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Parliamentary Delegations to the Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe

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Statement

adopted at the joint meeting on 24 March 2022

Our Union has faced and managed to get through economic, social and financial crises this century. Then followed the refugee and migration crisis, Brexit and the COVID crisis. Furthermore many other external and internal challenges, in a fast changing global scene and, unfortunately, an erosion of respect for the Union's fundamental values in some Member States. These developments created hardship for many people, in many countries, with youth unemployment soaring.

Now we face a new threat: a war on our continent that is not only an attack to a democratic Ukraine, but to democracy as a whole. The newfound unity in the European Council, with Commission and HR/VP in a coordinating role is incredibly significant. It gives a new impetus to European integration. An enhanced role of the EU in Foreign Affairs and Defence as well as in energy policy also means the way the EU works needs to be updated.

European decision-makers will have to take into account the new situations arising from these different crises and the social consequences for the Union's citizens.

Strong parliaments are at the heart of every democracy. As the only institutions directly elected by the people, they are irreplaceable for the democratic legitimacy of all political and legislative processes. Only democratically elected parliaments guarantee that each and every citizen has a seat at the table of political decision-making; decisions which in turn also affect the citizens in their everyday lives and their future. National Parliaments of the Member States and the European Parliament, with 108 representatives each in the Plenary, play therefore a crucial role in making the Conference a success, not only through our voice in the Plenary and competences in the follow up, but also in holding their respective executives (the European Commission and national governments) to account as regards their follow up to the results of the Conference.

Hence the importance of the parliamentary dimension of the Conference process (participatory democracy as complementing and strengthening representative democracy) and the need from the beginning till the end of the Conference to foster and strengthen the dialogue and cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament.

The European Parliament and national Parliaments are natural allies in the political goal of enhancing transparency of the working methods and decision-making processes of the EU institutions. The experience of the Conference on the Future of Europe confirms the importance to enhance all possible ways of dialogue and cooperation, among the European Parliament and national Parliaments, in particular by using already existing tools to the

utmost extent, in the goal of strengthening the European public sphere and promoting a new constitutional momentum.

Permanent and structured forms of interparliamentary discussion should be promoted in the follow-up of the Conference on the Future of Europe, and in this purpose, it is important to recall the experience of the “Assises”, the first European Parliament Conference with the national Parliaments that took place in November 1990.

Better interaction and an improved exchange of information between MEPs and MPs could help to improve scrutiny of the European debate at national level and thus foster a genuinely European parliamentary and political culture.

The establishment of political frameworks allowing a stronger dialogue between national and European political groups should also be encouraged, and the so-called caucuses of the political families, as organized in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe, constitute a good basis for future cooperation.

### Strengthening democracy within Europe

Citizens on the Digital Platform as well as within the Citizens’ Panels have discerned safeguarding and enhancing European democracy as of one the key objectives of the Conference.

As the directly elected representatives of the citizens, both at national and European level, parliamentarians share a common responsibility to safeguard the democratic process within the European Union. All parliaments within the Union have the dual responsibility to co-legislate as well as to hold their respective executive power to account. The executive power at European level is shared between the Commission and the national governments within Council, thus the accountability is also shared between the European Parliament and the national Parliaments. Together we should explore ways to enhance European democracy, namely through increasing legislative powers of parliaments, including their powers to monitor the proper implementation of existing legislation, empowering the European elections and increasing efficient EU decision making.

- Increasing legislative powers of parliaments:
  - Facilitating the subsidiarity check by national Parliaments.
  - The right of legislative initiative for the European Parliament.
  - Supporting an enhanced role for national Parliaments in the European architecture, by endowing them with a green card to propose initiatives to the European level, and by written questions to the EU Institutions.
  
- Empowering European elections:
  - Reform of the Electoral Law for the elections to the European Parliament.
  - The designation of the Commission President through the Spitzenkandidaten process as the heads of transnational lists, in which a part of the MEPs would be elected.
  
- Efficient EU decision making:
  - Increasing transparency of the decision-making in the Council, and trilogue negotiations.

- o Abolishing unanimity in some areas, and reducing it in others.
- o Stronger synergy between the European Parliament and national Parliaments in monitoring the implementation of EU legislation.
- o European Parliament and national Parliaments should be better involved in the European Semester and budgetary calendars at national and European level should be better coordinated throughout the process in order to encourage more effective use of this instrument.
- o Merging roles of the President of the European Council and the European Commission.

#### Common policy priorities

Citizens have identified key policy priorities in the platform and in the panels on which we must deliver. The following policies warrant specific attention and cooperation of the delegations of the national Parliaments and the European Parliament:

- Common Foreign, Security and Defence Policy:
  - o Improving the Union to act in foreign and defence policies, including a common EU defence.
  - o Parliamentary accountability on foreign policy,
- A real common economic and fiscal policy:
  - o Genuine own resources, which should replace national guarantees and contributions.
  - o Increasing competitiveness and strengthening of the Single Market.
  - o Enhanced social and common tax policy, and the implementation of the Social pillar.
- An Energy Union to guarantee energy independence.
- Common Migration Policy.
- Improve the European Trade Policy.
  - o Preserving free trade, while taking into account sustainability.
- Extension of EU competences in areas such as Health.
- Protection of EU values:
  - o Rule of law, human rights and freedoms.
  - o Independence of judiciary.
  - o Equality and non-discrimination, including gender equality.
  - o Privacy and data protection.
  - o Media freedom and fight against disinformation and fake news.
  - o Countering corruption.

#### Citizens' participation

Finally, mechanisms for regular citizens' participation and consultation at EU level could be enhanced. Citizens and various political and societal organisations, such as social partners, are interested and eager to contribute to the development of the European Union, as the experience with the Digital Platform and the European and national Citizens' Panels has shown.