

Speech by **Dr Slavko Gaber** on the

ROLE OF NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS IN THE EU

Convention meeting 6 - 7 June 2002

Dear Colleagues, Mr. President,

allow me to express my firm conviction that the Europe of the future needs the national parliaments to have a greater role not only as guardians of national interests but also as promoters of the European interest.

In my opinion the tempting division of interests into national and European, which contradict and oppose each other, is namely false.

By enforcing a greater role of the national parliaments, we should promote the exchange of best practises such as of Denmark, Finland, Sweden and some other countries. Slovenia benefits from this exchange already in the phase of accession to the Union. The Slovenian parliament is in fact approving all the negotiating positions of Slovenia in the process of accession negotiations.

Our experience show that government and parliament can both benefit from cooperation and, most important, that the legitimacy of the idea of Europe is firmly rooted in the public opinion.

I see this experience as the one demonstrating that, although competition between different branches of power is a natural state of affairs, it is also possible to benefit from sharing and accommodating in the decision making procedures and it is indeed worth while doing so.

In my opinion, Mr. President, we should:

- while considering coordination between the national parliaments at the European level enhance the role of COSAC with a permanent secretariat and strenghten the cooperation between the respective committees of national and European parliaments;

- but on the other hand we should not add to the complexity of the existing decision making process. I see the Convention as an appropriate approach when, for example, discussing the "state of the Union" and the decisions related to basic institutional arrangements of the Union which are supposed to be taken;
- the creation of the second or third chamber would in this context only add to the already very complex structures and decision making procedures and would not contribute to efficiency.

If we are going to consider the enhanced role of national parliaments not only as the competition of institutions for more power, but also as a matter of efforts joined in favour of Europe, it is going to be even more obvious that the role of national parliaments is national and European. While scrutinising EU decisions, be it at national or European level, national parliaments are taking the burdens of informing the citizens and legitimising the decisions taken, from the shoulders of the Commission, the Council, the EU parliament and above all from the shoulders of national governments. Making the plea for more of the national parliaments in European politics, I am indirectly in favour of preventing constant alibi position of national parliaments in relation to the responsibility for the decisions taken.

BEING included - be it informed, consulted, approving the decisions in advance or involved via parliamentary reservation method - means not only that respective parliament is in position to influence the decisions but that it is also responsible for the decisions taken. I am sure, dear colleagues, that national parliaments are ready to take their share of responsibility.

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