Recommendation 704 (1973)[1]

Mission of the Council of Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having regard to the report of the Political Affairs Committee on the mission of the Council of Europe (Doc. 3281), and expressing its gratitude to governments for the assistance they have given its workingparty ;

2. Noting with satisfaction that all the member governments have emphasised the importance they attach tothe Council of Europe and to therole which it must continue to play ;

3. Considering that the Council of Europe is one of the key elements in anarticulated system of Europeancooperation answering the needs andinterests of all the countries engaged in the quest for European unity ;

4. Considering that the Council of Europe's role should be reviewed, particularly in the light of the Community's enlargement and development and of the efforts beingmade to step up cooperation between Western and Eastern Europe;

5. Considering the profound interest for the Council of Europe to be the normal forum to maintain and develop relations between its Members and North America, Japan and other overseas countries and Europeannon-member States ;

6. Considering that the Council of Europe has a supremely political mission which includes :

achieving "a greater unity between its Members", founded on the principles of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms ;

identifying the current and future needs of the European society, and above all, those of the individual, and satisfying these needs by contributing towards a steady improvement of living conditions ;

7. Considering that the Council ofEurope is the only organisation in which all the democratic States of Europe can cooperate on an equal footing ;

8. Considering that the activities of the Council of Europe andof the Community, which both share the aim of European unity, should be complementary and not competitive, and that it is therefore essential to ensure a regular flow of information andeffective liaison between the twoOrganisations at all levels ;

9. Determined to pursuean "open door" policy, and convinced that the Council of Europe would be qualified to assistin implementing the conclusions of the Conference on Securityand Cooperation in Europe in specific fields in which it is recognised as having special competence ;

10. Believingthat it is essential to improve working methods and expedite the decision-making process in the Council of Europe, so that it can play its part fully and efficiently ;

11. Considering that the Council of Europe'sefficiency depends largely on the quality of Secretariat staffand that it is thus importantto promote a real staff policy within the Organisation ;

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1. Assembly debate on 15 and 16 May 1973 (3rd and 4th Sittings) (see Doc. 3281, report of the Political Affairs Committee). Text adopted by the Assembly on 16 May 1973 (4th Sitting).

12. Determined, without interfering with the right ofparliamentary initiative, to establish priorities for its own work and to concentrate that work on problems to whose solution the Council of Europe, and inparticular its Assembly, can make a specific contribution,

13. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

I. With regard to the political role of the Council of Europe : invite member governments to recognise theimportant political role of the Assembly as the widest parliamentary forum in Western Europe and to use the Council of Europe as the instrument for coordination and consultation on questions of common interest to theseventeen member States ;

II. With regard to the relations between the Council of Europe and the Community :

a. invite member governments, particularly the governments of the Nine, to coordinate the activities of the Council of Europe and of the Community, having due regard to the role and resources of each, without drawing a hard and fast line between their respective activity sectors, and applying the following criteria :

geographical criterion : the Council of Europe must be empowered to deal with all questions which transcend the geographical boundaries of the Community ;

methodological criterion : the Council of Europe must be given preference in matters which are not suited to integration by the Community methods ;

b. its meetings to foster the dialogue between Members and non-members of the Community, on the basis of a progress report by the Community's Council of Ministers and a report on cooperation within the Nine on matters of foreign policy ;

c. time its ministerial meetings so that some of them are held immediately after meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the Community countries ;

d. ensure continuous and effective liaison between the Community and the Council of Europe, at ministerial and parliamentary level, and between the various departments of the Commission and the Secretariat General ;

e. set up a Council of Europe office in Brussels and ask the Community to appoint a mission to the Council of Europe ;

III. With regard to East-West cooperation : see to it that the Council of Europe is available in particular, when political conditions permit, to make an effectual contribution to cooperation between Western Europe and Eastern Europe and to implementation of the conclusions of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe ;

IV. With regard to the Council of Europe's activities :

a. concentrate and develop the Council of Europe's activities in the following fields :

protection and extension of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in face of the challenges inherent in modern society ;

harmonisation of legal systems ;

cultural cooperation, reform of education and European youth policy ;

problems facing society and democratic parliamentary regimes as a result of scientific and technological advance ;

protection of nature and the historic heritage, and right to an environment and living conditions conducive to the full development of the human personality, within the context of a European regional planning policy ;

science policy and fundamental research ;

social rights and status of migrant workers, public health and human economic problems such as consumer protection ;

participation of local authorities in the building of Europe and in decisions taken at all levels which affect the life of local and regional communities ;

b. prepare a medium-term policy plan giving priority to activities which the Council of Europe can really carry through successfully ;

c. review the Organisation's Intergovernmental Work Programme periodically, without hesitating to drop certain non-priority activities and transfer the resources freed in this way to priority activities ;

d. having thus rationalised its Work Programme, provide the Council of Europe with the budgetary resources required to carry out its mission ;

e. have recourse whenever necessary to the "Partial Agreement" procedure or other methods which enable governments to implement specific projects in which they have a particular interest ;

V. With regard to the Council of Europe's working methods :

a. strengthen the dialogue and introduce regular consultation between the Committee of Ministers and the Consultative Assembly ;

b. make full use of its power to meet with a membership of specialised Ministers entitled to take decisions, in order to allow for the variety of requirements of European cooperation ;

c. give more scope to the Ministers' Deputies and allow them to concentrate on their executive role by improving the decision-making process, so as to leave to the Secretary General, who should be able to make more use of his right of initiation and of the executive powers attaching to his office, and to the committees of experts the duty of settlingthe largest possible number of administrative and technical questions ;

VI. With regard to follow-up action on this recommendation : clarify at its next ministerial meeting, the Council

of Europe's future role by the adoption of a resolution taking the foregoing considerations into account and associate the Assembly in the preparation of that resolution.