

31 May 2023

Memorandum from the Plenary Meeting of COSAC on 14–16 May 2023***Introduction***

On 14–16 May, the Riksdag hosted the Plenary Meeting of COSAC (LXIX COSAC). Approximately 300 participants took part in the conference. The conference was introduced with a dinner at Junibacken on 14 May and continued the next day in the Chamber of the Riksdag with the first of two conference days. The conference consisted of four thematic sessions: the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 30 years of the single market, towards a green transition and Ukraine. The Speaker Dr Andreas Norlén opened the conference with a welcoming address. This was followed by opening remarks from the Chair of the Riksdag Committee on EU Affairs Hans Wallmark. Hans Wallmark thereafter presented the outcome of the Meeting of the COSAC Presidential Troika after which the floor was given to Bruno Dias Pinheiro, COSAC's permanent representative, who presented the 39th Bi-annual Report of COSAC. A video greeting from the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, was then shown.

Further information and video recordings of the conference are available [here](#).

Session 1: The Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Session 1 was opened with an address by the Minister for EU Affairs Jessika Roswall. The Minister gave a general account of the work of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union so far and noted that the Swedish Presidency, like the previous Presidencies in France and the Czech Republic, has been marked by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The minister underlined that the support for Ukraine and pressure against the Russian regime have been, and will continue to be, of the highest priority for the Swedish Presidency. Intensive efforts are ongoing to increase the pressure on Russia, such as by means of sanctions. The tenth package of sanctions has been adopted during the Swedish Presidency and work continues to develop new sanctions at an unabated rate. In addition to the sanctions work, the Minister stressed the importance of continued EU military, economic, political and humanitarian support to Ukraine and pointed out that the work on joint procurement of ammunition within the EU sends a clear message about the continued support to Ukraine.

Following this, the Minister stated that the Swedish Presidency has prioritised making progress on the possibility of using frozen Russian assets for the reconstruction of Ukraine. The Swedish Presidency has taken the initiative to establish an ad hoc group tasked with examining the legal possibilities to do this. The Minister further stated that the Swedish

Presidency is working on reaching an agreement on how to resolve the legal obstacles to holding Russia to account for its war crimes. Following this, the Minister noted that Ukraine and Moldova have made progress on their integration work despite the ongoing war and attempts by Russia to destabilise the region. The Minister then stressed the importance of deepening relations with the Western Balkans, especially when taking the prevailing geopolitical circumstances into account, and stated that the EU's integration process for the region must continue.

In addition, the Minister mentioned a number of other issues which have been prioritised during the Swedish Presidency, including migration policy where the intention is to make progress on the Pact on Migration and Asylum with a particular focus on the external dimension and implementation of action programmes for third countries and various migration routes. Another issue that the Presidency has focussed on has been climate and energy related matters. During the last two months, agreements have been reached on energy efficiency, sustainable maritime fuels, sustainable aviation shipping and alternative fuel infrastructure.

EU competitiveness is another priority issue during the Swedish Presidency. Sweden has strongly advocated for the Commission to put forward a strategy for promoting the EU's long-term competitiveness and productivity and welcomes the fact that the Commission now has presented a competitiveness strategy and a Communication on The single market at 30.

In conclusion, the Minister stated that the Swedish Presidency has also chosen to focus on maintaining democratic values and the rule of law. For this reason, the Presidency will arrange a symposium on democracy and the rule of law in June, with the intention of discussing how we can improve the means of safeguarding democracy and the rule of law in the EU.

Following this, *Salvatore de Meo*, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs in the European Parliament gave an address on the work on constitutional matters in the EU and cooperation with the Swedish Presidency. He began the address by thanking the Swedish Presidency for its tireless work to strengthen the EU's position on support to Ukraine. Following this, Salvatore de Meo noted that Council conclusions in discussions on the future of Europe have been compiled during the Swedish Presidency and that the conclusions clearly indicate that the member states want to see a more efficient and cohesive Europe. Salvatore de Meo reminded the audience that the Conference on the Future of Europe had submitted important proposals which should be considered in future work to reform the EU. He mentioned in particular proposals to change voting rights so that more policy areas are included in the procedure of qualified majority. He further underlined the importance of the European Parliament being granted a substantial right of initiative and greater co-decision powers concerning the budget.

Salvatore de Meo then stated that ahead of the European Parliament elections in June 2024, strategies must be in place and the rules for how the elections are to be held strengthened. He mentioned, for example, that it must be possible to run cross-border election campaigns. He further stated that the Swedish Presidency, together with the European Parliament, is working on proposals that the European Parliament has presented on the statute on funding of political parties and political advertising. He emphasised the importance of implementing these initiatives ahead of the elections.

In conclusion, he welcomed the upcoming final discussions on the EU's accession to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and expressed the hope that the EU institutions will soon be able to sign and accede to the Council of Europe's Convention.

During the session's debate, Russia's aggression against Ukraine was raised, as well as the importance of unity in the support for Ukraine, energy security and energy transition, growth and competitiveness, migration and expansion.

Contributions were made by representatives from Spain, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary and the European Parliament.

The Swedish Minister for EU Affairs Jessika Roswall concluded the session with a few brief comments.

Session 2: 30 years of the single market – Part I

Session 2 opened with an address by Mr Othmar Karas, First Vice President of the European Parliament. The address focused on the development of the single market and its importance for European integration. Mr Karas described the European single market as the heart of the European Union and European unification. The common regulatory framework for the single market and the four freedoms – free movement of goods, services, capital and people – has been a success story which has served to strengthen the member states' economies and has created added value in the form of greater job opportunities, higher GDP and strengthened competitiveness. However, he underlined that the single market has its flaws, which become clear during the pandemic with serious disruptions to supply chains, and during the energy crisis when the EU's energy dependence became evident. He maintained that the problems in the single market need to be solved jointly, and underlined that the single market continues to hold unleashed potential.

In conclusion, Othmar Karas stated that the single market must not be taken for granted, and he underlined that it is vital that the EU continues to develop the single market with a view to making it more effective.

The session continued with an address by Kerstin Jorna, Director-General of Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. Kerstin Jorna stated that industry in the EU faces major challenges in that the entire continent needs to adapt to a net zero market. She underlined that no member state can implement the green transition alone, but that we need to take joint action and build synergies in order to succeed. She mentioned the hydrogen initiative – where member states and regions have joined forces for the purpose of hydrogen production, transport and distribution – as a good example of this. Industrial alliances have also been formed within several areas, such as a raw materials alliance, semiconductor alliance and solar industry alliance, where representatives of the business sector, regions and member states have joined together for the purpose of creating greater efficiency throughout the entire value chains. Kerstin Jorna maintained that this is an example of where the single market functions well. She further stated that it is the task of the Commission to create good preconditions for actors in the single market. This is achieved, for example, through the Commission's work to identify and remove barriers in the single market and work with compliance and supervision of the regulatory framework.

Issues raised during the session's debate included remaining obstacles and shortcomings in the single market and the importance of building resilience against external shocks that impact the single market. Further contributions dealt with the need for a revision of the rules on government subsidies, measures to address distorted competition in the single market and the need for redeployment support within certain sectors.

Contributions were made by various representatives, including from France, Poland, the Netherlands, Cyprus, Croatia and Ireland.

The session concluded with comments from Othmar Karas and Kerstin Jorna.

Session 2: 30 years of the single market – Part II

Part two of session 2 continued on the theme 30 years of the single market. The session was moderated by **Katarina Areskoug Mascarenhas**, Chair of the Board of the Centre for European Studies at Lund University. Katarina Areskoug Mascarenhas started with a short address in which she reminded the participants of the importance of celebrating the successes of the single market, while ensuring that the development of the single market does not come to a halt. Her address then focused on three areas: an enhanced capital markets Union, removal of remaining national obstacles in the single market and the need for better compliance with the regulatory framework for the single market.

Anna Stellingner, Deputy Director General, International and EU Affairs, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise then delivered an address focusing mainly on three topics: increased focus on the single market, clouds on the horizon and necessary measures to improve the functioning of the single market. Anna Stellingner started by saying that the single market is the greatest asset for companies in an increasingly uneasy and challenging world. She stressed the need for a more in-depth and future-orientated agenda for the single market and mentioned that the growing gap between the EU and the rest of the world regarding innovation, growth and productivity may become a problem for the single market's global competitiveness. She further emphasised the importance of maintaining a level playing field and called for caution as regards measures in response to the USA's *Inflation Reduction Act*, which risk distorting competition in the single market. She furthermore stressed the importance of consistent implementation of current legislation throughout the Union, in order to deal with fragmentation and distortion. In this context, the Commission can do more to eliminate obstacles that the member states raise in the single market, she said. In conclusion, Anna Stellingner stressed the importance of maintaining a broad perspective on the single market. Investments in innovation, new technologies and green products should not be limited to specific technologies or sectors.

This was followed by an address from **Therese Svanström**, President of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO). She emphasised the importance of the involvement of trade union organisations in the single market, and of well-functioning labour markets for competitiveness within the EU. She further underlined that lifelong learning and skills development are vital for future skills supply and the EU member states' continued competitiveness. The ongoing green and digital transition of society will involve major changes, with repercussions on the entire labour market. In order to create acceptance for changes such as digitalisation and automation of the labour market, it is important that the parties to the labour market are involved and allowed to participate actively in the process. It is also important to provide ongoing and flexible retraining and further training. The current shortage of skilled labour in the EU reflects the importance of this.

In conclusion, she stressed the importance of women's full participation in the skills revolution in order to reduce the employment gap between men and women.

The interactive part of the session then started with a quiz. The results of the quiz were commented on by a panel consisting of Othmar Karas, First Vice President of the European Parliament and two members from the Presidency trio: Ondřej Benešík, Chair of the Czech

Chamber of Deputies' Committee on European Affairs and Pere Joan Pons Sampietro, member of the Cortes Generales' (Spanish Congress) European Affairs Committee. The participating members of parliament then had the opportunity to make contributions.

The contributions dealt with the challenges regarding supply chains, energy prices, better preconditions for small and medium-sized enterprises to utilise the single market and the importance of EU regulations keeping up with technological developments (AI).

The contributions were made by various members representing, among others, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Finland, Romania and Poland.

The session was concluded with comments from Anna Stellingar and Therese Svanström.

The session was closed with comments from Othmar Karas and Kerstin Jorna.

Session 3: Towards a green transition

Session 3, which was arranged in the presence of H.R.H Crown Princess Victoria, was introduced with an address by the Deputy Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs Matilda Ernkrans, in which she welcomed all the participants of day two to the conference.

Following this, **Heléne Fritzon**, member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety of the European Parliament, held an address on the green transition. Heléne Fritzon introduced the address by emphasising that the launch of its flagship project the Green Deal has assumed global leadership of the green transition. The Green Deal takes a holistic approach to climate transition and environmental issues, and the historic European Climate Law that was adopted in 2021 constitutes the basis for work on this. The Climate Law contains clear climate goals stating that the EU shall be climate-neutral by 2050 at the latest and that emissions shall be reduced by at least 55 per cent by 2030. In order to achieve the climate goals by 2030, the reform package *Fit for 55* has been negotiated. The reform package contains a whole range of reforms and new tools that should reduce emissions and promote a just transition which will strengthen European competitiveness. Heléne Fritzon continued her address by stressing that despite the fact that the EU has taken major decisive steps in the right direction, climate ambitions must be raised further in order to be in line with the Paris Agreement. She further recalled that it is up to the member states to deliver in accordance with the decisions that have been taken jointly in the EU, as it is at the national and local level that common EU policy should be implemented.

In conclusion, she stated that the green transition must go hand in hand with increased gender equality. The transition must be just so that all citizens can clearly feel that they are having a better life and are not falling behind. Reforms that will involve redistribution of funding and support to households and companies will be required. The EU's Social Climate Fund is intended to facilitate the funding of such reforms.

The session continued with an address by **Daniel Mes**, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Frans Timmermans. The address focused on the Commission's work on the green transition. Daniel Mes underlined the difficulties of maintaining focus in the long-term transition that we face. "If we are to succeed with the transition in the long term, it is also important to succeed in the short term, for example with companies succeeding in producing green environmentally friendly products at reasonable prices that citizens will benefit from. Such short-term successes give us courage and make more long-term work

easier”, he said. Daniel Mes stated further that the EU’s new Climate Law constitutes a binding regulatory framework with goals that are to be reached by 2050. In a supplement to the Climate Law there are a number of laws within the framework of the newly adopted *Fit for 55* which describe in a concrete manner which changes must be implemented; it is a question for example of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, introducing more renewable elements involved in the heating of homes, implementing a transition of vehicles, including circular reuse of materials, etc. He stressed that it is now up to the national parliaments to implement and realise EU policy and conceded that this will mean tough decisions for the member states and that the EU’s Social Climate Fund will need to be used to support households and companies who will be hard hit by the transition.

In conclusion, he stressed how important it is to create favourable conditions for the business sector so that small and medium-sized enterprises that have solutions for the green transition will choose to invest in the EU. 1,000 new unicorn companies are expected in the sector for green climate technology and it is of great importance that these companies are given the best possible conditions for example when it comes to access to raw materials, energy at reasonable cost and access to private and public funding.

Following this, **Johan Kuylenstierna**, Director General of Formas, held an address focusing on environmental challenges linked to human activity. He introduced his address by recalling that the UN has issued a code red for the planet as a result of global climate change and that the World Economic Forum has stated that six of ten great global challenges can be attributed to environmental changes that are linked to human activity. He emphasised that climate change affects Europe to an ever-greater extent in the form of serious drought and flooding and that rising sea levels in the long term will create difficulties for our modern societies. He stated further that radical systematic changes are required to take the global population out of poverty and into the green transition.

However, Johan Kuylenstierna stated that despite everything there is reason to look to the future with confidence. The crises of the last few years have caused changes in ways of thinking and increased insight into the fact that resource effectiveness is also about geopolitical security. He emphasised that the EU has demonstrated its leadership skills and that there is now a clear vision that citizens must be part of the process of green transition. He further emphasised, in common with earlier speakers, the importance of the socio-economic aspect in the success of the green transition. Here, he emphasised the importance of efforts to increase knowledge, skills and competences of citizens to enable active participation in the green transition.

During the session’s debate, a number of issues were focused on including the ongoing energy transition, energy prices and energy poverty, safe energy supply and energy dependence in the EU, the importance of increased cooperation in the energy sector in the EU and large-scale investments in renewable sources. The addresses further concerned the European Climate Fund, citizens’ initiatives on networks for high-speed trains connecting Europe’s capital cities and the impact of the Green Deal on food production in Europe.

Contributions were made by representatives from Estonia, Belgium, Poland, Hungary; Slovenia and Portugal.

The session was concluded with comments from the main speakers of the session, Heléne Fritzon, Daniel Mes and Johan Kuylenstierna.

Session 4 Ukraine

Session 4 dealt with the situation in Ukraine. The Chair of the Riksdag Committee on EU Affairs Hans Wallmark introduced the session by welcoming the speakers at the session and extended a particularly warm welcome to the main speaker, *Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze*, Chair of the Committee on Ukraine's Integration into the EU.

Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze introduced her address by thanking the Swedish Presidency for its focus on Ukraine. She then expressed her thanks for the EU's extensive support to Ukraine and underlined how important it is that the war should soon come to an end and that Ukraine's sovereignty is maintained. She stressed that Russia's war against Ukraine is not only about destroying Ukraine as a nation, but the goal is also to shatter the international security order and establish a new security order. "This is an insight that we mustn't lose track of", she said.

She further expressed disappointment that one of the EU member states is blocking European Peace Facility support to Ukraine. She underlined the fact that Ukraine is counting on the EU's continued support and emphasised how important it is to counteract any signs of fatigue and exhaustion. Following this, she invited participants to look forward towards a new horizon beyond the war. This is where a new period of rebuilding and reforms awaits and a new opportunity for the Ukrainian people to take further steps towards European integration. In conclusion, she urged the EU to continue to arm and support Ukraine and not to give way to fatigue.

The session continued with an address by *Anders Ahnlid*, Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Party on the use of frozen and immobilised assets to support Ukraine's reconstruction. Anders Ahnlid introduced his address by referring to the European Council conclusions stating that the EU together with its partners should intensify work to determine how frozen Russian assets could be used for the reconstruction of Ukraine. As a result of the conclusions, the Swedish Presidency has established an ad hoc working party which will lead the work. Anders Ahnlid continued the address with a description of the duties of the working group and stated that the task of the working group is to examine and analyse the legal, financial, economic and political preconditions for using the frozen Russian assets. An important precondition for using the assets is ensuring that using them in this way is compatible with both EU law and international law. Anders Ahnlid emphasised that the rule of law also applies during crises and that this is a crucial factor that distinguishes democratic societies from authoritarian ones.

He stated further than the initial task of the working group is to obtain an overview over the frozen assets. The assets consist of both public and private assets and they are of various types, for example cash, financial assets, bank accounts and real property. As far as publicly owned assets are concerned, for example assets belonging to the Russian central bank, the working group will examine the matter of state immunity and investigate the conditions of using possible revenues from the assets. Anders Ahnlid stated further that the working group is entrusted with the task of looking at how G7 countries like the UK, Canada, the USA and Japan work with frozen Russian assets that these countries have in their possession. In conclusion, Anders Ahnlid stated that his hope is that the working group will be in a position to report tangible progress to the European Council and the Council of Ministers at the end of June.

Following this, *Jean-Erik de Zagon*, Head of the European Investment Bank Representation to Ukraine, held an address in which he described the measures the European Investment Bank (EIB) has taken so far and its assessment of the continued need for investments for the reconstruction of Ukraine. He stressed that the EIB did not hesitate to offer support to Ukraine after the Russian invasion last year. There was already a support package in place for emergency repairs as a consequence of Russian bombing of infrastructure. Following this, a further package was earmarked for the municipal level for

support to the reconstruction of buildings and a further package for the reconstruction of transport infrastructure.

Jean-Erik de Zagon stressed that investments primarily focus on the reconstruction of the public sector, that is public infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and other municipal infrastructure, which he believed is a precondition for Ukrainian citizens who have left the country wanting to return. Subsequently, the reconstruction of the energy and transport sector will be important to enable actors in the private sector to return and resume their activities. Furthermore, investments will be needed for solidarity channels which will ensure that Ukraine can import and export goods to neighbouring countries. In addition to this, it is important that the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, are given opportunities for financing. Here, the EIB is working with offering guarantees to local banks in Ukraine for lending services to small and medium-sized enterprises. The EIB is also attempting to find arrangements for larger companies in Ukraine. In addition, there is a need for investments in digital infrastructure and cybersecurity.

In conclusion, Jean-Erik de Zagon stated that the European Investment Bank hopes to establish a fund for Ukraine with support from the EU member states and like-minded countries such as Norway, Switzerland and Japan. Italy is the first country to make a pledge to allocate resources to the fund.

During the debate in this session, issues that were raised included the impact of the war in Ukraine on neighbouring countries, work on the EU's eleventh sanction package, Russian ownership of real property in EU member states and the need for further support and efforts to support Ukraine.

Contributors to the debate included representatives from Moldavia, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Latvia, Germany and Iceland.

In the concluding session, representatives from the Spanish delegation took the floor and welcomed the delegates to the next COSAC meeting which will take place in July and will be hosted by Spain. Following this, the Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs Hans Wallmark put the question to the delegates of the 39th Plenary Meeting of COSAC as to whether the proposed contributions and conclusions could be approved. The answer was yes and the conclusions were adopted.

The Chair Hans Wallmark then thanked the delegates for a meeting rich in content with good fruitful discussions. The Deputy Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs then concluded the conference with a recommendation to the participants to visit the exhibition Experience Europe! which has been arranged by the representation of the European Parliament in Sweden at Kulturhuset, the Stockholm House of Culture.