

Summary of the digital inauguration of the parliamentary dimension of the Swedish EU Presidency

On 26 January 2023, the Speaker of the Riksdag, Dr Andreas Norlén, hosted a digital inauguration of the parliamentary dimension of the Swedish Presidency. Speakers/Presidents of the national parliaments of the EU, the European Parliament, the candidate countries and special guests were invited and close to 30 attended. The inauguration included a brief presentation of the priorities of the Swedish Presidency, and an overview of the Riksdag's interparliamentary conferences and the Riksdag's ambitions for the parliamentary dimension.

Speaker Norlén opened the digital inauguration by welcoming the participants and showing a pre-recorded video, which is available on the website dedicated to the parliamentary dimension of the Swedish Presidency.

Thereafter, Speaker Norlén briefly addressed his colleagues, noting that this is the third time that Sweden holds the EU Presidency and that it is assuming this important role in troubled times. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has been ongoing for over 300 days and it is a violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty as well as an attack on the peace and prevailing security order of Europe. He underlined that Russia's war in Ukraine will continue to significantly affect the political agenda this spring and the priorities of the Swedish Presidency must therefore be considered against that background. Speaker Norlén presented the four priorities of the Swedish Presidency, which are: security, competitiveness, green and energy transitions and democratic values and the rule of law. He emphasised that the Swedish Presidency will give priority to continuing economic and military support to Ukraine, responding to the climate challenge by implementing the Fit for 55 package, accelerating the energy transition and upholding the rule of law in the EU.

During the spring, the Riksdag will organise eight interparliamentary conferences. Speaker Norlén noted that there was a desire to meet in person again after the pandemic. Consequently, the majority of the interparliamentary conferences will be arranged in the Riksdag and three of them will be thematic conferences on topics in line with the EU's political agenda. The themes of the thematic conferences are:

- Circular bioeconomy: The pathway to an innovative, resource efficient and competitive Europe
- Challenges and opportunities for the EU's future energy supply
- Democracy in Europe

In the discussion, all participants welcomed Speaker Norlén's initiative to organise a digital inauguration of the parliamentary dimension of the Swedish Presidency of the EU. This was the first time that a parliament inaugurated the parliamentary dimension and a number of participants believed that it sent a positive and an important signal that the parliamentary dimension is an essential part of an EU Presidency. It was also noted that the national parliaments and the European Parliament play an important role in the EU, in bringing the decision-making process closer to the citizens.

A number of Speakers/Presidents expressed support for the Swedish priorities. Some Speakers/Presidents also highlighted the importance of ensuring stability in the Western Balkans and in the European neighbourhood, continuing to work with the EU enlargement policy, combatting international crime and hate crime, and addressing climate change.

In his final remarks, Speaker Norlén expressed his satisfaction in the large turnout at the digital inauguration and he hoped that this initiative would become a new tradition.