

Letter of the President M. Van der Linden

Strasbourg, 13 December 2007

Dear colleague,

I have the pleasure to confirm my invitation to you to attend the next Conference of Presidents of Parliaments. As you will have noted, it will be held at the Council of Europe Headquarters in Strasbourg on 22 and 23 May 2008. Please find a draft programme enclosed.

The Conference is composed of the Speakers and Presidents of the Parliaments of the Member States of the Council of Europe and the Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the Assembly of Western European Union.

Only Speakers and Presidents will have the right to speak. In accordance with past practice, oral statements at the Conference will be limited to five minutes in order to give an opportunity to all those who so wish to take the floor.

The Speakers and Presidents of Parliaments enjoying Observer status with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Canada, Israel and Mexico), and the Presidents of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE/PA), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Parliamentary Assembly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO/PA), the Inter-parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Nordic Council, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (PABSEC), the Benelux Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Central European Initiative (CEI) are invited as observers.

Delegations wishing to provide a written statement addressing some or all of the topics for discussion may send their text of 3-5 pages (in English or French) by 31 March 2008 to the secretariat of the Conference, preferably in electronic form (Word).

Reserved seating will be allocated in the Assembly Chamber for National Delegations as follows: three seats for unicameral Parliaments and six for bicameral Parliaments. If Delegations include – as would be desirable - the Chairpersons of the National Delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, then one more seat can be reserved for them with advance notice.

Parliaments enjoying Observer status with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will be allocated 3 seats each. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the Assembly of Western European Union will each have a maximum of 6 seats. The other Inter-Parliamentary Assemblies invited will each be allotted 3 seats.

As usual, a separate meeting of Secretaries General will be called on the last day of the Conference, in the morning before the plenary sitting.

In the annexes hereto you will find a registration form and information about hotels. In due course you will also receive a conference handbook describing all practical arrangements.

It is my strong hope that you will be in a position to accept my invitation to this politically important Conference - dealing as it will with two essential challenges to Europe's future: finding better ways to involve civil society more closely in the political life of our nations; and having the democratic, human rights and rule of law values that underpin all we do to find clearer expression in our daily policies, at national and European level.

Looking forward to seeing you in Strasbourg,

Yours sincerely,

René van der Linden

Letter of the President M. de Puig

Strasbourg, 20 February 2008

Dear Chairperson,

On 21 January 2008, the members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe – who are also members of our 47 national parliaments – elected me President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

I see the Council of Europe as an organisation working for a more humane Europe. I have made the citizens' Europe the focus of my term of office and I have undertaken to make every effort to ensure that the Assembly contributes to it. Europe's citizens aspire to a Europe designed for Europeans by Europeans, and they are increasingly demanding that the political process be as wide open to them as possible.

With this in mind, I should therefore like to draw your attention to the next European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments, to be held in Strasbourg on 22 and 23 May 2008. The themes we have chosen, "Parliaments and civil society" and "National parliaments and the Council of Europe: promoting the core values of democracy, human rights and rules of law", are precisely aimed at discussing and reinforcing the vital link provided by national parliaments between decisions taken at European level and citizens' aspirations in the member countries.

This conference is a unique opportunity to pool our views and ideas on the many issues surrounding the development of our parliamentary democracies, so I am relying on you to take an active part in it.

I sincerely believe that my term of office will serve to strengthen co-operation between your parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly and that this will make it all the more effective. I am also convinced that your parliamentary delegation to the Assembly will continue to play a cardinal role in this co-operation. I am open to any suggestions you might like to make for joint action.

I hope to meet you in Strasbourg next May.

Yours sincerely,

Lluís Maria de Puig