and European geographical designations and ensure the protection of sensitive agricultural sectors. They call for cooperation with like-minded partners, in particular USA, as well as Canada and Australia.

20. give their full support to the implementation of the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and emphasise cooperation in the areas of cyber security, environment, biodiversity and ocean conservation, the use of space programmes, strengthening the health independence of the countries of the region and the development of new partnerships in science, research, and pharmaceutical production.

21. note that the World Trade Organisation (WTO), as the guarantor of multilateral trade rules, must remain the cornerstone of the international trading system and that the EU should play a key role in discussions on reform of the WTO.

22. stress that a well-functioning EU Single Market and sufficiently robust and secure energy, transport and digital infrastructure are prerequisites for the secure functioning of supply chains.

23. welcome the reaching of a provisional political agreement between the European Parliament and the Council on the form of the regulation on the protection from economic coercion by third countries (Anti-Coercion Instrument - ACI) as an essential instrument to deter third countries from using economic coercion.

24. appreciate the existence of the EU's framework for the coordination of foreign direct investment screening which allows for effective coordination aiming at safeguarding key European assets and protecting collective security.

25. emphasise that the targeted review of the electricity trading rules is only a first step. The next steps must aim at ensuring a predictable and competitive business environment that will bring down energy prices for consumers and businesses. At the same time, they note that the extension of emergency measures to save and store gas can serve as a necessary safeguard for the coming winters and that ensuring security of gas supply in the future will continue to rely on the strategy adopted to reduce gas consumption at the level of all Member States, as well as on strengthening partnerships with reliable external suppliers. Accelerating the development of renewable and low-carbon energy sources will also contribute to greater energy price stability and reduced gas consumption.



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26. warn against the danger of disinformation activities that weaken the unity of the European Union and transatlantic ties and undermine confidence in democratic processes and the common values shared by democratic countries. They therefore underline the importance of combatting disinformation and the importance of limiting the influence of Russian and other propaganda in the European media space and support effective and as integrated as possible strategic communication to counter disinformation activities in third countries. The Speakers underline the need to be all the more united in order to stop the seeds of political discrediting or manipulation and the fuelling of hatred or radicalisation, including a rise in antisemitism, that are spreading far too fast. They also reaffirm the need for initiatives in the field of education, and in particular democracy education, in order to reinforce the conviction in our societies that democracy and freedom are the sole guarantee for human prosperity and security.

27. with a view to the significant development generative Artificial Intelligence has made in recent months, the Speakers acknowledge the enormous potential of this technological development but at the same time agree, that the enormous speed with which it develops, poses inherent risks. Amongst others, there is a clear risk that such systems might be used to create fake content that is difficult to distinguish from reality. Furthermore, there is also a clear risk of misuse of this technology by authoritarian regimes. Speakers therefore concur that Artificial Intelligence must be embedded in a clear ethical and legal framework and call upon decision-makers to quickly respond to this challenge.

III. IPEX (Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange)

The Speakers:

28. welcome the Conclusions on IPEX, adopted at the online meeting of the Secretaries General of European Union Parliaments in Prague on 6 February 2023.

29. thank the Slovenian National Assembly and the National Council for their work during the past year of their Chairmanship of the IPEX Board, in particular for their efforts to implement the Rolling Work Programme for 2021 - 2023, for raising awareness of the role of the IPEX platform in the framework of inter-parliamentary cooperation and the preparation of the updated version of the IPEX Guidelines approved at the Secretaries General online meeting in February 2023 which reflects the new version of the IPEX platform and the opportunities and tools offered by this new version.

30. would also like to thank the Slovenian Chairmanship of the IPEX Board for hosting the annual IPEX Correspondents' Meeting in Ljubljana in 2022, the Belgian Senate for its



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continuous availability to formally employ the IPEX Information Officer, the European Parliament for providing financial and human resources for the development and operation of the new website, and the Portuguese Parliament for hosting the IPEX Users Conference in March this year.

31. look forward to the analysis of the IPEX Users Conference results and invite EU Parliaments to consider organising more such conferences in future.

32. welcome the continuous strengthening of cooperation between IPEX and the Democracy Support Network (DSN) and call on national Parliaments to update and actively share information through the IPEX platform and the DSN, as well as to seek new opportunities for cooperation in this field.

33. following the European Council decisions to grant EU candidate status to Ukraine, Moldova (June 2022) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (December 2022), welcome the decision of the Parliament of Moldova to join the IPEX network, invite the Parliaments of Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina to do the same and look forward to future constructive cooperation,

34. call on the upcoming Czech Chairmanship of the IPEX Board to evaluate the implementation of the Rolling Work Programme for 2021-2023, to start the preparation of a new Rolling Work Programme for 2024-2026 aiming at its approval at the IPEX Board meeting in the beginning of 2024 and to continue the further development of the IPEX v3 platform.