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The Council of Europe and its observer states – the current situation and a way forward

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 1827 (2008)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully considered [Recommendation 1827 \(2008\)](#) and is grateful to the Assembly for its contribution to the reflection on how to enhance the relations between the Council of Europe and observer states. The contribution, including financial, made by observer states² to the work of the Council of Europe is most useful and the Committee of Ministers wishes this engagement to be maintained and strengthened further as co-operation with these states constitutes a precious outreach opportunity for the Council of Europe and allows also the Organisation to benefit from their input and support. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the ratification of Council of Europe treaties by observer states and their membership of partial agreements.

2. The Committee would like to recall the decision adopted at the 676th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies held on 1-2 and 7 July 1999 on the criteria for the granting of observer status with the Council of Europe. Whilst distinguishing the commitments to Council of Europe standards by member states and observer states, these criteria address the issues raised in [Recommendation 1827 \(2008\)](#), including the proposal to amend Statutory Resolution (93) 26 and promote the universal abolition of the death penalty.

3. Striving to ensure the total abolition of the death penalty within all Council of Europe member states, the Committee recalls that it has appealed in favour of its abolition on several occasions. Such appeals have also been addressed to observer states which still apply this sentence. The efforts to convince through dialogue to this end will be reinforced.

4. In accordance with the decision of the Ministers' Deputies, the Secretary General presents each year an Annual Report on External Relations of the Council of Europe. This report also contains information on the involvement of observer states in all aspects of the Council of Europe's work, including a detailed account of contacts with Japan and the United States on non use and abolition of the death penalty. The report covering calendar year 2007 is at the Assembly's disposal. The next report will be submitted in anticipation of the Ministerial Session of the Committee of Ministers to be held on 12 May 2009. This report will also be available to the Assembly.

5. The Committee of Ministers confirms that the observer states are invited to participate in the Forum for the Future of Democracy. Their national experience and expertise can be most useful for advancing the work of the Forum and their active participation in the sessions of the Forum is therefore welcome.

6. Finally, the Committee recalls its reply to Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 1753 \(2006\)](#) on External Relations of the Council of Europe adopted on 18 January 2007 at the 984th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, in which the Committee stated that in order to strengthen the existing partnership with observer states and encourage these states to make full use of the opportunities offered by their status, it had

1. adopted at the 1045th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (14 January 2009)

2. The Holy See since 1970, the United States since 1995, Canada since 1996, Japan since 1996 and Mexico since 1999.



decided that observer states (Canada, Holy See, Japan, Mexico and United States of America) would also be invited to attend the regular meetings of the Ministers' Deputies as from September 2006 (971st meeting, 12 July 2006).