

Joint declaration

Budapest, 9 November 2007

The 9th meeting of the Speakers and Presidents of Parliaments of Regional Partnership Countries took place in Budapest from 9 to 10 November 2007. The meeting was attended by Mrs Katalin Szili, Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly; Mrs Barbara Prammer, President of the National Council of the Republic of Austria; Mrs Anna Elisabeth Haselbach, Vice-President of the Federal Council of the Republic of Austria; Mr Přemysl Sobotka, President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, Miloslav Vlček, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic; Mr Pavol Paška, President of the National Council of the Slovak Republic; France Cukjati, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia; Janez Sušnik, President of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia. Poland was represented by Mrs Joanna Stempińska, Ambassador of Poland to Hungary.

The participants discussed the following topics:

Schengen area

The Speakers and Presidents of the Parliaments of the Regional Partnership Countries welcomed with great satisfaction the conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council adopted 9 November 2007 on the Schengen evaluation process which established that the nine Member States concerned are sufficiently prepared and all the necessary conditions for the application of the Schengen acquis have been met in all areas. They look forward to the decision of the Council of 6 and 7 December 2007 to approve the elimination of the border controls on 21 December 2007 at internal land and sea borders and on 30 March 2008 at air borders among these and other Member States of the Union. The entry into force of the full Schengen acquis in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia represents much more than merely the practical facilitation of movement within the EU. It carries the highly symbolic significance of trust among the Members of the European political community and the full participation of the nations and citizens of the countries acceding to the Schengen area in the common European space of freedom, justice and security.

Reform Treaty

The Speakers and Presidents of the Parliaments of the Regional Partnership Countries welcomed the agreement reached at the informal meeting of the Heads of States and Governments on 18 and 19 October in Lisbon and expressed their conviction that the Reform Treaty will contribute to a more effective and democratic functioning of the European Union. After the signature of the Treaty, national parliaments will play a significant role in order to ensure that the Treaty enters into force prior to the next European Parliament elections in 2009. The Speakers and Presidents stressed that the ratification debates in national parliaments – whose role has been significantly strengthened by the new Treaty – will offer a special opportunity to convince the European citizens that a strong and influential Europe cannot function without the Reform Treaty.

Future of the meetings of the Speakers and Presidents of the Parliaments of the Regional Partnership Countries

The Speakers and Presidents of the Parliaments of the Regional Partnership Countries committed themselves to the further deepening of their cooperation in EU-related issues in order to better represent the specific aspirations and interests of the Central-European region within the European Union. Therefore, they agreed that on the occasions of their annual meetings they will concentrate on the most topical European issues which are dealt with at the meetings of the European Council and on issues of specific joint interest in the region. It will be the responsibility of the host Parliament of the meeting of the Speakers and Presidents of the Parliaments of the Regional Partnership countries to coordinate the planned topics of the agenda with the other participating parliaments prior to the meeting. Guest Speakers may be invited on an ad hoc basis. The participating parliaments will regularly discuss the specific parliamentary tasks and activities resulting from the responsibilities of holding the Presidency of the European Union.

The meeting of the Speakers and Presidents of the Parliaments of the Regional Partnership Countries shall take place on the basis of rotation in one of the countries in autumn (Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Austria, the Czech Republic and Hungary).