



12TH CONFERENCE OF THE PRESIDENTS OF PARLIAMENTS OF SMALL EUROPEAN STATES

Vaduz, Liechtenstein

19 – 21 September 2018

Joint Declaration of the Presidents of Parliaments of Small European States adopted at the 12th Conference held in Liechtenstein on 20 September 2018

The Presidents or representatives of the Parliaments of the Principality of Andorra, the Republic of Cyprus, the Republic of Iceland, the Principality of Liechtenstein, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Republic of Malta, the Principality of Monaco, Montenegro and the Republic of San Marino;

Having gathered in Liechtenstein from 19 to 21 September 2018 at the invitation of Mr Albert Frick, President of Parliament of Liechtenstein;

Thanking Liechtenstein for having hosted the 12th Conference of the Presidents of Parliament of Small European States;

Welcoming the continuation of these meetings at the highest parliamentary level in the future as well;

Appreciating the offer of the President of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Demetris Syllouris, to host the 13th Conference of the Presidents of Parliaments of Small European States in 2019;

Highlighting the importance of such conferences, which strengthen parliamentary contacts and consequently facilitate ever-deeper mutual understanding of the specific characteristics of Small European States;

Reiterating the need to conduct this discussion and the efforts to reach common positions, so that these characteristics, which are unique in the community of states, may be protected while seeking a greater international integration;

Finally, emphasise the importance of the topics discussed and of the conclusions briefly summarised below:

Session 1 – The sovereignty of small states: origins and international recognition

1. Note that the independence and sovereignty of small states in history has been endangered on numerous occasions, in all parts of Europe, and throughout the centuries;
2. Underline the importance of strengthening cooperation between small states in order to raise awareness of their particular situation;
3. Share awareness of the importance of respect for international law and treaties by all countries, as small states are dependent on the stability and coherence of the international rule of law;
4. Condemn all attempts in the past, present and future to destabilise small states and all attempts to question or to undermine national sovereignty;
5. Note that small states contribute in a special way to peaceful international relations and provide services for arbitration in international conflicts and for the protection of human rights, and that they have – as small states – particular credibility for this purpose;
6. Commit themselves to highlight at every opportunity the special needs of small states and to support other small states in their efforts to strengthen their sovereignty.

Session 2 – Political participation: special challenges in the small state

7. Underline their commitment to democratic principles and the maintenance of these principles, to fundamental rights and freedoms, to pluralism and an open society;
8. Share the awareness that it is important to involve citizens as closely as possible in the political decision-making process. This includes not only free elections, but also other forms of civic participation or direct democratic rights;
9. Are firmly convinced that small states are particularly dependent on national cohesion and broad national consensus, which makes it particularly necessary to involve citizens in the political process;
10. Observe that there is a gap arising in many states between political and civil society, and thus endeavour to foster the closest possible proximity to citizens in the small states;
11. Are convinced that the small state offers particularly favourable conditions for citizen-friendly policies, and want to make the most of this in their national policies.
12. Underline that small states, as well as bigger ones, share the duty to contribute to solving today's global challenges, such as combatting climate change and work actively for UN development goals. Small states have in many ways a chance to act more swiftly and can even serve as role models.

Session 3 – International relations and diplomacy: strategies and priorities

13. Are aware that the foreign policy objectives and strategies of small states differ due to geographical, economic, social, cultural and political conditions;
14. Note that small states need to set priorities in their foreign policy that are adapted to the particular needs of each small state;
15. Stress the need for small states not to be disadvantaged by foreign policy and for them not to be discriminated against at the international level;
16. Consider it helpful for small states to support each other in their efforts to improve international networking at all levels;
17. Advocate regular exchanges between the small states on their current problems, difficulties and objectives in their foreign policy and a common commitment to their concerns.