Recommendation 910 (1981)[1]

Environment policy in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Reaffirming its concern for environment protection as an important factor for man's self-fulfilment ;

2. Convinced that protection of the environment and of the quality of life is one of the essential tasks of the Council of Europe and one of the ideal fields for co-operation between Council of Europe member states, particularly as regards their frontier regions ;

3. Noting with satisfaction that the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats drawn up by the Council of Europe, was swiftly signed by eighteen member states, as well as by Finland and the European Economic Community ;

4. Welcoming the fact that the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, drawn up by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, has been signed by thirty-five European governments, as well as by the European Economic Community ;

5. Valuing as an instrument for improved co-operation between the European countries and the other United Nations member states the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, adopted at Bonn in 1979 at the instigation of the Federal Republic of Germany ;

6. Noting with approval the progress made in protecting the Mediterranean under the United Nations Environment Programme, as well as the signature in 1980 of the Agreement on land-based pollution of the Mediterranean Basin, one of the technical protocols deriving from the Barcelona Convention ;

7. Welcoming the environment protection efforts of the European Economic Community ;

8. Considering that, in the interests of earlier and fuller implementation of the various legal instruments relating to environment protection, national parliaments need to be made more aware of the contribution they can make to the ratification thereof and to the adoption of relevant legislation, as well as to the pursuit of active and coherent government policies in this field ;

9. Convinced of the need for a greater effort to inform and educate the public so that it can make a clear-headed, dispassionate assessment of situations where growth requirements and environmental considerations conflict with one another ;

10. Considering, however, that development requirements cannot justify measures that will cause irreversible damage to the environment ;

11. Fearing that the proliferation of initiatives by international organisations and states, however laudable they are, may muddle planning and cause duplication of effort resulting in a waste of time and money,

1. Assembly debate on 27 January 1981 (21st and 22nd Sittings) (see Doc. 4658, report of the Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 January 1981 (22nd Sitting).

12. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

a. bring together representatives of the various international organisations concerned with environment protection in Europe, with a view to ensuring the requisite co-ordination of their activities, and appoint a consultant to prepare a study on overlap in this field ;

b. encourage member states to include the rudiments of ecology in school curricula at all levels, and to develop systematically measures to inform members of the public in order to improve their behaviour towards the environment and enable them to react knowledgeably to any project threatening their environment ;

c. endeavour to secure the harmonisation of member states' legislation ensuring respect for the wishes of the population and allowing for citizen participation in the preparation of administrative decisions liable to affect the environment ;

d. invite the governments of member states to supply every year to the Assembly information on their environment protection programmes, in order to monitor their fulfilment ;

e. conclude without delay the European Outline Convention for the Protection of International Watercourses against Pollution ;

f. call on member states to ratify the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats if they have not already done so ;

g. give the European Information Centre for Nature Conservation the additional resources it requires to carry out more effectively its task of informing and educating public opinion.