

**Intervention of Mr. Józef Oleksy,
Representative of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland
at the fifth session of the Convention on the Future of Europe,
6-7 June 2002**

Changing the role of national parliaments in the European institutional architecture will have a direct impact on democracy and legitimacy. We are right to criticize the democratic deficit. If we do not increase the role of national parliaments, citizens will get less interested in Europe. Such a scenario would also see the national parliaments set at loggerheads with the EU as it would be something distant and disconnected from the society's everyday's life. It is then easy to revive anti-European trends.

The democratic deficit stems from the poor connection between the decisions made at the European level and the co-participation of national parliaments in preparing such decisions. The European Parliament is only partly offsetting the missing influence of national parliaments on the EU decision-making process, because in public perception its passport carries less weight than the passport of national parliaments.

Hence, we need a new quality of cooperation between the national parliaments and the European Parliament as well as among the national parliaments themselves.

The role of national parliaments needs to be analyzed in conjunction with the perceived position of the executive bodies in the Community system. It is difficult to find solutions that would not erode and complicate the present philosophy of the Community decision-making, while expanding the powers of national parliaments.

The national parliaments play a role exclusively via the national structures. Such a model complies with the actual institutional situation. Without changing the treaty, we can improve that process by providing a better political control at national level. Some of the present Member States' experience might prove useful in that respect. As it was rightly pointed out by Gisela Stuart in her introductory paper on the

mandate of the working group on national parliaments, we will have to analyze the best practices of today's scrutiny by national parliaments.

I also agree that we should consider the possibility of going further.

Assigning competencies to national parliaments in an institutionalized form could then take the following shape:

- To make it possible to consult the positions relating to common policies before they are submitted by the governments in Brussels,
- To impose a duty upon the initiators of the legislative process to convey to parliaments all required documentation,
- To institutionalize the cooperation of national parliaments on the community matters,
- To involve sectoral committees of the national parliaments into the works of the European Parliament.

Trying to establish a connection between the national parliaments and the EU institutions, some voices suggest the creation of a second chamber of the European Parliament or present a concept of a dual mandate. I do not favor such proposals. It would be an attempt to establish European elites while at the same time causing an unnecessary institutional burden. We want all national parliamentarians to create a European identity and feel responsible for it. It is those parliamentarians that citizens identify their hopes and interests with.

To conclude let me stress that without an institutionalized role of the national parliaments, it will not be possible to overcome the deficit of democracy, which is related to the weakening of the influence of national parliaments upon the Community lawmaking.

Thank you for your attention.