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Incoming Italian presidency urges early creation of new interparliamentary defence body

Paris, 2 December 2010 – On Tuesday Italian Permanent Representative H.E. **Mr Luca GIANSANTI** called for an interparliamentary defence scrutiny mechanism to be set up as soon as possible.

Speaking on behalf of Foreign Affairs Minister **Mr Franco FRATTINI**, he said that the legal framework was already established under Protocol No. 1 of the Lisbon Treaty. “It is up to national parliaments to grasp this opportunity and reach an understanding”, he added.

He noted that all parties of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and Senate had agreed on a proposed structure for an interparliamentary conference, which would be made up of delegations from the European Parliament and EU national parliaments. It would be up to parliaments to work on issues such as its name, composition, location for meetings, its chairperson and its powers and the role of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. “I hope they will reach an agreement very rapidly”, he said, adding that work on the issue had been stepped up in recent weeks.

During an earlier debate, **Mr Armand DE DECKER** (Belgium, Liberal Group) who is coordinating ideas for the EU Speakers Conference said that there was “no financial obstacle to creating a new structure for parliamentary oversight”, adding that “meetings would cost next to nothing as they could be held in the European Parliament in Brussels or in the parliament of the country holding the EU Presidency”. He estimated that staff costs for “a maximum of 10 permanent members of staff” would amount to a million euros per annum to be shared among the 27 member states. “We are not going to leave security and defence problems in the sole hands of the military, diplomats and ministers” he said as he argued in favour of establishing “a parliamentary structure providing a mechanism for a structured dialogue with the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy”.

Outlining priorities for the incoming Italian WEU presidency, H.E. Mr GIANSANTI said it was EU policy to invest more in pooling and sharing military capabilities, to continue studies on synergies between civilian and military aspects of crisis management and to work on a more comprehensive approach to all Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) instruments and missions, such as those involving Bosnia and Herzegovina and piracy off the Somali coast. He also said there should be greater synergy between the different missions, which until now had been compartmentalised.

The Assembly adopted two reports and their accompanying recommendations on the ongoing debates in the national parliaments on monitoring CSDP and on interparliamentary assemblies and external communication. Submitting the reports on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations, **Mrs Marietta KARAMANLI** (France, Socialist Group) said that it was a priority “not to let the European executive and national governments go head to head with the European Parliament from which the national parliaments were excluded”. She added that “parliamentary scrutiny should be considered as a guarantee of democracy which brings added value to security”.

The Assembly recommended that the national parliaments should “put forward, as soon as possible, concrete proposals to create an interparliamentary structure suitable for monitoring common European security and defence policy”.

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