

20th Meeting of the Association of European Senates

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Conclusions of the Presidency

Paris, 14 June 2019

On Friday 14 June 2019, the Presidents of the delegations of the Upper Houses that are members of the Association of European Senates attended the 20th meeting of the Association of European Senates in Paris at the Palais du Luxembourg, where the decision to create this association was originally made in November 2000.

- The role of the Association of European Senates in developing interparliamentary co-operation and promoting bicameralism as a factor in enhancing democracy both in Europe and on other continents, especially on the African continent which took part in this 20th meeting, was reaffirmed.

- The exceptional participation of the Presidents of the Upper Houses of Algeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Kenya, Morocco and the Republic of Congo at this meeting was emphasised. No such meeting between European Senates and African Senates has ever been held before.

- The profound historical, cultural, economic and human ties between Africa and Europe constitute a solid and sustainable geostrategic foundation for the Euro-African partnership. The same attachment to regional integration efforts prevails in Europe and Africa.

- Determination to promote the shared values of parliamentarianism, rule of law, political pluralism, democracy, gender equality and respect for human dignity, and to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals set out by the United Nations, was shared.

During their meeting, the presidents of the second chambers addressed the following topics:

- Dialogue between European and African second chambers;
- Bicameralism: an asset for democracy.

On Euro-African dialogue among second chambers, the conclusions highlighted that:

- the relationship between Europe and Africa should take the form of a renewed partnership, based on reciprocal commitments at the service of sustainable, human and inclusive development;
- the sovereignty of each State is intangible, and each State is responsible for taking measures that fall under its authority, in a sovereign manner;
- Europe and Africa face many common threats and a concerted, coordinated commitment and response from all actors is necessary to deal with them effectively; these threats include major pandemics, the effects of climate change, terrorism and the trafficking networks that promote clandestine migration and have caused so many deaths;
- a comprehensive approach to crisis and risk management, seeking to provide political, economic and social responses, in addition to military involvement in the fight against terrorism or increased security measures, is the guarantee of peace and sustainable development; African initiatives, such as the G5 Sahel Joint Force or the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram, or the Alliance for the Sahel, among others, that evidence the increasing commitment of African States to take responsibility for their own security, respond to this imperative; an integrated approach can regulate migration flows within Africa and between Africa and Europe, while respecting the sovereignty and balances specific to each State;
- in global competition, Europe and Africa share many interests, especially in the face of certain global giants, and a joint approach would help provide the right solutions to address them;
- alongside the management of crises and threats, it is also necessary to build a positive agenda around the sustainable city, inclusive development, education and youth, innovation, population control, food security and local governance, among other priorities, in which the contribution of second chambers is essential;
- inter-cultural dialogue – to which Francophony makes a vital contribution, alongside other forms of expression – deserves support;
- the pooling of cooperation efforts among all States constitutes a lever to increase available resources and guarantee their optimum allocation; the objective to reach, within European countries, an increased mutualisation of the resources for cooperation, in all its forms, with African countries, has been affirmed.

On bicameralism as an asset for democracy, the conclusions highlighted that:

- at a time when parliamentary representation is sometimes being questioned, the contribution of Senates and bicameralism to taking up the challenges of our times must be strongly emphasised; it should also be noted that there is a trend towards reinstating Senates in those cases where they have been abolished;
- Senates may vary in their composition and in the ways their members are appointed, but they all have in common the fact that they enhance parliamentarianism, democratic representation and the rule of law, in particular by ensuring the representation of territories, intermediary bodies, civil society actors and all citizens in all their diversity, which is essential for the cohesion of our societies;
- it is often up to them to act in difficult circumstances to ensure the continuity of the State and the stability of institutions;
- Senates are an asset in fostering the emergence of better governance, in particular by their specific means of oversight of governmental action;
- they play a driving role in the establishment of responsible local governance, so as to better consider the specific characteristics of different territories, while respecting the unity of the State;
- Senates, and specifically those of the Member States of the European Union, have a special responsibility to ensure the unity of the Union, to bring it closer to its citizens and make its action more effective and better understood, in the wake of European elections expressing the citizens' expectations.

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The Presidents of the delegations of the Association of European Senates welcome the proposal of the House of Peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina to host the next meeting of the Association in 2020, highlighting the role of this assembly in helping promote reconciliation amongst peoples and the importance of the Western Balkans region for Europe.

They have concluded that the parliamentary dimensions of political dialogue in its various and complementary forms (multilateral, regional and bilateral, in particular via interparliamentary friendship groups helping to promote dialogue between parliaments and peoples) should be strengthened.

They considered that this 1st meeting among African and European Senates should not be left to stand alone and that the dialogue should be pursued and expanded. Several African Senates are considering the creation of an association of African Senates.

Adopted by consensus.