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Introduction of a status of observer in the Assembly

Report¹

Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

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1. 1958 - 10th Session - Second part



A. Draft Resolution

After Rule 49 there shall be inserted in the Rules of Procedure a new Part and Rule worded as follows:

PART XI a

Rule 49 a

1. The Assembly may, on the proposal of the Bureau, admit as observers official Representatives of Governments or Parliaments of non-Member States of the Council of Europe.
2. Such observers shall have the right of access to the Assembly and its committees, but may not take part in the discussions, subject, in the case of committees, to the provisions of clause 3 of paragraph 7 of Rule 42 above..

B. Explanatory Memorandum

1.

At its meeting of 2nd December 1957, the Standing Committee, having decided to admit Israeli observers at Sessions of the Assembly, instructed the Committee on Rules of Procedure to consider a " status of observer " in the Assembly and to specify the rights which might go with that status in a Rule.

At the First Part of the Tenth Session, a theoretical study by the Secretariat-General on the rights and the procedure for admission of observers was submitted to the Committee on Rules of Procedure.

Although the Assembly, in Resolution 57 of 23rd September 1954, had expressed the hope that observers might be permitted to speak- without being entitled to vote, the Committee on Rules of Procedure felt that it was, in the circumstances, impossible to grant such wide privileges to representatives of countries which did not wish to accede to the Statute of the Council of Europe, except, in the case of committees, under the general conditions set forth in Rule 42, paragraph 7 relating to the right to speak in the committees.

Nevertheless, the Committee was unanimous in considering that it would be desirable for the Assembly to find some way of associating governmental or parliamentary representatives of States interested in the consolidation of Europe with the work of its committees.

Should the Assembly decide to grant the status of observer to qualified representatives of non-Member States, then such status should carry with it certain rights, namely free access to committees, which implies the right to receive all official documents, freedom to circulate throughout the premises and the use of seats at the rear and sides of the Assembly Hall.

The text of the new rule which the Committee on Rules of Procedure proposes that the Assembly should adopt specifies only the right of access to committees, and any other facilities granted to observers should be settled by the Secretariat-General.

The Committee on Rules of Procedure takes the view that observers should not be admitted to the Assembly on any extensive scale, in other words that the new observer status proposed to the Assembly should be applied with due caution.

In conclusion, the Committee decided unanimously to submit the foregoing draft Resolution to the Assembly.