

20<sup>TH</sup> MEETING  
OF THE ASSOCIATION  
OF EUROPEAN SENATES

PARIS, 14 JUNE 2019

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# SITTING

Friday, 14 June 2019

PRESIDENCY OF MR GÉRARD LARCHER

*The sitting was opened at 9.00 am.*

## ***Opening Address***

**Mr Gérard Larcher, *President of the Senate of the French Republic***  
– I would like to welcome you to the Chamber of the Senate of the French Republic.

Right here in this Chamber, not long after Paris had been liberated, General de Gaulle took the floor on 9 November 1944, to inaugurate the work of what was then the Provisional Consultative Assembly. And he paid tribute to the fighters, to the Resistance, to those who had come from all sides to confront Nazism and continued to fight. On this occasion, I would also like to remember the help received from Africa: it was in Africa that the heart of a free France continued to beat.

We are certainly experiencing a unique moment.

Firstly, because, after Romania last year, we are about to start the 20<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Association of European Senates. Twenty meetings have already been held since the founding event here in 2000, on the initiative of one of my predecessors, Christian Poncelet, whom I remember with affection at this moment.

Our association is itself unique because, in a visionary approach, we have chosen a continental approach that extends beyond the borders of the European Union. I would like to thank the delegations from Switzerland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Russian Federation for their commitment.

The European Union is a major component of Europe, but it is not the whole of Europe.

Our meeting is also unique because of the attendance of African Senates, which we collectively decided to invite. This is a first. Allow me to name and welcome each of the delegations among us in the Chamber: the Council of the Nation of Algeria, the Senate of Cameroon, the Senate of Côte d'Ivoire, the Senate of Gabon, the Senate of Kenya, the House of Councillors of Morocco and the Senate of the Republic of the Congo.

Other African Senates were unable to join us, due to their electoral timetables, in particular. These include Namibia, Nigeria, which has just elected its new President of the Senate, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would like to acknowledge all of them from this rostrum. We will, of course, send them the conclusions of our proceedings.

Why have such a meeting between the European and African Senates? Because there is no equivalent. While our two continents and their sub-regions each possess interparliamentary structures, while the Inter-Parliamentary Union (the IPU) brings together all of the world's Parliaments, Africa and Europe have thus far only communicated with each other bilaterally, between Parliaments.

From now on, this will no longer be the case. And that's a good thing! Because, today, misunderstandings and prejudices sometimes create so many barriers that interfere with and undermine trust. In Europe, Africa, despite its diversity, is sometimes perceived as an aggregation of crises, which pose many dangers. In Africa, Europe is sometimes seen as a fortress looking inward upon itself.

If we are not careful, Europe as a whole risks distancing itself from Africa, and Africa from Europe.

Yet, we have shared interests. We increasingly share common destinies.

In spite of our histories, with their periods of light and shadow, geography imposes its rules on us: we are neighbours. Managing many of the threats that affect us all requires a coordinated response, whether to major pandemics, climate change, smuggling networks that kill so many Africans, or the fight against terrorism. These common challenges require common responses.

But our relationship cannot be limited to managing threats! It must give hope. It must be our future.

In the face of global competition, our interests are more convergent than certain people imagine. After years of delay and a certain amount of naivety, the European Union has just adopted measures to protect its strategic sectors from certain foreign investments by major powers.

Many African countries, for their part, are experiencing difficult renegotiations at the financial level on this subject, and I raised this concern in frank discussions with the President of the People's Republic of China during his visit to France last March.

We have certainly failed to develop an adequate joint analysis in our countries of the impact of investments according to their origin, or of laws with extraterritorial effect.

But we still have more to build on. On innovation, on the sustainable city: one of the topics chosen for a new kind of Africas (in the plural) - France summit to be held in Bordeaux in 2020, on education and youth, on agriculture and food security, on involving African diasporas in development, and finally on local governance, which interests second chambers so much because it is part of their DNA.

In order to tackle all these projects and this positive agenda, reciprocal commitments are the key.

As Europeans, we all tend to look to the Middle East, to the Far East, and we perhaps do so more openly. But we should never forget that Africa is our neighbour, and we should try to both increase and pool our efforts more effectively, to Africa's benefit! African friends, let's move forward together, making sure that everyone is taking control of their own destiny!

These issues do not only concern governments. The second parliamentary chambers have an important role to play in promoting a balanced, respectful and responsible dialogue, and in adding their special touch.

Sometimes criticised, second chambers are so irreplaceable that, once they have been abolished, they are often restored! In many countries, we are witnessing a revival of second chambers, after a period of decline, because they reflect the needs and aspirations of States.

These aspirations are reflected in the three pillars of bicameralism: further developing parliamentarianism, ensuring the stability and continuity of institutions, including in the most difficult situations, and representing all territories and populations, in all their diversity, in order to provide cohesion.

Second chambers are one of the essential links in inclusive development. They help to smooth out conflicts. They are a factor in contributing to peace of mind, cohesion and unity while respecting diversity.

Consequently, ladies and gentlemen, on this day, through our meeting of the Association of European and African Senates, we are breaking new ground together.

Hopefully, further meetings will follow, with an even broader representation from African Senates.

I will conclude on a single point, in the form of an appeal: let Senates become places of dialogue between Europe and Africa.

Senates of Africa and Europe, let us unite! Welcome to the Senate of the French Republic!

### ***Speech by the Guest Speaker for Europe***

**The President** – In this Palace for which we have to thank a Queen of France from Italy, Marie de' Medici, I would like to extend a special welcome to the President of the Italian Senate.

I will now give the floor to Michel Barnier, whom I sincerely thank for having accepted our invitation to speak, as guest of honour, at the opening sitting on the dialogue between Europe and Africa.

Michel Barnier has held high ministerial office in France, serving as Minister for European Affairs and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

He has long been an environmentalist.

He is also a very committed player in European integration, having served as European Commissioner from 1999 to 2004, as a Member of the European Parliament and then as European Commissioner again and Vice President of the European Commission from 2010 to 2014.

Since October 2016, he has held the challenging position of Chief European Union Negotiator responsible for preparing and conducting negotiations with the United Kingdom. At this point, I would also like to welcome the Speaker of the House of Lords.

**Mr Michel Barnier** – Thank you, Mr President, for the honour of speaking here today. I have sat in the Senate. I have not forgotten the quality of its debates and the tolerance that prevailed here.

I have attended many meetings of the Conference of Community Affairs Committees (COSAC) and have been visiting European capitals for three years to discuss the issue of Brexit. All the meetings I have had in this context have been cordial and of high quality.

The European continent is larger than the European Union.

I would like to extend my greetings to the Presidents of the second chambers of Europe and Africa. My thoughts also go out to Jean-Claude Juncker, with whom I am leading the Brexit negotiations.

A few years ago, in 2003, the Prodi Commission, of which I was a member, welcomed to Brussels the President of the African Union Commission, President Alpha Oumar Konaré. This was the first time the two bodies had met. And President Konaré, quite passionately, drew the attention of the Commissioners to two points: first, Africa will have two billion inhabitants in 2050 – tomorrow, we might say – 50% of whom will be under 18 years old; and second, our continents will still be 14 kilometres apart. These figures are relevant to us!

We face common challenges: the contrast in population between our two continents, migratory movements, climate change (President Larcher reminded us of the importance of this issue), the fight against terrorism, the control of financial markets, the fight against speculation, the technological war being waged by certain major companies, and finally the food challenge.

The world is changing quickly and permanently. Our relations with Russia, the United States and China are evolving.

Almost three years ago to the day, the United Kingdom chose to leave the European Union. It chose to stand alone rather than remain together. We deeply regret this choice, but we respect it. It is the sovereign freedom of the British people – and I say this to the Speaker of the House of Lords here today.

The negotiations I am leading are lose-lose; no one has been able to show me that Brexit would bring any added value. It is simply a matter of limiting the consequences of this process, whether they are human (four million citizens are affected on both sides), financial and budgetary (the United Kingdom has made certain commitments to the 28-member Union, which must be honoured in full), or even political (I am thinking in particular about the situation in Ireland, an island dear to my heart).

We have ended up with a 600-page treaty, which is a kind of divorce agreement. We are waiting for this document to be ratified. If the United Kingdom wishes to leave the European Union, which is its right, and to do so in an orderly manner, this is the only agreement possible. We are now waiting for the appointment of the new Prime Minister in London.

More important than divorce is the new relationship we need to build with the United Kingdom. I have great admiration for the culture and history of this great country, and I particularly remember Winston Churchill's role during the Second World War.

The United Kingdom will remain our neighbour, friend and ally. A second phase of negotiations will be needed to build a new and ambitious strategic partnership after the British withdrawal.

These negotiations will cover trade, research, Erasmus, judicial and police cooperation, defence and foreign policy, as well as certain sectoral policies. The safety of European citizens, in particular, cannot be achieved without the United Kingdom. The stability of the continent requires a strong partnership between the UK and the European Union.

To conclude on a note of hope, let's look ahead rather than dwell on the past: we need the United Kingdom in order to meet the challenges I have mentioned; we must therefore build an ambitious strategic agreement with the UK as soon as possible.

I also believe in a partnership of equals between Europe and Africa. Our relationship is based on the past, even if it has not always been easy, but more importantly on the present: Europe is the leading source of foreign investment on the African continent, and we are allies in the fight against terrorism. History affords us no rights, but we have reasons to work together to address Africa's challenges: electrification, agricultural autonomy, culture, education, investment in youth, access to the Internet.

In this respect, I remain concerned about the unity of the 27-member Union.

We have cultivated this unity in the context of negative negotiations. It must now be implemented as part of a positive agenda: we need to carry

out the necessary reforms in Europe; we need to learn from Brexit to reconcile citizens with the European project; we need to address the challenges of our relations with Africa, China, Russia and the United States.

The alliance of equals between the African Union and the European Union will be one of the priorities for the next five to ten years. It will mobilise public and private funding, beyond the Cotonou Agreements, with all African countries that so wish.

The partnership between Europe and Africa is a priority for our public and private policies. Your initiative, Mr President, is an essential platform to build this alliance. And I thank you for that. *(Applause)*

**The President** – Thank you for this powerful speech, which focused on relations between our two continents, but also on current events. A recent trip to Ireland also convinced me of the need to look positively to the future.

### ***Video message from the Guest Speaker for Africa***

**Ms Vera Songwe**, *Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa* – I am pleased to be with you today, even though I am not there in person, which I regret.

This twentieth meeting of the Association of European Senates is very important. Africa and Europe certainly have common challenges to face, in a changing global context – the issue of intercontinental trade, in particular, is becoming crucial. In addition, Africa is uniting to become Europe's interlocutor in trade and economic issues.

Europe remains our leading economic partner, although trade has declined somewhat recently due to rising commodity prices. The added value of this trade, particularly of goods exported to Europe, is considerable. It creates many jobs in Africa, and I hope it will continue to grow.

Similarly, European investment in Africa remains essential, although it has also declined in the most recent period. We would like to see even more, especially in the digital technology and energy sectors, where European engineering is invaluable and Africa's needs are considerable.

Sharing state-of-the-art technologies, particularly in the field of renewable energy, is also very useful.

Cooperation in sustainable development and agriculture should be encouraged. Italy has just launched an initiative in this area, with the

support of the European Investment Bank. We are forging win-win partnerships.

However, certain African countries remain fragile; they will still require assistance. To this end, Europe must remain true to its commitment to devote 0.7% of its gross national income to Africa's development.

With regard to migration, which is a key issue, we need to communicate more. There is less migration to Europe, but intra-African migration remains very high. Migrants are also more highly educated. We need to think about the causes of migration: unemployment, political instability – particularly in the Sahel – and social inequality.

The free movement of people in Africa must be improved. Today, people move freely between Kenya and Rwanda, without documents, with significant benefits to these two States.

In one sense, we are all migrants. Our history has been a story of migration, whether to Europe or the United States. This trend will continue, especially as Europe's population ages. Healthy, organised and safe migration is required for everyone involved.

Investments in Africa today have the highest return, far outstripping the rates of return in Europe. Creating a continental free trade area will also increase employment in Africa.

Both African and European populations must be cared for. From this perspective, bringing together the Senates of Europe and Africa and involving the United Nations Economic Commission is a very good idea. We must expand our collaboration!

## ***Euro-African dialogue among second chambers***

**The President** – Before we begin our morning’s proceedings, I would like to welcome the members of the *Bureau* of the Senate and my fellow Senators to the chamber of the Senate.

I also extend a warm welcome to the members of the jury for the Senate Thesis Award, who are in the galleries. Professors, lawyers and authors, they are all very committed to bicameralism and attend our debates.

The topic for our first session is “the Euro-African dialogue among second chambers”.

I propose that the debates be organised as follows: each of the heads of delegation who have expressed the wish to speak will do so for a maximum of seven minutes; each of the heads of delegation who have previously registered may then speak in a debate, for a maximum of two minutes.

We can take other speakers, for the same two-minute period, if time permits. Those who know me know that I am intractable and anything but diplomatic when it comes to respecting time limits! (*Smiles*)

**Mr Salal Goudjil**, *President of the Council of the Nation of Algeria* – I am delighted to be able to join you again and I would like to thank you for the friendly welcome and the excellent organisation of this important meeting.

The various parliamentary fora available as part of parliamentary diplomacy are appropriate frameworks for improving the performance of national Parliaments at the national, regional and international levels.

That is why this meeting is of particular importance.

It is imperative to remember the importance of bicameralism as a modern political system, not only in terms of its effective contribution to the development of legislative activity, but also and more importantly in terms of the balance and stability of all national political institutions.

The African continent is currently engaged, under the leadership of the African Union, in a vast undertaking of overall political and economic rehabilitation, to make Africa a major and essential player in international relations.

However, this task is not easy because the African continent is still facing crises and conflicts, asymmetric threats and challenges such as terrorism, transnational organised crime and violent extremism, and also

faces challenges related to migratory movements and environmental issues.

The expected Euro-African dialogue is a dialogue that prioritises the development of human resources and ensures the availability of investments to guarantee the continent's growth, peace and security.

In this regard, Afro-European relations need a real boost and must be more effective, to foster all forms of integration and interaction between continental and regional bodies.

These relations also need greater and more creative synergy between the efforts of the African continent and the European Union, which will considerably increase the value and profitability of our partnerships in support of peace, development and shared hopes.

That is why my country has always been keen to advocate a partnership based on the principles of balance and equality with partners outside the continent.

My country has also been keen to step up its contribution to the development of a peaceful and secure African continent, one that can subsequently address development issues and other challenges.

Algeria therefore believes that the issue of development must be considered as part of a comprehensive and inclusive approach, primarily involving economic and social development and the promotion and empowerment of human beings. This must form the basis and purpose of any development process.

In this context, the recent people's movement in our country, characterised by the peaceful and civilised nature of Algerian demonstrations, bears witness to the vitality of the Algerian people in their interactions with issues of public interest.

This movement will pave the way for a true, stronger and deeper democracy to which everyone must contribute, which will inevitably lead to the growing independence of national political decision-making.

Consequently, we affirm that the Algerian people, in all conscience and responsibility, have underlined their commitment to protecting their country, and their desire to propel it towards a democratic, promising and prosperous future.

That is why comprehensive dialogue, as emphasised by His Excellency the Head of State, Mr Abdelkader Bensalah, in his last speech to the Nation, remains the most appropriate way to achieve the aspirations of the Algerian people.

Our world desperately needs to promote the values of peace and dialogue in order to address current challenges and threats and resolve existing conflicts through peaceful means.

In the same context, the African continent must further develop its democratic practices, with the need to increase the independence of political decision-making, which should become a more widespread political practice in Africa.

In addition, it is essential for the African continent to eliminate its remaining pockets of colonialism by allowing its peoples to exercise their right to self-determination, as required under international law.

In conclusion, we believe that providing security, supporting peace and stability, achieving prosperity, promoting economic, social and technological development and creating shared opportunities are all aspirations that can be achieved by adopting a balanced approach to cooperation between Africa and Europe. (*Applause*)

**Mr Marcel Niat Njifenji**, *President of the Senate of Cameroon* – We are pleased and honoured to be attending the twentieth meeting of the Association of European Senates in your prestigious Palais du Luxembourg. President Larcher, thank you very much! The people of Cameroon express their sincere gratitude to you.

The Senate of Cameroon, created by the Constitution of 18 January 1996, which is in its second term of office and still has only limited experience, is a young, developing chamber that is open to cooperation and partnerships with other Senates, particularly with those that are more experienced.

We have high expectations of interparliamentary exchanges and cooperation and dialogue between second chambers. In this regard, we are convinced that together we can find solutions to the challenges facing our two continents, in the fields of development, climate, decentralisation, the fight against terrorism and migration issues.

With this in mind, we call for the creation of interparliamentary friendship groups in our various chambers to boost our relations, promote dialogue between our States and bring our peoples closer together. By focusing on areas that have the greatest impact on the lives of our fellow citizens, we can mobilise parliamentary action for positive change.

Senates, because of the way they are elected, have shown that they are close to the people.

They can help raise awareness of their country and their institutional processes. Not only is little known about African countries in Europe, they are sometimes the subject of misinformation or even real campaigns to denigrate our country and our institutions, which we strongly condemn. Cameroon, a State governed by the rule of law, and which upholds its international commitments, has always been concerned about improving the well-being of our people and those of our sister countries facing security challenges.

For many years, for example, Cameroon has welcomed many refugees from neighbouring African countries, some of which lie even beyond our borders. The reason is simple: Cameroon is still considered a haven of peace in such a troubled Africa. We appeal to our European partners to understand the countries facing security risks, subversive activities, separatist threats and terrorist violence, to which Cameroon is also currently exposed.

Thanks to the policy of our President, Paul Biya, and the efforts of our defence and security forces, Cameroon has succeeded in eradicating the threat of Boko Haram in the northern part of the country. The fight against terrorism is at the heart of the Government's programme, which is taking steps, with all parts of the country, to promote a calmer response to a threat that is developing in the west...

**The President** – Please conclude, Mr President...

**Mr Marcel Niat Njifenji**, *President of the Senate of Cameroon* – It has implemented measures to promote bilingualism, in particular. The military assistance plan and the national disarmament and reintegration plan demonstrate that the country is tackling the problem in the north-west and south-west.

Thank you again for inviting us to take part in your proceedings. May these efforts be successful, for the sake of peace, security and development in the world, thanks in particular to the dialogue between the Senates of Europe and Africa.

I hope that the Europeans among you now have a better understanding of Cameroon, which is open to dialogue, and have respect for our country's institutions and democracy. (*Applause*)

**Mr Jeannot Ahoussou-Kovadio**, *President of the Senate of Côte d'Ivoire* – According to the 2017 report of the Mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the number of migrants registered on the Italian coast claiming to be Ivorian nationals is estimated at 10,000 individuals, placing Côte d'Ivoire in third place for arrivals on the central Mediterranean route, after Nigeria and Guinea. These migrants engaging in suicidal journeys are assisted by unscrupulous people smugglers.

The factors leading to the mass departure of young people are poverty, unemployment, lack of democracy and intra-community and post-electoral conflicts, terrorist threats and climate change. But the European dream is turning into a nightmare.

While Côte d'Ivoire has recorded an average growth rate of 8% since 2012, making it one of the most prosperous economies in Africa, the reasons why these young people are leaving the country raise questions. Ms Marina Schramn, IOM Head of Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, reveals that, from May 2017 to May 2018, at least 85% of Ivorian illegal migrants had paid employment in Côte d'Ivoire, most of them with a monthly income of at least 100,000 CFA francs, or €150.

Under the authority of His Excellency Mr Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic, Côte d'Ivoire has made significant progress on the issues of reception and integration. The European Union Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF-IOM) joint initiative project, costing €2.7 million or 1.7 billion CFA francs, covering the 2017-2020 period, has already provided support for several thousand migrants from May 2017 to July 2018.

A law on the smuggling of migrants, passed in 2017 by the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, established a mechanism for eradicating people smuggling and protecting the fundamental rights of migrants.

The Government has arrested 400 smugglers and 40 others have been questioned.

However, if the Ivorian and French authorities are concerned about irregular migration, we must get back to work. How can migrants already settled abroad – the diasporas – be associated with diversified skills, national development and curbing uncontrolled migration flows? This question concerns the Ivorian Senate.

I now turn to the role and responsibilities of the second chambers in establishing new partnerships.

Almost all the literature on the relationship between development and the diasporas leads to the same conclusion: the undeniable contribution that the diasporas make to the socio-economic transformation of the home and host countries.

A report by the African Institute for Remittances (AIR) indicates that, in 2017, African diasporas sent US\$65 billion to residents of their home countries. This amount is equivalent to 44.33% of the official development assistance to African countries granted within the framework of the OECD in the same year, which adds up to US\$146.6 billion.

The power and potential of diasporas in the development of their home countries is therefore a reality, and this has led many countries to create public entities to mobilise them. This is the case in Côte d'Ivoire, which created the Ministry of African Integration and Ivorians Abroad in 2012.

The issue of diasporas has been enshrined in our Constitution and entrusted to the Senate. Diasporas also contribute to the cultural, sporting, social, economic and even political influence – a dimension well known in France – of their host country. There are many examples of these brilliant achievements, and the pride that inspires these exceptional journeys is shared by both home and host countries.

For all these reasons and as part of its mission to represent Ivorians living outside Côte d'Ivoire, the Senate of Côte d'Ivoire proposes to organise an international conference to discuss the type of partnerships that could be established between diasporas and the Ivorian Government on the one hand, and between the Government and host countries of the Ivorian diasporas on the other.

A second level of partnership can be developed between the Ivorian Government and diaspora host countries. However, it is one thing to understand the need to involve the diasporas in development and quite

another to have the capacity and financial resources for the programmes and projects that the undertaking requires.

Therefore, a long-term commitment by diasporas to the development of Côte d'Ivoire undoubtedly requires the reinforcement of the Government's capacities by developing strategies and financial support to improve the attractiveness of regions by improving living conditions and creating well-paying jobs, which will enable young people to settle in their local places of residence.

By representing local authorities via the Constitution, the Ivorian Senate intends to play a key role in its quest to improve the laws governing local authorities, in particular the transfer of powers and resources to local authorities and decentralised cooperation.

Finally, the Senate intends to use its diplomatic power to advocate with the interparliamentary organisations and the bodies whose interests they defend for the advancement of these projects.

I conclude by reaffirming the Senate's commitment to Euro-African dialogue.

Côte d'Ivoire's second parliamentary chamber is committed to continuing discussions on the issues and strategies relating to development and the diasporas. Development strategies based on human development and attractive regions where respect for human rights and environmental protection thrive, together with participatory democracy and the fair sharing of the fruits of growth, will contribute to the long-term settlement of citizens in their homeland, all in a climate of security for people and property. *(Applause)*

**Mr Christian Cambon**, *Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate of the French Republic* – “Africa is our future!” This is the title of a recent report by the Senate's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee. It conveys a simple message, which is also our conviction.

Africa is the continent of all promises. The challenges it faces are many. These challenges call for a stronger partnership between France, Europe and Africa.

As Michel Barnier pointed out, Africa is a continent full of promise, looking to the future. Half of the African population is under 25 years old and is eager to forge a future with an open outlook on the world. Africa, a continent of 30 million square kilometres, 54 countries and 1.3 billion people, has become a digital and innovative continent. Its growth rate is something we can only dream of!

It is on this pluralist, multifaceted continent, whose peoples, languages, economies and history are hugely diverse, that a part of our common future is being played out. It is also on this central, global and indispensable continent that formidable challenges are concentrated.

The first challenge is that of young people, their education and training. In Africa, 450 million young people will enter the labour market by 2050. They need to be educated, trained and provided with jobs. For our part, we wish to contribute by placing particular emphasis on Francophone education. The challenge is to build on the shared asset that is the French language, with synergies and cross-over training programmes involving our universities and schools. This is vital: schools are at the forefront of the fight against all forms of obscurantism, especially religious extremism, which is a mortal danger to us all, and which is penetrating dangerously and ever-more deeply into Africa, from the Sahel to West Africa and into the Horn of Africa.

The second challenge is migration. With a population that is expected to double by 2050, it is first and foremost a challenge for Africa, with migration flows within the continent. At the same time, an increasing number of Africans will want to travel to Europe. We must therefore cooperate to better regulate and control these migrations. Together, we can take effective action, both bilaterally and at the European level. The common struggle to dismantle migration routes is essential. And it works: I would like to pay tribute to Niger in particular.

This question is closely linked to the issue of population. No country in the world has developed without controlling its population growth! All this requires a determined intervention by public authorities and civil society to enable young women to take greater control of their future. We are not oblivious to the complexity and sensitivity of this subject, but to avoid it would be extremely risky.

The fourth common challenge is sustainable development. Take agriculture, for example. Europe, and particularly France, needs a new and more sustainable agricultural model, while Africa needs to feed a growing population. We can therefore learn a lot from each other. Our institutes, which bring together French and African researchers, the Institute of Research for Development (IRD) and the Centre for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD), are working on this every day. I am also delighted that, as we have repeatedly advocated, the French Development Agency (AFD) is investing again in the agricultural sector, which has been neglected for too long: what a monumental backward step in the era of the great global food challenge! When centuries-old agropastoralism disappears in the Sahel, what alternative remains for the younger generations? This is a breeding ground for terrorism!

There are, however, several pitfalls that might prevent us from addressing these common challenges together.

The first is the persistence of insecurity, conflict and terrorism. Because these plagues are a threat to all of us in Africa and Europe, our armed forces are deployed in the Sahel as part of Operation Barkhane, a 4,500-strong operation, to whom I would like to pay due tribute here. I say to our European friends: it is the security of Europe as a whole that France is ensuring in the Sahel! The European Union is also involved alongside us, as are several Member States, in EUTM Mali (European Union Training Mission in Mali) and in MINUSMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali). I welcome their involvement. We will never forget the French soldiers, nor will we ever forget the African soldiers who have paid a bloody price for restoring peace.

The long-term solution is to restore the State and public services, and strengthen African military capabilities, at the State or regional organisation level, such as the G5 Sahel with its joint force, or at the continental level with the African Union, which is leading the Joint Multinational Force against Boko Haram. France and the European Union are taking concrete action, through training and cooperation, to obtain international funding for security in Africa, whether at the European Union or United Nations level.

It is more necessary than ever to develop a comprehensive approach, which we call “3D”, forming part of a true continuum of diplomacy, development and defence. This was the subject of the Dakar Forum last November. The Senate made a major contribution to the creation of a €200 million French fund managed by the AFD for development projects in crisis and conflict areas.

In this area – and I know that there are very high expectations among our partners – it is no longer acceptable to juxtapose national interventions without any coordination. That is why we support the Sahel Alliance, which must specifically enable this concentration of desires and resources, with, for example, a strong contribution from our German partner, but also the support of the European Union, the African Development Bank and the World Bank.

The second major pitfall would be to ignore African aspirations for the further development of democracy. In particular, we must take into consideration the emergence of a large population of highly connected young people who want more transparent governance and a more open economy. It is the expectations of these young people that African countries must meet, but these people must also be the focus of more targeted development actions; otherwise these countries will lack the type of people required to drive innovation and change.

Developing democracy may also involve creating a second chamber, which, as many of your countries prove, acts as a “stabilising pendulum” for institutions, to use President Larcher’s excellent expression, which responds to the need for inclusiveness expressed by societies. Chad, Mali and Côte d’Ivoire have made this choice.

Neither France nor Europe wants to be associated with projects that would force Africa in the pitfalls of underdevelopment and debt. This is what we say with great frankness to our Chinese friends, for example, who wish to cooperate with us in Africa, but under financial conditions that sometimes seem unbalanced to us.

Rest assured: France and Europe will stand by Africa’s side in meeting the challenge of development, security and the future.

So yes, “Africa is our future”; now let’s write the next wonderful chapter together! (*Applause*)

**Mr Daniel Gunther, *President of the German Bundesrat*** – I am very pleased that we can hold this expanded meeting, and I would like to thank President Larcher for his initiative and personal commitment, which has been crucial to its success.

It should be our joint mission to show how essential second chambers are to democracy and for maintaining close links with citizens, especially in federal systems.

The partnership with Africa is crucial for European countries, for all of us. We will be establishing direct contact. I undertake to do so, as President of the Bundesrat. I will be travelling to Angola and Namibia. After this conference, let's help each other to maintain this face-to-face contact. *(Applause)*

**The President** – Together with the German Bundesrat and the Polish Senate, we meet regularly in a format known as the “Weimar Triangle”, which is a non-exclusive discussion forum. With your predecessor to the Presidency of the Bundesrat and the Marshal (President) of the Senate of Poland, and in close liaison with our colleague the President of the Senate of Romania, who last year chaired the Association of European Senates, we took the initiative to exceptionally invite the Presidents of the second chambers of Africa to this 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Association of European Senates, which was agreed by our colleagues the Presidents of the European Senates at our previous meeting in Bucharest in 2018.

**Ms Maria Elisabetta Alberti Casellati, President of the Senate of Italy** – Thank you for putting the Euro-African dialogue on our agenda. I am delighted to meet our colleagues in the African Senates for the first time. I would like to extend the greetings and friendship of the Italian Senate to them.

In the coming decades, the global balances and the future of Europe will be determined by what happens on the African continent. By the end of the century, Africa's population will increase from 1.2 billion to 4 billion. Migration is not a solution for the future for such a large population.

Africa's economic growth, which is significant despite persistent imbalances, runs alongside situations of extreme poverty. There are encouraging signs, such as the entry into force of the free trade agreement.

Africa is the future of the world! China's interest proves this. Europe has a direct interest in this future. It must adopt a strategy in this regard and mobilise new resources and synergies.

A new Marshall Plan is needed to bring about economic and social development: not based on paternalism or handouts, but on development, law and well-being for all, with mutual efforts to build trust and share energies and resources. To this end, our Parliaments can play an essential role, together with the European and African institutions, in the formulation and implementation of new development policies. Let's develop our mutual knowledge, overcome our old prejudices and learn to collaborate for the common good! *(Applause)*

**The President** – “Development, law and well-being”, that is a very appropriate formula! We must reject our disregard for one another!

**Mr Nikolay Fedorov, First Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council of Russia** – I would like to thank France for this invitation. It is symbolic that this meeting is being held in Paris, the birthplace of our association, whose cooperation with African countries is a priority. It is also a priority of the President of Russia. A summit between Russia and Africa will soon be held in Sochi. I would like to take this opportunity to invite our colleagues from the African countries to participate in this undertaking.

We are striving to strengthen economic ties and regional cooperation, and to involve Russia in improving education, health and human rights in Africa. The African continent must take responsibility for its development and sovereignty and determine its own future.

A Russian delegation visited Rwanda to prepare for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tutsi genocide. We all live in the same world; Russia is aware of this. Pushkin had African ancestors: we thank Africa for giving us such a great poet!

We would like to express our compassion and sympathy to Mali, with the hope that our meeting will be successful and that all Heads of State will work towards the well-being of our peoples. *(Applause)*

**The President** – The next time we read Pushkin, it will be from a different perspective...

*The sitting was suspended at 10.40 am and resumed at 11.30 am.*

**The President** – I would like to welcome Deputy Chairmen Jean-Marc Gabouty, Philippe Dallier and David Assouline, who represent the full spectrum of views held by the Senate, along with Ms Jacky Deromedi, who represents French people “from the diaspora”, who have settled outside France.

**Ms Lucie Milebou Aubusson, President of the Senate of Gabon** – I am very honoured to be with you and I thank President Gérard Larcher for his initiative.

This important meeting is an ideal opportunity for dialogue, in a multilateral framework, with countries that historically do not have a close relationship with Gabon but with which we share overarching issues.

The Euro-African dialogue of the second chambers allows us to address issues of common interest such as security, development, education, the environment and migration.

Insecurity in Africa is a major issue that undermines development and democracy efforts by creating pockets of instability, sowing the seeds of

poverty, resulting in population displacement, inter-communal conflict and, above all, massive immigration to Europe, which stirs up nationalistic tendencies and exacerbates racism. Walls of isolation are being erected and few bridges are able to survive this identity trend.

There can be no development and no democracy without security. Sustainable development objectives can only be achieved in an environment of peace, stability and respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law.

Another major subject is the industrialisation and transfer of technologies between a developing continent, which supplies raw materials, and another which controls the production facilities. The industrialisation of African countries will reduce youth unemployment, poverty and migration.

Environmental protection is also a priority. The second-largest green “lung” on Earth after the Amazon is located in the Congo Basin. Gabon, 70% of which is covered by virgin rainforest and also possessing 800 kilometres of coastline, has passed a framework law on sustainable development. It has twenty marine protected areas, representing 26% of marine areas, and thirteen natural parks, covering 11% of its territory. Poaching, deforestation, unregulated fishing and waste recycling, especially from industrialised countries, are ongoing challenges. We live on the same Earth, we are all affected by climate change. There is no backup planet.

We must therefore pass laws to punish environmental criminals and encourage our governments to continue their efforts to protect our planet. We must scrutinise government actions by ensuring their compliance with treaties.

We welcome the commitment of European Union countries, which are showing practical solidarity with our nations through the European Development Fund and also in the field in the fight against terrorism.

With the richness of our identities and peculiarities, we must, in the age of globalisation, communitarianism and digital technology, create a common identity as world parliamentarians, to tear down the walls of intolerance and build bridges of friendship, fraternity and solidarity in their place. We all belong to the same human race! (*Applause*)

**The President** – Absolutely, and we all have the same willingness to engage in dialogue.

It is a great pleasure to welcome the President of the Senate of Kenya this morning – our French-speaking friends will forgive me! (*Smiles*)

**Mr Kenneth Makelo Lusaka**, *President of the Senate of Kenya* – I am honoured to be part of this very important meeting, and I thank President Larcher for his welcome. I would also like to thank the Association of European Senates.

Parliament represents the collective voice of the people and a nation, and it is an essential part of democracy. Its role in society is changing as the world around us changes. Democracies around the world are reassessing the role of Parliament, and bicameralism is attracting a lot of attention, hence the relevance of our discussion.

Kenya introduced bicameralism in 2010 with its new Constitution, after it had been abolished in 1966. This had become important, due to decentralisation among other factors; a chamber representing the interests of decentralised authorities was needed. It has been a success, but in recent years, the young Kenyan Senate has faced many challenges.

Bicameralism is essential to ensure respect for the different interests in the legislative process. The parliamentary chambers can deal with many subjects, according to the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure. The second chambers have common concerns, hence the importance of working together.

The time has come to formalise the Euro-African friendship. Africa faces unique challenges. Parliamentary democracy has not been fully exploited. European and African Senates must compare and share their best practices in order to become effective champions of democratic governance. Through this meeting, I hope that we can build a strong network to strengthen parliamentary diplomacy by strengthening our Upper Houses, for the benefit of our citizens and our institutions.

The bicameral system is based on checks and balances. The examination of a bill by both chambers ensures that legislation is not adopted in haste or under emotional stress. Majority bias can cause members of parliament from one party to pass laws that are draconian and even harmful to members of parliament themselves!

The existence of two chambers enriches legislative debates. Bicameralism should promote complementarity between political parties and between chambers.

Unfortunately, political rivalry between the two chambers can affect the legislative timetable. While competition is normal in a democracy, we should nevertheless seek complementarity. In Kenya, we have developed a dispute-resolution mechanism: in the event of disagreement between the chambers, an ad hoc joint mediation committee meets, composed of equal numbers of representatives from the two chambers.

Establishing such a mechanism is in the best interests of bicameral African States. I have no doubt that my brothers and sisters in the African Senates will be able to draw inspiration from this system. Promoters of bicameralism in Africa have lessons to learn from the work of the Association of European Senates. This meeting is also an opportunity to bridge the gap between French- and English-speaking nations: what brings us together is more important than what divides us!

For example, Kenya has played a major role in ensuring the stability of Somalia and southern Sudan, and I thank you for your help in the fight against terrorism, a threat we all face.

I want to issue an appeal for us to work together. For example, in Kenya we have a digital platform that allows people to send money via their mobile phones; 19 million Kenyans use it daily. It is not about reinventing the wheel, but about sharing our practices. We have a common destiny in Africa, whether in relation to agriculture, development or food security. I will conclude by quoting Henry Ford: "If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself." (*Applause*)

**The President** – We will all try to move forward together. Thank you for your contribution.

**Mr Abdessamad Kayouh**, *first Vice President of the House of Councillors of Morocco* – I would like to thank President Gérard Larcher for such a warm welcome and for the excellent organisation of this important meeting.

I welcome your initiative to hold this twentieth meeting of the Association of European Senates with the theme of Euro-African dialogue, promoting the exchange and sharing of experiences. This dialogue is the essence of parliamentary diplomacy, which brings together different points of view and provides an opportunity to debate concerns common to our Upper Houses, which are in touch with local and regional realities.

Fourteen kilometres separate Morocco from Spain; history has also forged economic, cultural and human ties, fostering multidimensional and dynamic cooperation.

Africa and Europe are facing common challenges, including security, human rights, the fight against terrorism, development, education, migration and climate change.

Convinced of its strategic importance, the Kingdom of Morocco has made South-South cooperation the main focus of its foreign policy. Pope Francis' visit at the end of March was an important moment in the fight against religious intolerance, fanaticism and identity-driven insularity.

Socio-economic development requires the transformation of risks and challenges into opportunities. 2018 was the year in which Morocco's pioneering role on migration was acknowledged, the year our humanist, global and solidarity-based immigration and asylum policy was recognised. Launched in 2013, it is aligned with the Marrakech Pact adopted in December 2018.

The Upper Houses provide for better representation of the people: stability, conservatism, counterbalance and the enrichment of legislative work are the characteristics of these chambers. The House of Councillors of Morocco represents local authorities, professional associations for agriculture, industry and crafts, trade unions, entrepreneurs and employers.

The House of Councillors has institutionalised cooperation with African and European Parliaments and strengthened dialogue with such bodies as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, the European Parliament, the African Parliamentary Union, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie and, since 2018, the Pan-African Parliament.

The Association of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECAAA) promotes constructive dialogue among its members and works to build a model of integrity and regional cooperation. Food security is one of its priority issues.

Let's put our heads together on a coordination mechanism between ASSECAA and the Association of European Senates to capitalise on our achievements and accomplishments. The House of Councillors of Morocco will then be delighted to host a joint event.

I would like to emphasise the importance of parliamentary friendship groups and commend the work of Mr Christian Cambon, Chairman of the France-Morocco friendship group and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, for his commitment and his work with my counterpart group.

Through this parliamentary diplomacy, local initiatives are being developed, particularly in the context of decentralised cooperation. We share our experiences on topics such as regionalisation and the governance of regions. Socio-economic realities differ from country to country, but we have some common ground.

I hope that the Parliamentary Forum organised by the Parliament of Morocco with its French and Spanish counterparts will become a long-term initiative in collaboration with other European and African parliaments.

Euro-African relations deserve a renewed and long-term partnership for a pluralist and transparent democracy, inclusive growth, shared development and reinforced regional integration: the keys to peace, stability and collective well-being.

The Upper Houses have an important role to play in response to the rise of populism. Our key concerns are similar. *(Applause)*

**The President** – Pluralist and inclusive democracy, shared growth, these are important!

I now call upon Ms Ankie Broekers-Knol to speak. She has only a few more hours left as President of the Dutch Senate before she takes up her post as Secretary of State for Security and Justice in the Government of the Netherlands. *(Applause)*

**Ms Ankie Broekers-Knol, President of the Senate of the Netherlands** – It is a privilege to be here today and I thank President Larcher for his warm welcome.

This twentieth meeting of the Association of European Senates, founded in 2001 here in the Palais du Luxembourg, is exceptional in many respects. Welcome to our colleagues from African countries; their participation, which is essential, further enriches our debates and the dialogue between European and African Senates.

President Larcher put it perfectly last night: we must not turn our backs on each other but must engage in dialogue, cooperation and unity.

The Senate of the Netherlands has many years of experience in interparliamentary cooperation and understands its benefits. I am therefore delighted with the important work we are doing today, by strengthening the relations between our European and African countries.

Our two continents share a sometimes complicated common history, but our relationship has changed in recent decades, and we now face the same challenges: migration, climate change, terrorism and security. These challenges require common responses.

Parliaments, and particularly the Upper Houses – chambers of sober second thought – must ensure that they do not lose contact with the people. Major issues require major responses, but it is important not to move too quickly – on climate policy, for example. Major changes will only be successful in the long term if they are accompanied by a gradual, progressive process that takes the interests of all our citizens into account and assesses the impact of the measures taken.

Bodies such as the Association of European Senates provide an excellent opportunity to discuss the role of the Senates in this regard.

As you know, Euro-African relations fall within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement. Adopted in 2000 to replace the 1975 Lomé Convention, it expires in February 2020. The future partnership, which is beginning to be developed, will cover areas as important as migration, security and climate, as well as economic cooperation, democracy and the rule of law. This will be an opportunity to show that we can find common solutions to the common challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is important for Parliaments to be involved, and I look forward to hearing from our African colleagues on this subject.

As I said, this meeting is exceptional in more ways than one. This is particularly true for me: the Dutch Senate will have a new President at the end of this month. I resigned from my office on 11 June to become Minister of Justice, Immigration, Migration and Human Trafficking. I have no doubt that my successor will continue to involve the Dutch Senate in these international fora, and I take this opportunity to thank you all for your friendship and fruitful discussions. It has been an honour and a pleasure to belong to this association. (*Applause*)

**The President** – Thank you, Madam Minister. (*Smiles*) We wish you all the best, because you are a great lady! (*Applause*) You have always been an agent of dialogue and calmness, and the King has made a wise choice in appointing you to this sensitive post.

Development cooperation, economic and trade cooperation and political cooperation are the three pillars of the Cotonou Agreement. The

subject cannot be ignored by the parliamentary chambers that will have to ratify the new agreement. We have to take control of it.

I now open the debate.

**Mr Michal Sewerynski, Vice Marshal of the Senate of Poland** – In the dialogue between the second European and African Chambers, I want to stress the importance of education: it is the foundation of democracy. Educated societies can be effective democracies, and this is the most important of all Polish experiences. This preoccupation motivated the Polish elites in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their work gave birth to the modern Polish nation and created such a strong attachment to its democratic traditions that it survived Nazism and Communism.

Among these traditions, the Polish Parliament's bicameralism dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Abolished under the Soviet dictatorship, it was re-established in 1989.

Education is the foundation of all progress; without it, crazy ideologies and religious fundamentalisms thrive, which deny the very nature of God, which is love and justice, non-violence and justice.

There is an Arabic proverb that says: "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave." The dialogue between European and African parliamentarians has thus far focused on economic issues, good governance, the fight against corruption and development aid. These questions are important, but without education, they are doomed to failure.

The Global Partnership for Education Programme, promoted by the Croatian Commissioner to the European Union, deserves our political support, particularly its component relating to Africa. Senates often have more prestige than sovereign powers, but they have a huge role to play in promoting ideas! I propose that the European and African Upper Houses sponsor programmes to support the development of education in Africa. *(Applause)*

**Mr Calin Popescu-Tariceanu, President of the Senate of Romania** – I congratulate President Larcher for having created, on the occasion of this anniversary meeting of our association, a pilot forum for open dialogue between the Senates of Europe and Africa. I say "pilot" because I hope that this experience will not be a one-off.

Romania has always had a privileged relationship with many African States. We have a strong tradition of involvement in Africa, in major industrial projects, schools and hospitals: Romanian engineers, teachers and doctors work alongside the African people to promote democratic stabilisation.

Despite constraints and uncertainties, Africa is becoming more democratic; Africa is working, developing and modernising. Romania fully shares the vision of African solutions to African problems, particularly in the field of peace and security. Romania recently hosted the 37<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in Bucharest.

Dear African colleagues, the doors of the Senate of Romania are held wide open for you, and we are willing to consider any project that helps to reinforce parliamentary democracy as an instrument for progress in the area of peace and development. *(Applause)*

**The President** – Parliamentary democracy in Africa and the European Union is essential for strengthening economic cooperation, promoting sustainable development and ensuring our two continents coexist in peace, democracy, prosperity, solidarity and human dignity.

Thank you to our Polish colleague for promoting tolerance, education and partnership.

**Mr Abdessamad Kayouh**, *first Vice President of the House of Councillors of Morocco* – ASSECAAA brings together the Senates, Shoora and equivalent councils in Africa, and I would like to invite the European Parliaments to join us at our meeting in Rabat in October 2019!

**The President** – We welcome this invitation, and it has been noted. It will bring an additional dimension to our bilateral parliamentary diplomacy!

This morning's proceedings are now complete. It is not 36 degrees like in Warsaw, but we have chased away the rain. I therefore invite you to have lunch in the Palace gardens.

*The sitting was suspended at 12.20 pm and resumed at 2.45 pm.*

## ***Bicameralism as an asset for democracy***

**The President** – We will now begin the second session of our meeting, whose topic is “Bicameralism as an asset for democracy”. I would like to thank the First Vice President of the French Senate, Philippe Dallier, for his attendance. A draft final declaration has been provided to you all. It will be submitted for your approval at the end of our proceedings.

It is not a political document but a factual statement. However, we remain at your disposal to consider any requests for modification.

I propose that we organise this afternoon’s debates in the same manner as this morning. Each of the heads of delegation who have expressed the wish to speak will do so first for a maximum of seven minutes. Each of the heads of delegation who have previously registered may then speak in the debate, for a maximum of two minutes.

If time permits, we can take other speakers who have registered today, for the same two-minute period.

Our proceedings are open to the press and will be recorded on video. I now give the floor to the President of the Bundesrat of Austria.

**Mr Ingo Appe, *President of the Bundesrat of Austria*** – First of all, I would like to thank our hosts for the impeccable organisation of this event and their warm welcome.

The Association of European Senates was founded in Paris in 2000. Its meetings are an essential platform for exchanges between Parliaments. I am convinced that this cooperation is now more important than ever. Only through intensive dialogue will we be able to make the right decisions for the good of our fellow citizens. The principle of subsidiarity is crucial in building the Europe of tomorrow; Regional Parliaments must be more involved in the Union’s legislative process, through permanent dialogue, formal and informal, between the regions and the European Union.

I like to call our Chamber of the Länder the Chamber of the Future and of Europe. Through the representation of the various provinces, it strengthens relations between citizens, civil society, municipalities and political power. We allow the regions to participate in decision-making.

Our chamber has the right to oppose laws passed by the National Council. In most cases, this veto is only suspensive, but it is absolute in some areas. In 2019, for the first time, we prevented the adoption of a bill that was incompatible with the powers of the Länder.

The Lisbon Treaty has given the second European chambers a new central role, that of ensuring that draft European legislation stands up to the test of reality and meets the citizens' needs. The Austrian Federal Council (Bundesrat) thus serves as an interface between the European Union and its citizens. I am proud that our European Affairs Committee is fully committed to European issues; it is one of the most committed in Europe.

In addition to its important role in the lawmaking process, the Bundesrat participates in the development of sustainable political strategies for Austria.

We deal with long-term issues that go beyond current events in a cross-party way. Democracy is participation. Therefore, Austrian citizens are invited to join in our work and contribute to decision-making.

I have chosen a topic that is particularly important to everyone: the security of the drinking water supply. Drinking water shortages have a social and economic cost, but they can also create conflict. Climate change is having a real impact on drinking water supplies around the world. In 2010, the UN made access to safe drinking water a human right, but it still cannot be upheld as a fundamental right in the courts. Slovenia has recently included in its Constitution the statement that drinking water cannot be considered a commodity. I would like Austria to follow this example.

Controlling the way in which multinationals take over water resources is also required. I look forward to a fruitful dialogue with you all and in particular with our African colleagues. Let's work together to find constructive solutions to the common challenges ahead. *(Applause)*

**The President** – In France as well *(Applause)*, this is a constitutional question. Should the protection of biodiversity and the fight against climate change be included in Article 1 of our Constitution, or in Article 34? Our concerns are similar to yours. It is not only about living conditions, but also about protecting the planet for future generations.

I am now delighted to give the floor to the President of the Senate of Belgium.

**Mr Jacques Brotchi**, *President of the Senate of Belgium* – Mr President, thank you for the invitation to participate in this twentieth meeting of our Association of European Senates.

In my thoughts at this time is Mr Armand de Decker, former President of our Senate, who passed away two days ago. He represented the Belgian Senate at the first meeting of our association.

This is the first time I have attended this type of meeting, and I must confess that I was impressed by this morning's speeches and debates. I was particularly pleased to hear the in-depth, eloquent and richly informed insight that is so characteristic of the culture of the Upper Houses.

This session is entitled: "Bicameralism as an asset for democracy". I welcome its positive tone.

We are all aware of the assets that are traditionally attributed to the Senates. There is of course the moderating role they play in the legislative process. The added value of the Senates usually lies in the second look, a different look, a critical look they take at the work of the Lower Houses.

I would like to highlight two assets of bicameralism: the creation of an appropriate space for long-term thinking and the strengthening of democracy when facing a crisis in the political system.

Five years ago, the Senate of Belgium underwent a major reform. Since then, it has been composed mainly of representatives from the regional parliaments. Senators are no longer directly elected. They have a dual mandate as members of the regional parliament and Senators.

The legislative role of this new Senate has been restricted: it shares constituent power with the House of Representatives and decides on legislative texts directly linked to the institutions and powers of the federated entities. This is essentially the logical role of the Senate as a Chamber of States-General and guarantor of the interests of the federated entities. However, the last five years have been rather quiet in this regard. The government majority has focused mainly on the socio-economic agenda and, after the Brussels attacks, on the fight against terrorism. There has been little interest in constitutional revisions, and no interest at all in institutional reforms.

But the Senate has not been inactive during these last five years of the legislature. Although it has not adopted many legislative texts, it has nevertheless been actively involved in a completely new initiative for the Belgium parliament: the production of information reports. In addition, at the end of April, the Senate voted on the articles of the Constitution that could be open for revision. In Belgium, the Constitution cannot be altered without the approval of the Senate. In this area, our two chambers are on exactly the same footing.

The Senators choose topics that they deal with in committee, with the help of experts, and put forward recommendations for the attention of the various parliaments, but also of the country's governments. We did not wait until young people took to the streets before producing a report on fine atmospheric particles, pollution and endocrine disrupters. We have also produced a report on artificial intelligence that is going to revolutionise our daily lives.

These information reports are not laws. They are not binding. They mainly contain information and recommendations. The Senators who prepared them have put in a lot of hard work over the past five years.

This is very striking: in Belgium, Senators are, first and foremost, members of a federated entity's assembly. It is at this level that they question ministers and draft legislation. But in these federated entity Parliaments – all unicameral – it is difficult, if not impossible, to carry out any long-term analysis or in-depth debates. All of these inherently political assemblies struggle to overcome the demands of immediacy.

I remain convinced that bicameralism has the strength and energy to meet today's challenges, starting with the rise in extremism. When democracy is in crisis, bicameralism is a very valuable instrument for those who have to manage that crisis. *(Applause)*

**The President** – You highlighted the stabilising role of a second assembly in a federated entity. Montesquieu said: "The Constitution should only be touched with a shaky hand." We cannot navigate by the political pressures of the moment. In countries with a constitutional tradition, the Constitution can only evolve after shared reflection.

I now give the floor to the President of the House of Peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who may host the next meeting of the European Senates. *(Applause)*

**Mr Bakir Izetbegovic, President of the House of Peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina** – Thank you to the Association of European Senates for your welcome. Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a long-standing member. It is an opportunity to exchange experiences with our European colleagues.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a democratic and parliamentary state: the three powers are separated; there are many parties, the media are free.

Article 4 of our Constitution makes our Parliamentary Assembly the highest-ranking law-making body. The House of Representatives has 42 members, two thirds of whom are elected from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and one third from Republika Srpska. A similar proportion applies to the other assembly, the House of Peoples, which has 15 members.

The Parliamentary Assembly regulates the organisation of powers and carries out legislative work. Each House has standing committees; there are also committees common to both Houses.

The House of Representatives examines legislative texts first, unless otherwise requested. All texts must be adopted by both Houses. The House of Peoples, as the second chamber, is particularly important in a multicultural state like Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in view of its recent history.

The House of Peoples represents the interests of the constituent peoples through special procedures specified in Article 4, which stipulates that each text must be approved by a majority of the Bosnian, Croat and Serb delegates.

Some texts may be considered contrary to the interests of a people. In the event of disagreement, a committee of three delegates, one for each people, meets. In the event of continuing disagreement, the text is referred to the Supreme Court.

These complex mechanisms aim to avoid the domination of one group over the others.

The House of Peoples thus ensures that the rule of law is respected, and above all that the mechanism mentioned above does not become a blocking factor.

Our Assembly has special obligations towards all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, within the framework of EU rules and in preparation for our accession to the European Union.

In May 2019, we embarked on a specific programme with the Parliaments of Hungary, Austria and Croatia to achieve this integration. Meetings like today's are also extremely useful.

In conclusion, I would like to confirm our invitation to the European Senates to come to Sarajevo – a small Jerusalem in Europe, where mosques, churches and synagogues co-exist side by side – for our 2020

meeting. Your attendance will contribute to the reconciliation process, which is so important for our country. *(Applause)*

**The President** – Your words illustrate how the second chamber contributes to cohesion in a country. You concluded with the idea of reconciliation. I would be very happy if our association could contribute to this.

I would like to welcome the President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Spain, who has just been elected.

**Mr Manuel Cruz Rodriguez, *President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Spain*** – It is a great honour to be attending the twentieth meeting of the Association of European Senates, founded by Mr Christian Poncelet. I am grateful to the venerable institution of the French Senate for welcoming us. We have a very wonderfully rewarding relationship with its President, Mr Larcher.

Bicameralism, almost two decades after the creation of our Assembly, remains a topical issue. In 2000, twelve European Senates reiterated, in a joint manifesto, their commitment to reinforcing it. We look forward to stepping up our cooperation with African Parliaments on topics such as climate change, population challenges and migration. President Larcher's initiative to involve them is a resounding success.

Historically, bicameralism has not been associated with a particular type of system or even with the separation of powers. Senates perform their role more or less effectively in countries with different systems. The existence of the Senate has been called into question, even in very old democracies; in other more recent democracies, and especially in African countries, it is perceived as the guarantor of a better separation of powers.

In Spain, the Senate is the Chamber of Territorial Representation. Our Constitution assigns it the second reading, an essential and fundamental task. It amends almost all texts, and its undertakings are taken into account by the Chamber of Deputies. The latter is often subject to media and political pressure, hence our role in updating laws.

Spain defines itself as a very decentralised State of Autonomies. As soon as this system was introduced, a reform of the Senate was considered.

In almost all legislatures, reforms have been studied with a view to strengthening the Senate's position in the legislative process. It was therefore proposed that laws with consequences for regional autonomy should be examined at first reading by the Senate, that legislative initiatives of the Autonomous Communities should be examined in the

Senate rather than in the Chamber of Deputies, and that the conditions enabling the Chamber of Deputies to reject Senate amendments should be more restrictive.

The Government should inform the Senate of discussions with the Autonomous Communities. A special committee on the Autonomous Communities has been formed within the Senate, and its debates are held in Spanish and in Spain's joint official languages.

This is very important at a time when there are fears of a centralising drift in federal States.

We are experiencing a period of political crisis, but also a crisis of temporality. Speed is the dominant factor in an increasingly complex and globalised world. The three main functions of National Representation – legislating, questioning and controlling – take on their full meaning in the Senate, which has a long-term role and can express itself on subjects of territorial scope.

The notion of cooperative bicameralism has recently emerged: it consists in distributing the work items between the two chambers.

In these times of crisis of representation and crisis of mediation, our parliamentary chambers play an essential role in reinforcing the ties between our fellow citizens and our institutions. Our annual exchange of views contributes to this. That is why I thank you very much for your invitation. *(Applause)*

**The President** – You talked about implementing forms of autonomy. In France, since 2003, the Senate has always had the first reading of bills concerning the organisation of local government. It is enshrined in our Constitution, and a government that had forgotten this had its text censured by the Constitutional Council.

I now give the floor to the President of the Senate of Ireland, who invited us last week to walk in General de Gaulle's footsteps.

**Mr Denis O'Donovan**, *President of the Senate of the Republic of Ireland* – Thank you for your recent visit to our country and your generous welcome. I am particularly pleased to be attending the first meeting of the Association of European Senates since our senate, Seanad Éireann, has been a full member.

**The President** – Thanks to the efforts of our friend and colleague, the President of the Senate of Romania!

**Mr Denis O'Donovan**, *President of the Senate of the Republic of Ireland* – Dáil Éireann, the Irish National Assembly, is celebrating its centenary this year as it was founded in 1919. Three years later, our Senate was created. Since then, we have been fortunate to have had almost a hundred years of uninterrupted parliamentary democracy as an independent state. However, this stability and continuity carry their own risks. These include the risk of complacency, and with this the associated risk that the relevance and effectiveness of our institutions will be diminished if we do not give the necessary attention to the situation as it evolves. All of us, presidents of Upper Houses in a Europe facing an uncertain future, must ask ourselves: how can our institutions respond to these challenges? Do they contribute in the best possible way to the health of democracy? Each of us must find our own way to take account of the particular characteristics of our constitutional structures and the political situation. The question that underlies all our efforts is fundamental: is bicameralism an asset for democracy?

Second chambers sometimes find it difficult to fulfil their role when the Constitution requires them to exercise supervisory power over directly elected chambers. The balance of institutions is essential in a healthy and well-ordered democracy. Yet the second chambers are sometimes accused of frustrating the will of the people, in a Europe where simplistic populist rhetoric and sometimes authoritarian tendencies are seeking to undermine the authority of government institutions, including Parliament, without taking into account the delicate balance required for them to function properly.

Senates, because of the way they are elected, are probably more immune than Lower Houses to populist risk. They have a more relaxed view of the issues of the day. We do not want to undermine democratic choices, of course, but we are well placed to improve the decision-making process.

Democracy is not just about elections. It is an ongoing process aimed at ensuring that citizens' concerns are considered. This requires constant contact with the population. It must be acknowledged that the members of the Lower Houses are highly in tune with their constituents and understand their concerns intimately. The Senates, on the other hand, often composed of representatives of the regions or elected by them, have a different relationship with the people and are better at defending local interests at the national level. For example, in Ireland, 43 of the 60 seats in the Senate are reserved for representatives of local authorities. The close links between Senators and local authorities considerably improve the quality of our contribution to parliamentary decision-making and facilitate the representation of regional issues in a more structured manner than the person-to-person relationships that are more characteristic of the Lower Houses.

The existence, in certain Senates, of independent voices from sectors that are often poorly represented in Parliament brings considerable added value to the legislative process. In Ireland, a complex electoral process, in which some non-governmental organisations nominate candidates and the Irish Prime Minister – the Taoiseach – has the right to appoint eleven members, ensures the strong presence of Senators with solid professional experience in areas such as mental health, inadequate housing, disability and addiction. It is thanks to the Senate that our Parliament has made room for voices that would otherwise remain too quiet.

The Senates are rightly proud of their contribution to political life. Like all public institutions, especially those of a great age, we must not, however, be complacent or lose touch with the population we serve. Their support should not be taken for granted.

I think that the public often understands the contribution that our Senates make to the health of democracy better than we might think. In 2013, the Irish people had the opportunity, through a referendum, to abolish the Senate. The campaign for its abolition focused on the benefits of eliminating sixty elected seats and using the money saved for other purposes. However, during the debate, public opinion became aware of the more elaborate arguments in favour of maintaining the Senate. In the end, a majority voted to retain it and, for the first time since the advent of the Constitution in 1937, the Senate received popular approval. But this was not unconditional. The debate clearly highlighted the need for our Senate to reform. We have started discussing this reform by focusing on electoral changes. However, there is still no political consensus.

The ongoing validation by the people of the importance of bicameralism is the real answer to the question of whether it is an asset

to democracy. I am convinced that our Senates contribute to good legislation and sound political discourse, but as our national poet William Butler Yeats, a former member of our Senate, said, we must keep a cool head about our role and accept constant criticism. (*Applause*)

**The President** – Your conclusion is consistent with our ongoing question: what is our added value in representing and constructing the law? We can be a safeguard against populist temptations. That is the role of the Senate and your contribution was important.

I now give the floor to the President of the Italian Senate, which has recently been put to the same test as the Irish Senate. We now have the opportunity to hear about their experience.

**Ms Maria Elisabetta Alberti Casellati, *President of the Senate of Italy*** – I thank the Senate and its President for their splendid welcome and the impeccable organisation of this meeting.

Our attendance in Paris, twenty years after the first meeting of the Association of European Senates in this palace on 8 November 2000, has a double symbolic meaning. Firstly, expanding the meeting to include African Senates reflects the maturity of the discussion on bicameralism and shows that it is central to the geopolitical debate and to large-scale international cooperation. This association has listened to the request for openness, aware that in an increasingly globalised political and institutional scenario, the contribution of an authentically representative parliamentary system to the health of democracy has positive effects far beyond national borders.

Secondly, the title of this second session captures the very essence of bicameralism: an asset for democracy. In a game of cards, the trump card is the card that prevails over all other cards and gives an advantage to the person holding it. Metaphorically, it is an asset with a comparative advantage. Bicameralism can thus be considered the trump card – an asset – with competitive advantages over unicameral systems.

In 2014, the French Senate organised a conference on bicameralism, a challenge for our democratic systems, based on a rather simple slogan: more Parliament means more democracy. And it is true, bicameralism is the most common system in countries with a high democratic stability index. This is proof of the importance of bicameralism for the proper functioning of contemporary democracies, even if, in the current historical and institutional context, we are facing challenges concerning the very foundations of representativeness. I am thinking here of the growing threats of populism, abstention and the use of methods associated with direct democracy that compete with parliamentary activities. Faced with these current challenges, we need a form of realistic parliamentarianism.

Bicameralism is not monolithic. Its justification cannot be sought in the geographical or population dimension of a State. There can, of course, be two chambers even in small States: this is the case in Slovenia, Bosnia and Ireland. Rather, its justification must be found in the distribution of powers between the central State and local authorities.

The role of the second chamber differs according to whether the system is presidential or parliamentary, and whether the State is centralised or federal. But in all systems, the second chamber has an added value. It expresses a different attitude from that held by the government majority, expressing different points of view that come from the regions, without entering into the traditional games that political parties play.

The guarantee of pluralism provided by the Senates constitutes a genuine asset that strengthens the sense of belonging to the Nation, by contributing to the creation of a collective national identity fuelled by the real inclusion of everyone.

Historically, bicameralism was conceived to address the main risks created by unicameralism: dependence on the will of a single assembly, potentially inconsistent or subject to the tyranny of the majority.

This concern is repeated with insistence in classical thinking, that of the founding fathers of the American Constitution and of Victor Hugo, who said: "France ruled by a single assembly is the ocean governed by the storm".

This is more relevant than ever. We live in an era characterised by the domination of the Executive. At both national and supranational levels, governments predominate in many public decision-making spheres. This is what makes the restoration of a balance achieved by a two-voice parliament that controls government action necessary, preventing political decision-making from taking place on a continuum between the parliamentary majority and the government, and offering greater stability. In fact, an executive backed by a single House is likely to be unstable.

Lastly, bicameralism ensures that decisions are more thoughtful and that more space is allocated for debate. According to its opponents, this opportunity to think twice about laws – a powerful added value of bicameralism – leads to an unacceptable slowdown in decision-making.

This is a red herring, or at least an issue that can easily be limited by adapting the procedure. The Italian Parliament, representing the purest form of bicameralism, is very efficient in terms of the number of laws adopted and the time spent legislating. In the 17<sup>th</sup> legislature, from 2013 to 2018, some 243 laws were passed, each within an average of 237 days. This dropped to 172 days for bills.

Certain strategic laws, such as the ratification of the Single Resolution Fund Agreement, within the framework of the European Banking Union, were passed in just thirteen days.

Opponents of bicameralism have often referred to the “Liberal Razor”, Karl Popper’s inspired analogy based on “Ockham’s Razor”, considering that *non sunt multiplicanda entia præter necessitatem* (entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity).

I am convinced that the need for a second chamber is irrefutable, for the reasons I briefly mentioned and as President Larcher rightly pointed out in his speech. We cannot relinquish the functions of filtering, mediating and considering citizens’ needs that are carried out by the second chamber, which can offer useful tools for correcting representative democracy, tools that cannot easily be replaced.  
(Applause)

**The President** – Thank you for your thoughts on territories, executive control and stability. In Italy, you pass about the same number of laws as we do. I wonder if we are not over-legislating. According to an ancient legal principle, no one should ignore the law. However, the Health Act, passed three years ago, has 350 pages. I am not sure that even the specialists have fully understood it.

**Mr Jeannot Ahoussou-Kouadio**, *President of the Senate of Côte d’Ivoire* – I listened carefully to the speech by Mr Appe, President of the

Austrian Senate, on the issue of water. This is of great concern to us in Africa. Large industrial firms set up their factories near rivers, into which they discharge untreated water. It is an issue related to public health, the future and ecology.

We talked this morning about climate change. It is time to put our heads together to legislate for solutions. A common position should be adopted against the crime of ecocide, and it should be recognised as a violation of human rights.

We have noted, while listening to the various interventions on bicameralism, that some countries have made considerable progress in terms of regional decentralisation and territorial empowerment.

But the obstacles are still there. There is a surplus of executive authority in the transfer of powers and resources. It is essential for the transfer of powers to be accompanied by a corresponding transfer of resources. *(Applause)*

**The President** – Thank you.

**Mr Jean Bizet**, *Chairman of the European Affairs Committee of the Senate of the French Republic* – We represent many Senates from Europe and Africa, all of which differ in their history, their election procedures and their composition. However, what all these Senates have in common is that they enrich democratic representation in their countries: each of us who is here in Paris today represents civil society, some of us in each of our capitals, others in the regions and other still in intermediary bodies. All of us are bringing political power closer to citizens or locally elected officials. In this way, we are contributing to the cohesion of our societies. By having a second chamber, each of our States ensures that it remains in touch with the situation at grass-roots level and avoids over-centralisation or the excessive concentration of executive power. Every Senate makes an essential contribution to living together in our increasingly fragmented societies.

Senates have greater independence from the Government. They therefore play a moderating role in institutions and look further ahead than the Lower House, often grappling with the partisan debates of the moment. This complementary approach by both Houses ensures that government action is better controlled and that laws are of higher quality. Therefore, in the East and in the West, in the North and in the South, bicameralism contributes to the balance of power and to respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights. This is what motivated the founding of the Association of European Senates in 2000 and is what still motivates our meeting today, which is attended by several African Senates, which I am delighted to see.

To meet the immense challenges of our time – and there are many – whether political, population-related, climate-related or economic, we all want to promote bicameralism together, in the interests of democracy, which is a precious but always fragile treasure, on all continents.

The second chamber, an asset for democracy, has a culture with a promising future, and only the future interests us. *(Applause)*

**The President** – I would now like to mention the Lisbon Treaty, which established the possibility of monitoring the subsidiarity of European texts. I hope that our African colleagues will not hold this against me, nor our colleagues from Russia, those from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who I know wish to join our European Union, nor our colleagues from the Swiss Confederation, who may have a few words to say about the complex negotiation of their agreement with Europe.

Following Mr Frans Timmermans' report, it is important to determine what is and is not the responsibility of national governments and to consider how to make better use of the yellow card procedure.

The Senate, under the authority of Mr Bizet, has used it extensively, since it is the source of 7 of the 57 referrals in this regard. It must be further strengthened, because subsidiarity contributes to proximity, which is high on the list of expectations for our fellow citizens.

We will now suspend proceedings until precisely 4.25 pm. As you can see, I have an obsession with timekeeping, which is surprising for a Frenchman! *(Smiles)*

*The sitting was suspended at 4.00 pm.*

PRESIDENCY OF MR PHILIPPE DALLIER,

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

*The sitting resumed at 4.25 pm.*

**The Vice President** – Ladies and gentlemen, we will now resume our proceedings. President Larcher will join us at around 5.15 pm, which means that I have the pleasure of opening this session.

On behalf of us all, I would like to welcome our colleague Ms Agnès Durdu, President of the Council of State of Luxembourg, whom we are pleased to have as the first speaker at our second session.

A lawyer and former Deputy, Ms Durdu replaced Mr Georges Wivernes on 1<sup>st</sup> April. Until then, she was Vice President of the Council of State of Luxembourg, to which she was appointed in 2006.

I would like to congratulate her and wish her every success in her new office!

**Ms Agnès Durdu, *President of the Council of State of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*** – On behalf of the Luxembourg delegation, I would like to thank the French Senate for the welcome we have received. As always in France, we have received a very warm welcome! (*Smiles*)

The Luxembourg Council of State is not a Senate; we are only an observer member of your association.

The Luxembourg system does not provide for two chambers. Over time, however, the Council of State has acquired various powers, which give it its specific characteristics.

When it was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was designed to appease the Chamber of Deputies, to weaken it and support the Government. However, it has managed to win over both sides.

A second development was initiated by the Procola ruling of the ECHR, which, in September 1995, took away our jurisdiction as an administrative court. The role of the Council of State as a body involved in the law-making process has been acknowledged; we can provide informed advice to the legislative and governmental authorities.

We have succeeded in imposing the constitutional oversight we exercise: we ensure that legislative texts conform to the highest standards, that is to the Constitution and to international law, which itself consists of European texts and international conventions.

Our way of imposing our views in the interests of democracy and of the people is through “formal objections”, a formidable weapon if ever there was one! When the Council of State issues a formal objection, for example because a text does not respect the division of competences between the legislative and regulatory branches, Parliament is obliged to rework the text.

The real weapon available to us is as follows: if the legislative branch considers that our formal objection is not admissible, it can certainly pass the law, but it will have to be voted on a second time, after a period of three months. This is a formidable weapon to encourage the legislative branch to improve the drafting of its bills and to ensure that they conform to the highest standards.

The appointment of the members of the Council of State is a third specific characteristic, as they are appointed for a period of twelve years.

We are therefore not subject to elections. Instead, we are appointed by the Government, by Parliament or by the Council of State itself, on the basis of proposals from political parties and profiles that we prepare. This allows us to recruit members who possess the expertise we need at a given time.

Bicameralism is therefore an asset for democracy! An exclamation mark is required here, rather than a question mark. (*Applause*)

**Mr Michal Sewerynski**, *Vice Marshal of the Senate of the Republic of Poland – In varietate concordia* (“united in diversity”) is the European Union’s motto. This also means that there is not just one tradition, but several different European traditions, which are on an equal footing.

This fact takes us back to the origins of the role of the Upper Houses. In Poland, the Senate, which evolved from the Royal Council, emerged in the Middle Ages. From 1468 onwards, it acted as the Upper House. In

1501, it became the dominant chamber for a short period, finally giving way to the House of Deputies, under the famous *Nihil novi nisi commune consensu* (“Nothing new without the common consent”) Constitution. This constitution governed the relations of a community of free people, which was finally defeated by enlightened despotism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, the second chambers play two roles: ratifying legislative texts and representing the regions. Senates are also a symbol of democratic tradition, which is why they were restored in Poland and the Czech Republic after 1989.

Senates bring together experienced people; they ensure that legislative procedures are carried out consistently. They are a tool for correcting legislative errors and a chamber of sober second thought.

The Senates slow down the procedure by emphasising the quality of the law, which is the basis for people’s respect towards the legislator. Without this respect, which must be earned, democracy suffers and can even collapse. The role of the Upper Houses is therefore invaluable.

When it is not a federal body, the Upper House may represent the regions. It stabilises democracy by ensuring the political autonomy of local and regional authorities.

I repeat the motto of the European Union: *in varietate concordia*. Respect for the diversity of local identities in a nation state is a stabilising factor for democracy. The Upper Houses of the EU’s member states, which are so different, all contribute to democracy. They act as guardians of legislative quality and are fora for building consensus and harmonising the interests of the regions.

Bicameralism is therefore undeniably an added value for democracy.  
(*Applause*)

**Mr Pierre N’Golo**, *President of the Senate of the Republic of the Congo* – Mr Gérard Larcher, on behalf of the delegation of the Senate of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on my own behalf, I would like to thank you most sincerely for honouring us with your invitation to this meeting. I extend warm greetings to my colleagues from Europe and their colleagues, as well as to all those who, like me, have travelled from Africa.

This meeting is being held in a building steeped in history, a symbol of the defence of human and civil rights, the building that houses the French Senate, which succeeded the Council of Elders established under

the 1795 Thermidorian Constitution. It is important for the global parliamentary movement in more ways than one.

Posterity will remember that here in Paris, in June 2019, the Senates of Europe and Africa, committed to a process of bringing peoples closer together, took the decision to promote this coming together and establish bicameralism as an essential tool of democracy.

Bicameralism is an asset for democracy. This was already Montesquieu's conviction. In 1748, in *The Spirit of the Laws*, he saw bicameralism as the means to prevent abuses of the legislative power, with each House counterbalancing the other. Mr Vincent Boyer, a lecturer at the University of Brittany and a specialist on the Senate, pointed out that bicameralism strengthens democracy through a double reading of legislative texts, which improves their drafting, and by ensuring a double control over the Government's action.

In the history of my own country, the Congo, bicameralism is a recent tradition, established by the Constitution of 15 March 1992. A hiatus occurred between 1997 and 2002, but since then our Parliament has existed with two chambers without interruption, under the Constitutions of 20 January 2002 and 25 October 2015. This is a remarkable contribution to the construction of democracy in the Congo, all the more so in the current context, marked by the financial crisis, which has highlighted the importance of transparency.

For Michel Debré, the role of the second chamber is to temper the enthusiasm of the first. The Senate of the Congo is therefore working hard, in the face of various social pressures, to assume its role as moderator and advisor to the Nation. Constantly seeking solutions to counter risks of explosion, it helps to calm the social climate.

Its members are elected by indirect universal suffrage by departmental and municipal councillors; pursuant to Article 133 of the Constitution, it represents the Republic's regional authorities.

It is therefore important, as I have highlighted in my address, to state emphatically that bicameralism is an important asset for democracy. Parliamentarians are honouring their commitments and working, today, tomorrow and always, to promote democracy and serve citizens.

Long live the global parliamentary movement! Long live European-African parliamentary cooperation! (*Applause*)

**Mr Jaroslav Kubera**, *President of the Senate of the Czech Republic*  
– Since its inception in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the bicameral parliamentary structure has served to ensure diversity. Ever since then, in the United Kingdom, Parliament has been divided into an Upper House and a Lower House, in order to involve and represent the different social strata in a spirit of harmony and freedom.

Over the centuries, the types of second chambers have changed considerably, but the emphasis on diversified representation remains common to all of them, whether representing elites of all kinds and different backgrounds, States, regions, professional categories or national minorities. These second chambers thus reinforce the feeling of social cohesion; thanks to them, fewer people feel excluded or unheard.

The primary role of bicameralism is therefore to reflect or embody social diversity. This is of course only true if diversity and variety are combined with democracy; there are many theories, and political systems, which claim to represent the people but instead interpret them as homogeneous, abstract entity, with a single will and interest.

It seems to me that we find such a conception in the history of France during the Jacobin phase of the French Revolution, and in Czech history after 1948. In both cases, the people as an abstraction do not speak for themselves. They therefore need a spokesperson who knows what their interests and needs are – in one case, the Jacobins, and in the other, the communists. Both are willing to impose on individuals and entire groups what is best for them, without asking for their opinion.

Neither the current Czech Senate nor its Czechoslovak precursor from the interwar period was based on a particular representative design, since a compromise had to be reached on the adoption of the Constitution, between 1919 and 1920 and in 1992.

In the 1919-1920 period, the bicameral structure had many critics, who were willing to accept the second chamber provided that it was fully democratic, that is, elected by the citizens on the basis of direct and

universal suffrage. The representation of professional categories was rejected, as were other projects to modify the form of representation.

The Czechoslovak Senate of the interwar period suffered because both chambers were elected by an identical electorate, resulting in an identical political composition. The specialised public and civil society were therefore critical of this chamber, as it did not provide an alternative vision and was not fundamentally different from the Chamber of Deputies. This issue was exacerbated by rigorous party discipline, which prevented the emergence of different profiles between Deputies and Senators.

This is no longer the case today: the fact that the Deputies of a particular party vote in the Chamber of Deputies in a certain way does not mean that Senators from the same party will vote in the same way.

In 1992, the Czech Senate was designed according to the following principle: the most important aspect is not that it should have the same power as the Chamber of Deputies, but that it should be politically different. For example, it is elected on the basis of a different electoral system – a majority system, rather than a proportional one – and for different periods; it is renewed by a third every two years; it cannot be dissolved; and the minimum age limit is 40 years old, compared to 21 for the Chamber of Deputies.

As a result, the two Houses have different political compositions. The Senate also includes Senators who are independent, or from small regional parties.

In some cases, one political group controls the majority of seats; in others, it takes three political groups to obtain a majority. Of course, all of this is reflected in the content and quality of the debates.

Our Senate has no direct influence on the fate of the executive branch. Our debates are therefore more open: we do not tend to blame the Government just because it is the Government, nor do we sing its praises for the same reasons.

Democracy is defined as the power of the majority that respects the minority. Second chambers serve this general purpose, as does the Czech Senate. Decisions that are fundamental to our institutional system, namely organic and electoral laws and international treaties, require the approval of both chambers. After all, a majority comes from a single election, which can be influenced by a single strong but fleeting sentiment of the voters. A double majority is therefore essential: it is not the result of happenstance and indicates that the decision made will be stable.

Under the current legislative process, the Chamber of Deputies can have the final say over the Senate. However, even when this is the case, bicameralism contributes to the quality of Czech democracy, as the Senate's involvement creates an opportunity to re-examine the issue in question. It allows other points of view to be considered, provides a forum to hear the views of people affected by the legislation or simply leaves time for spirits to cool off.

In this respect, the Czech Senate falls into the category of chambers of sober second thought, which take account of human fallibility and contribute to discovering and correcting errors during the decision-making process.

Of course, there is no direct correlation between the quality of democracy and the parliamentary structure, but a bicameral parliamentary structure with sophisticated cooperation between the chambers strengthens democracy. In Czechoslovakia, after the Second World War, the shift towards an undemocratic system was marked by the end of bicameralism and the Constitutional Court. We must all keep this in mind. *(Applause)*

**Mr Calin Popescu-Tariceanu, *President of the Senate of Romania*** – In his speeches, President Gérard Larcher made several historical incursions. I will also make a few of my own.

Once the Terror was over, the rapporteur of the draft Constitution of 5 Fructidor Year III, François de Boissy d'Anglas, told the members of the Assembly: "I will not spend much time recounting the dangers inseparably connected to the existence of a single assembly. A powerful dam must be set against the impetuosity of the legislature; this dam is the division between the two assemblies."

A few years earlier, George Washington shared the same wisdom, explaining to Jefferson that the Senate's function was comparable to that of the milk poured into hot tea: it reduces the temperature.

Boissy d'Anglas and Washington seem to think that when laws are passed for a society of free people and equal citizens, the greatest threat to everyone's freedom is posed by acting quickly, in order to respond swiftly to what James Madison called at that time "the inclinations of the people", which he set against the discernment of the "interests of the people".

In other words, a single legislative chamber can easily fall prey to emotions, while two chambers always follow reason. It was also Boissy d'Anglas who pointed out, for the benefit of constituents, that the first chamber, of broader composition, would represent "the imagination of the republic", while the second, more mature chamber, would represent "reason".

Parliament as an institution of political modernity was born in bicameral form in England; it remained so in the United States in 1787, while in France, it adopted a unicameral form at the beginning of the 1789 Revolution. Most of today's Parliaments, particularly those with democratic systems, are bicameral, including in Italy, France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, India and Japan.

However, we must be wary of this apparent unanimity. For example, within the European Union, only half of the Member States have adopted the bicameral form. Portugal, Greece, Slovakia, Hungary and others have opted for unicameralism. This distinction sets us on a fertile path: the larger the State, the greater the temptation to adopt bicameralism; the smaller the State, the greater the appeal of unicameralism.

This is, however, just a trend: certain large states have opted for unicameralism, while other smaller ones have bicameral parliaments, such as Switzerland, Austria and Belgium. However, we note that these countries are federations. So, while the federal format is highly appropriate for large countries, it also works for smaller ones. Hence the general conclusion that beyond the size of the countries concerned, it is the structure of the State, or its format, that matters.

In a nutshell: a unitary state may be equally inclined to adopt unicameralism or bicameralism; however, a federation will always opt for bicameralism, as the Lower House represents the people and the Upper House represents the federated entities.

A cautious and subtle approach must be adopted regarding the relationship between bicameralism and the structure of the State. It is

important to distinguish between two statements, which are usually combined but which, on the contrary, should be kept separate.

The first is that federations should always opt for bicameralism. This statement is irrefutable: throughout the world, at least in the West, there are no federations without bicameral Parliaments. There are no exceptions to this rule: Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, the United States, Canada, Nigeria, India and Russia, in addition to Belgium, Switzerland and Austria, all have a bicameral Parliament.

On the other hand, this does not mean that unitary and centralised States always choose unicameralism, as the examples of France and the Netherlands prove.

The doctrine, almost universally, asserts that, in a federation, the Lower House represents the people and the Upper House represents the federated entities, whether they are called Länder, cantons, provinces or states. This is a questionable correlation because the rule is not irrefutable: it is true in some federations, but not in all.

We should firstly consider the representation of the people in the Lower House, a vulgate that is not specific to federations. In France too, it is stated that the National Assembly represents the people, or the Nation, while the Senate represents local government, under the terms of the 1958 Constitution. In Italy, each parliamentarian represents the entire Nation, pursuant to Article 67 of the 1947 Constitution.

What specific role do the Upper Houses play? At first glance, one might think that there are three possible models: equality between the two assemblies, inequality in favour of the Lower House and inequality in favour of the Upper House. However, two sets of considerations must be added to this picture: first, bicameralism is sometimes specialised; and second, there are likely to be different degrees of inequality.

First of all, in specialised bicameralism, equality or balance between chambers is difficult to discern, because they do not collaborate, or at least do not work together: they simply succeed one another in carrying out their tasks. Romania, after the 2003 constitutional reform, is one example.

In addition, there are many examples of countries in which bicameralism is almost perfectly equal, if not totally equal. At the moment, Italy is the sole example of this in Europe. The mechanics are unambiguous: in Italy, as in the United States, the Constitution does not establish any hierarchy between the Houses, and a law can only enter into force by mutual agreement. Hence the “parliamentary shuttle” mechanism: the text passes back and forth between the two assemblies until all its articles have been passed.

Attenuated unequal bicameralism refers to the configuration in which bicameralism gives the advantage to the Lower House, without rendering the Upper House completely powerless.

Reversed unequal bicameralism in favour of the Upper House can be found in the United States, which has the oldest form of written constitution dating back to 1787. The apparent equality between the two Houses was the result of a compromise between the federalists and their opponents, the former wanting a strong federation, the latter a federation more respectful of the autonomy of the federated states.

The Union was accepted in exchange for a number of concessions, including a strong Senate. Each federal state appointed two Senators. The small states were therefore assured that they would not be crushed in the Upper House and that their interests would be defended effectively. However, to ensure that this victory by the federal states was not illusory, this second chamber had to have powers that were at least similar to the first. But “similar” does not mean “identical”.

The privileges specific to each chamber give the Senate the advantage over the House of Representatives. The House of Representatives certainly has priority for financial laws. It is also empowered to choose the President of the United States whenever the Electoral College fails to achieve an absolute majority. In addition, with regard to legislation, both Assemblies are strictly equal: a bill must always obtain the agreement of both Houses. There is no exception in this respect, and it also applies to constitutional amendments. This explains the importance of harmonisation discussions between the two Houses, especially when they wear different political stripes.

More importantly still, the Senate is the arbiter of all appointments made by the US President. This is based on the liberal idea, formulated at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, that the executive branch must always be kept on a tight leash by the legislative body.

Looking at the big picture, we can see that specialised bicameralism and unequal bicameralism in favour of the Upper House are quite rare, but that they have undeniable merits if we believe that freedom must remain the central value of any constitutional arrangement.

The risk in our democratic systems today is to succumb to the temptation once described and decried by Boissy d'Anglas and George Washington: in the name of the principle of effectiveness, borrowed from economic thought and action, representative political institutions run the risk of becoming indifferent to citizens' freedom. *(Applause)*

**Lord Norman Fowler**, *Lord Speaker of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom* – It is an honour to be here with you today, in such a beautiful setting. I would also like to thank you for your hospitality.

The Franco-British relationship has been the foundation of our respective prosperity for over a hundred years. I am also delighted to see so many African countries represented.

On Brexit, my comments will remain succinct, because it would be foolhardy to make any prediction whatsoever. I had made a prediction to my Belgian counterpart about the last vote in the House of Commons; a prediction that turned out to be totally wrong... *(Smiles)*

A clear majority emerged from the referendum. We all have our opinions. I was myself a remainer, and I was also convinced of the need to join the European Union in the 1970s. But the will of the people must be respected.

However, if we leave the European Union, we will not be leaving Europe. We will need to build a new relationship between the United Kingdom and Europe, and the coming years will be used to work on this.

I have been Speaker of the House of Lords for three years. This is a relatively new function in the United Kingdom. My predecessors were women. I may therefore have broken through a glass ceiling, that of female supremacy in the House of Lords! (*Smiles*) Before that, I had spent thirty years in the House of Commons and almost twenty years in the House of Lords.

There have been many calls to reform the House of Lords. They all point in the same radical direction: towards the abolition of the second chamber. But no one wonders what it does and what its role is! However, there are arguments in favour of retaining it. Second chambers work very hard to scrutinise legislative texts, with an independence that many lower chambers do not have. They therefore have a significant role to play.

The second chambers can make a difference in three areas.

First of all, political debates today quickly turn sour. Their noise level is deafening; people do nothing but shout at each other and only respond to attacks, which contaminates public discourse. Social media have provided an echo chamber for this atmosphere of intimidation and insults, undermining public confidence in political life. The second chamber is probably best placed to mitigate this atmosphere, given its reputation for moderation.

Secondly, the second chambers contribute to parliamentary work and to compliance with legislative procedure. This is a significant part of their added value. The members of the second chambers know, by experience, how to make a difference in the lives of our fellow citizens. Politics deals with serious issues, which are not to be taken lightly.

Finally, I am concerned that some people want to bypass the Constitution to achieve their short-term goals. Of course, we do not really have a Constitution, but a patchwork of fundamental laws. Building a majority in the House of Commons is always a challenge. Parliament has tried to play an active role in Brexit, but it has been bypassed, so some people believe that the constitutional framework forming the basis of our political life must now be changed. Parliament, in this respect, has failed and has appeared to be weak.

The House of Lords passes many amendments calling on the Government to review its action. Our restricted committees interview many experts and help shape the policies of tomorrow. It carries out valuable work on a daily basis, work that must be continued.

The second chamber has much more to offer. We must set an example to follow, by tempering the tone of political discourse, creating new standards for public debate, and raising the bar. These are the responsibilities we must assume, in the service of others. *(Applause)*

**Mr Nikolay Fedorov**, *First Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council of Russia* – Allow me, on behalf of the delegation from the Russian Federation, to thank our French colleagues for their welcome and hospitality, which enhances the friendship between our countries, against the backdrop of an ancient parliamentary tradition.

Compared to the British and French traditions, our parliamentary history is short, but it is solid. The first joint meeting of the State Council and the State Duma was held in 1906, and historians see this as the foundation of bicameralism and democracy in Russia.

In 1993, a referendum was held, and a Constitution was adopted, which organised Russia along the lines of a federal structure, composed of 85 entities. Many Senators are former ministers and senior politicians. It is a kind of “Council of Elders”, complementing the Lower House, which is responsible for legislative activities. The two Houses of Parliament are therefore, in a sense, both wings of a bird soaring skyward.

We have nothing to do with political parties, so we are impartial. We are responsible for approving the federal budget, ratifying international treaties and drawing up sovereign borders. We also examine the nominations for generals, federal judges and members of the electoral commission. We assess emergency situations when martial law is declared. We have the power to set up parliamentary select committees and can invite members of the Lower House, who are held to account for their actions.

We are represented on social media and on the Internet, and we have a television channel. We are trying to strengthen our authority in international relations, including by participating in various UN commissions.

“Where there is unity, there is victory”, as an ancient wise man put it!  
(*Applause*)

#### PRESIDENCY OF MR GÉRARD LARCHER

**The President** – Forgive me for missing three speeches. We were engaged in bilateral discussions. Nevertheless, I did hear the lesson in constitutional law from the President of the Senate of Romania, who rightly pointed out that the diversity of our composition is our strength.

We will now hear from our last speaker, our colleague Jean-René Fournier, President of the Council of States of the Swiss Confederation, before a possible debate and then the closure of our proceedings.

I would like to welcome our colleague and thank him for his patience.

Although alphabetical order has placed Switzerland at the bottom of the list of speakers, Switzerland is a model for democracy and bicameralism, and we look forward to hearing what you have to say.

“Misfortune is the father of tomorrow’s happiness,” wrote Swiss novelist Albert Cohen in *Belle du Seigneur*.

Perhaps you will also tell us a little about the progress made in the negotiations on the framework agreement between the European Union and Switzerland, a subject that the French Senate is following with great interest, particularly within the European Affairs Committee chaired by my colleague Jean Bizet.

**Mr Jean-René Fournier, President of the Council of States of the Swiss Confederation** – Allow me first of all to thank our hosts for the flawless organisation of this twentieth meeting of the Association of European Senates in the beautiful city of Paris.

We are here to discuss the importance of bicameralism in the democratic system. Allow me to illustrate how Swiss democracy functions with a concrete example, which, for the President, will bring back fond memories of his veterinary studies. *(Smiles)*

As you may know, Switzerland is currently very busy working on the institutional agreement with the European Union. With reference to this agreement, the President of the Swiss Confederation recently compared my country's political system to the digestive system of ruminants. I'm not going to lie to you: he's right! *(More smiles)*

Rumination allows herbivores to digest food that is initially indigestible. Swiss politics is somewhat similar. This process fosters the development of viable, long-term solutions that everyone can live with.

A cow has four stomachs. The first, the rumen, breaks down the food. When the food is too big, the rumen regurgitates it so that the cow can chew it again.

Our first stomach in Switzerland is called the "consultation procedure". It examines whether federal initiatives with far-reaching political, financial or economic significance are appropriate, feasible and, most importantly, whether they are likely to be favourably accepted.

To this end, these proposals are submitted to the cantons, the political parties represented in the Federal Assembly, the umbrella associations of the municipalities and economic players, in short, to all relevant stakeholders. They have three months to submit their responses. The administration then makes certain improvements, in light of the opinions received.

With regard to the institutional framework agreement between Switzerland and the European Union, in the spring of this year, the Federal Council gathered the views of the main Swiss stakeholders, but the consultation procedure has not yet been carried out. This two-stage approach is exceptional; it reflects the Government's commitment to removing all possible stumbling blocks.

This "pre-consultation procedure" in the spring revealed that adjustments are still required to make the proposal palatable for the subsequent stages. That is why, on 7 June, the Federal Council decided to ask the European Union for further clarifications about three sensitive points in this agreement.

However, let's return to our sheep or, rather, our cow. (*Laughing*) After the rumen, two stomachs come into play: first, the reticulum, and then, the omasum. Their collaboration is similar to that of the National Council and the Council of States – the two chambers of the Swiss Parliament.

In the Council of States – our Senate – each canton is represented by two Deputies, regardless of its size and population. For example, my two colleagues from the Jura represent 70,000 inhabitants, while the two Senators from the canton of Zurich speak on behalf of 1.4 million people. Most of these 46 Deputies are elected under the majority system and are the voice of their canton in Parliament.

Switzerland is a federal state; the cantons have extensive powers and state aid is, in part, their responsibility. If the institutional agreement is signed, we do not yet know whether, or to what extent, the cantons will be prevented from receiving this state aid. The Council of States will echo this concern.

In the National Council, the number of deputies varies according to the population of each canton, and Deputies are elected under the proportional system. In this chamber, the debates take a much more partisan approach than in the Upper House. It is not governed by a majority system; coalitions between parties are formed according to the subjects being considered.

However, it should be noted that, for many elected representatives, the directive on the rights of EU citizens cannot apply to Switzerland, since this directive is specifically linked to EU citizenship.

Bicameralism is an asset for democracy. This is a given in Switzerland, where no one has ever questioned it.

In Switzerland, both Houses of Parliament have exactly the same weight and the same prerogatives. A bill that does not secure a majority in one of the two chambers is deemed to have been “liquidated”. This system ensures that small cantons are not dominated by the large ones and that minorities are not subjected to the “tyranny of the majority”. The Swiss Parliament elects the members of the Government and cannot be dissolved by the Executive. It is the people who directly counterbalance its power. This is another asset of Swiss democracy: in Switzerland, the population can express its opinions on all decisions made by the legislator.

Direct democracy is the fourth and last “stomach” of the Swiss political system. Four times a year, the Swiss population goes to the polls to vote on federal proposals. Around 50,000 citizens or eight cantons can request a popular vote on any law passed by Parliament, and certain referendums are mandatory. This has an impact on the Parliament’s work, since Deputies, when drafting legislation, automatically include the views of groups that are entitled to launch a referendum.

This brings me to the third point, which will need to be clarified in the context of the institutional agreement with the European Union: the accompanying measures, which aim to protect employees from wage undercutting.

These measures must be safeguarded; workers must not fear that signing the institutional agreement will cause their pay and working conditions to deteriorate. The fourth stomach of the Swiss political system will not be able to digest the agreement if such a fear persists.

It is under this condition that the agreement can be digested by the four stomachs that make up our political system. It is under this condition that Switzerland can sign the institutional agreement with the European Union. The Swiss Senate, often called a “chamber of sober second thought”, will undoubtedly help ensure that this debate is properly conducted, given that our Upper Chamber is renowned for very frequently taking the opposite view to the media and social networks, which are so quick to be immediately moved by everything, without having to worry about anything over the long term.

An African friend once told me: “You Swiss have watches. But we Africans have time.” (*Laughing*) Long-term political reflection, so dear to the late Philippe Séguin, whom I had the great honour to know, is certainly the true value that our chambers of second sober thought bring to democracy.

Thank you again for these discussions, thank you for this warm welcome! (*Loud applause*)

**The President** – An effective democracy cannot be monogastric. (*Smiles*) But does it need four stomachs? I say this under the watchful eye of President Bizet, who is also a veterinarian – no one is perfect...

In these violent, sometimes brutal times, we have to rise above our own circumstances, if I may be so bold, so we can see further. If we do not digest everything properly, by taking the necessary time, we run the risk of bloat, the type of swelling that leads to violence.

Forgive these medical comparisons, but President Fournier has just reminded us of the role played by second chambers, not based on nostalgia, but on balance. In these times of radicalisation, of social networks, we need what I would call moderating networks. In this respect, we are needed now even more than we were before. We must raise the bar, as Lord Fowler rightly said.

In France, we have just experienced a social and societal crisis, the yellow vest crisis, which you may have heard about. However, as a chamber close to the people, we have had an even more essential role in this situation than usual, because we know we are not in the driving seat. We do not have the monopoly on proximity to the people, but we understand the importance of being close to them. I have just gained a very sharp appreciation of this, by travelling through 47 of our 81 departments over the past six months.

### ***Candidacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Association of European Senates in 2020***

**The President** – It is now incumbent upon us to decide which country will host the next meeting of the Association of European Senates in 2020.

I have received only one highly symbolic candidacy, that of the House of Peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I will therefore give the floor to the President of that House, so that he can tell us whether he confirms his candidacy.

**Mr Bakir Izetbegovic, President of the House of Peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the candidacy of the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting in 2020** – I am delighted that you have accepted our candidacy! We naturally confirm our desire to host the next meeting. I am sure that this will help to consolidate democracy.

Therefore, we will see you in Bosnia next year, in our beautiful city of Sarajevo!

**The President** – We will be delighted to be there for the first time and for the twentieth anniversary of our association. I see this as a symbol, a symbol of being true to what our founders wanted – I am thinking of President Christian Poncelet in particular.

After reconciliation comes the time to build the future together. I have also noted that our experience has been recognised: I was approached by the President of the Republic of Iraq with a view to establishing a

second chamber and starting a dialogue, in order to put an end to majorities and minorities and focus exclusively on making it possible for citizens to come together, regardless of their origin or religion.

It is also a symbol, as our German and Austrian friends often tell us, of the importance of the Western Balkans at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa.

### ***Adoption of the Conclusions of the Presidency***

**The President** – I will now close our meeting.

The draft final declaration has been distributed to you. We have retained all the proposed amendments, and I thank their authors, who wished to clarify one point or another. Here is the final draft:

*20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Association of European Senates*

*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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 EU-Africa partnership. The same attachment to regional integration efforts prevails in Europe and Africa.*

*The determination to promote the shared values of parliamentarianism, the 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:*

*Euro-African dialogue among second chambers;*

*Bicameralism: an asset for democracy.*

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

*the relationship between Europe and Africa should take the form of a renewed partnership, based on reciprocal commitments at the service of sustainable, humane and inclusive development;*

*the sovereignty of each State is intangible, and each State is responsible for taking such measures as may be incumbent upon it in a sovereign manner;*

*Europe and Africa face many common threats and a concerted, coordinated commitment and response from all actors is required to tackle 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, are the only guarantees of peace and sustainable development; African initiatives, such as the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram, and the Alliance for the Sahel, among others, where Africans are taking responsibility for their own security, respond to this imperative; only 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 based on sustainable city issues, 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 the French-speaking world makes a vital contribution, alongside other forms of expression – is worthy of support;*

*the pooling of cooperation efforts among all States constitutes a lever to increase available resources and guarantee their optimum allocation. The European countries have made known their aspiration to improve the pooling of resources for cooperation in all its forms with African countries.*

*On bicameralism as an asset for democracy, the conclusions stressed 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 cases where they have been abolished;*

*Senates may vary in their composition and in the ways their members are appointed, but they all share 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 stakeholders and all citizens in all their diversity, which is essential for the cohesion of our societies;*

*they are often required 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 are a driving force in establishing responsible local governance, to take better account of 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 actions more effective and better understood, in the wake of European elections expressing the citizens' expectations.*

*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 to promote reconciliation among 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 reinforced.*

*They considered that this 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of African and European Senates should not be a one-off event and that the dialogue should be continued and expanded. Several African Senates are considering the creation of an association of African Senates.*

A Vice President of the Senate and Mayor of Marseilles used to say, with a southern French accent, inventing a very modern voting technique: “I consult with my eyes...” And, without ever looking, he would give the result of the vote! (*Laughing*)

I shall put the final declaration to the vote.

*The final declaration was adopted.*

## ***Closing Address***

**Mr Gérard Larcher, *President of the Senate of the French Republic***  
– I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Senates of Europe and Africa. We have been delighted and honoured to welcome you to this Chamber for this 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. This was a first. To become a tradition, another meeting is needed. We will look at how and when this might happen.

Let me also thank my colleagues Mr Philippe Dallier, Vice President of the Senate, Mr Christian Cambon, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee and Jean Bizet, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee, for their active participation throughout the debates. We also thank the friendship groups for bringing our discussions to life.

The time has come for us to conclude, but not, of course, for you to leave us. There will be many more discussions this evening. Tomorrow morning, I have a surprise to share with you, which is not ruminant, but equestrian (*Smiles*), and which will take you back to the life of a veterinary officer in the most prestigious of our regiments.

Our Senates, as they have shown, are places of open dialogue, in their respective countries, between regions, the people and institutions, but they are also meeting places. They are also a bridge between Europe and Africa – our session becomes all the more valuable as a pragmatic and lively advocacy for bicameralism.

The Senates, so diverse in their composition and prerogatives, are an asset to bicameralism. They are guarantors of the continuity of the State, given certain circumstances, in crisis situations or when there is a power vacuum – this is the case in a number of countries. They maintain a balance of power everywhere and contribute to consistency between regions. They smooth out conflicts and raise the level of debate, which explains their revival – and I mean “revival”. When second chambers are for some reason abolished, they are more often than not eventually restored... The experience of the Senates convinces those who do not have an Upper House to establish one.

But Senates must also live up to expectations. They must look to the future with spirit and determination.

Our meeting has also showed that Europe and Africa are not that far apart from each other. I even think that we have come closer together over the course of these proceedings. Together, we will go further. Alone, we might think we are progressing quickly, but we won't get very far...

No subject has been overlooked: global warming, pandemics, terrorism, human trafficking, to name a few. We also have an ambition to build a positive agenda together, whether this relates to sustainable cities, population or migration.

Second chambers have also devoted considerable efforts to local governance. Reciprocal commitments, complete sovereignty, respect: these are our watchwords. If an inclusive approach to cooperation and development is the only way to meet the challenges of our time, it requires greater commitment and better sharing of resources.

In the game of globalisation, up against economic giants and those who consider themselves to be all-powerful with no assistance from others, it is time to share our experiences and best practices in order to protect everyone's interests.

Léopold Sédar Senghor, reflecting on *The Poetry of Action*, made an appeal that will be my conclusion: "Think and act by ourselves and for ourselves; yes, think and act by ourselves and for ourselves." I propose that we make this phrase coined by Senghor (who, as we know was very close friends with President Pompidou during his studies) our credo, compatible with friendship, closer ties and the most genuine cooperation.

The medal you have all received shows a group of lictors: when you walk bearing fasces, you walk with a Senator's gait, as these lictors did in Ancient Rome. Let us walk in peace and with senatorial wisdom.

Long live the European Senates, long live the African Senates, long live the friendship between us!

*(Loud applause)*

*The sitting rose at 5.45 pm.*