



## Recommendation 1103 (1989)<sup>1</sup>

# Future role of the Council of Europe in the process of European construction

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recalling its previous work on the future of European construction, which led notably to the report of the Commission of Eminent European Personalities (Colombo Commission), communicated to both organs of the Council of Europe in June 1986, and the subsequent work of the Colombo Commission Follow-up Group, which benefited from the contributions of all Assembly committees and of the Secretary General in its efforts to secure early implementation of the recommendations contained in that report, in conformity with [Resolution 871 \(1987\)](#) ;
2. Welcoming the Secretary General's communication ([Doc. 5981](#)) on the subject under discussion, submitted in the spirit of the Colombo Commission, both for its content and as a major factor in accelerating the debate both in the Assembly and in the Committee of Ministers which decided to devote an extraordinary meeting to the subject on 22 March 1989 ;
3. Considering that the happy coincidence on 5 May 1989 (Europe Day) of the formal accession of Finland as the twenty-third member state and the 40th anniversary of the Council of Europe makes the current debate especially timely,

### *A. Role of the Council of Europe in European construction*

4. Stresses the irreplaceable political role of the Council of Europe as co-ordinator of all European parliamentary democracies and as a framework for real political dialogue between these democracies with the aim of preserving their internal cohesion and harmonising their positions on major international questions ;
5. Stresses the extent to which this stronghold of democracy and human rights is indispensable for European co-operation as a whole and particularly for the policies of integration pursued in the framework of the European Community ;
6. Considers that the Single Market, which should be a factor not only of economic, but of social cohesion between the twelve Community member states and therefore a factor for progress in Europe in general, makes more necessary than ever a permanent and wide-ranging dialogue between those countries which are members of the Community and those which are not ;
7. Considers that the Council of Europe provides the best political framework for this dialogue aimed at the cohesion of democratic Europe and that, with its achievements and its experience, it also constitutes an excellent framework for co-operation which can usefully serve to avoid the appearance of gaps in certain fields between Community and non-Community countries ;

---

1. See [Doc. 6022](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, Rapporteur : Mr Lied, and [Doc. 6023](#), opinion of the Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme, Rapporteur : Mr Oehler. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 15 March 1989.



8. Welcomes the fact, in this connection, that the Rhodes Summit (European Council) of the Community(2 and 3 December 1988) considered, in the conclusions of the Presidency :
  - a. on the one hand, that proposals for basic social rights to be guaranteed in the Community framework should "draw inspiration from the Social Charter of the Council of Europe" ;
  - b. on the other hand, in the audiovisual area, that "the Community's efforts should be deployed in a manner consistent with the Council of Europe convention" ;
9. Welcomes moreover, in respect of basic social rights in Europe, the opinion expressed by the Economic and Social Committee of the European Communities (Brussels, 22 February 1989) that "the intention is not to devise a new instrument, but to enshrine fundamental social guarantees in the Community legal system, with its distinctive supranational features" ;
10. Proposes furthermore that a management survey team, consisting of a small group of international experts, be invited to examine working methods and structures, including archaic-seeming staffing procedures ;
11. Stresses also that the evolution towards greater respect for human rights - and even moves in the direction of political pluralism - in certain Central and East European countries, combined with a new readiness on their part for wider European co-operation, reflected also in the terms of the concluding document of the Vienna CSCE review meeting, similarly sets a new challenge for the Council of Europe in the field of human rights, but also of cultural, social, environmental, legal, public health and scientific co-operation, and considers that the time has come to define and establish specific fields of co-operation with certain Central and East European countries ;
12. Considers that the accession of these countries to some conventions is desirable, and that accession of Hungary to the European Cultural Convention would be a significant step, possibly following a transitional period of participation on an ad hoc basis in the work in question ;
13. Points out that the Council of Europe provides a framework for European co-operation in the safeguarding and development of the diversity of national, regional and local cultural values, and that it is equally open to the processes of greater unity and closer union in Europe ;
14. Believes in addition that the Council of Europe has given a true European dimension to the concept of local democracy and that it can, in this connection, provide its experience and co-operation to those European countries which aspire to greater democratisation through the promotion and protection of local and regional autonomy ;

#### *B. Role of the Parliamentary Assembly*

15. Reaffirms its role of giving impetus to the accomplishment of the Council of Europe's vocation, as fixed in Article 1 of the Statute, which implies the recognition and encouragement of its specific contribution to political debate in Europe and the world, and of its pioneering work, in which it enjoys a certain freedom of action from which the Organisation as a whole benefits ;
16. Considers that it is more important than ever, at a time when fears are voiced of a "democratic deficit" in Europe, to reassert the relevance of the Parliamentary Assembly constituted of national parliamentarians for the first time, with Finland's accession, from the whole of democratic Europe, who are ideally placed to ensure that political impulses flowing from the preoccupations of the populations they represent are given full expression at European level, and that, conversely, their work in Europe is given full weight at national level ;
17. Recognises the need for greater efforts to assure the latter function in order to bring the Council of Europe's work to the attention of wider circles in the member states, an important task to which every member of the Assembly should contribute ;
18. Considers that democratic Europe already disposes in the Assembly of an institution which, given its composition of delegations from national parliaments, should play the role of a "European Upper Chamber", and considers also that this role should be further developed in order to bring European construction closer to national realities ;
19. Considers that the parliamentary dimension of European construction must be strengthened by institutionalising increased co-operation between European parliamentary assemblies, in particular between the European Parliament on the one hand, and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, issue of the national parliaments, on the other ;

20. Notes the recent resolutions of the European Parliament concerning its relations with national parliaments ;
21. Appeals to the national parliaments concerned, in order to avoid any needless overlapping, to ensure that their delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe participate as closely as possible in any actions undertaken in this context ;
22. Considers that the Assembly can also make a valuable contribution in improving relations with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, taking a lead among European organisations in this field, and that the creation of a special status, still to be defined, for these countries will contribute to the improvement of the climate of co-operation in Europe and that the association of the Assembly in the CSCE process would introduce an indispensable democratic dimension ;
23. Considers that the Assembly should play a leading role in the follow-up to the Vienna concluding document and monitor the practical implementation of the appropriate aspects of undertakings contained in that document for all thirty-five participating countries ;
24. Expresses its wish to establish and maintain co-operative relations with the European Parliament when it is reconstituted, at the level of bureaux, committees and secretariats, in the interests of the common goal of European construction in the widest sense ;

### *C. Resources for co-operation*

25. Stresses also the responsibility of specialised ministers, whose periodic conferences are such an important feature of the Council of Europe's activity, to harmonise the work programmes between the different European organisations, which should imply extension, wherever possible, of the benefits of co-operation to the widest circle of European democratic states, not forgetting those which aspire towards democracy ;
26. Endorses the Colombo Commission's view that the conferences of specialised ministers should be integrated into the Council of Europe's statutory framework and given a bigger role in the determination of intergovernmental activities ;
27. Where the Council's intergovernmental work programme is concerned, fully supports an increased role for the Secretary General in eliminating unnecessary bureaucratic procedures, in order, without reducing the fields of competence of the Organisation, to achieve the flexibility indispensable in affecting limited existing resources - which are likely to be increasingly revealed as inadequate - to the new priorities, by presenting proposals which will naturally be subject to scrutiny by the Parliamentary Assembly and, subsequently, by the Committee of Ministers ;
28. Expresses itself in favour of the replacement of the medium-term plan with activities programmed on a two- or three-yearly basis ;
29. Approves of the gradual replacement of certain steering committees, wherever desirable, by more flexible ad hoc structures with variable membership and emphasises that these new structures should be the advisers of the Secretary General in his capacity as manager of the Organisation's activities ;
30. Advocates more frequent use of partial agreements as a way of achieving greater flexibility in the mechanisms of intergovernmental co-operation ;
31. Expresses itself in favour of strengthening the Assembly's role as regards both the budget and the determining of intergovernmental co-operation activities ;
32. Calls for a stepping-up of the dialogue between the specialised ministers and the various Assembly committees ;
33. Expresses the desire that the Committee of Ministers should set itself a maximum time-limit (for example, six months) in which to reply to the Assembly's recommendations ;
34. Supports the proposal by the Secretary General to modernise the Council of Europe's working tools by providing the Secretariat with requisite facilities (computers, office technology, data banks, telecommunication networks) ;

35. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

35.1. reaffirm clearly the Council of Europe's vocation as promotor of democracy and human rights both in Europe and in the world and give support to all initiatives of the Assembly in this field, and in particular to the Strasbourg Conference on Parliamentary Democracy and its decision to establish an Institute for Democracy ;

35.2. take advantage of the possibility of developing co-operation on an even broader level, as on the basis of the European Cultural Convention, for extending dialogue and co-operation to other European countries ;

35.3. initiate without delay discussion on possible ways of reforming the European Social Charter - including the possibility for the European Communities to accede thereto, as well as to the European Code of Social Security - thus avoiding the risk of a divided "social Europe" and respecting the spirit of the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee of the European Communities against the creation of new legal instruments ;

35.4. utilise the results of the Council of Europe's experience in the search, in a spirit of solidarity, for answers to the shared problems with which European countries are confronted, such as AIDS, drugs, new issues in the area of bio-ethics, threats to the environment and terrorism ;

35.5. explore the possibilities for the Council of Europe to play an active and leading role in the CSCE process and the follow-up conferences now in preparation, both at governmental and parliamentary level, and take advantage of the Council of Europe's proven record in human rights and social and family affairs to build upon the recent Vienna Agreement on Human Rights, particularly with regard to non-member states in Central and Eastern Europe ;

35.6. ensure a greater rationalisation of the work of the various European organisations, by taking account of their respective membership and working methods and by improving practical machinery for concertation, especially between the Council of Europe, the European Community and EFTA ;

35.7. take due account of the Assembly's special responsibility over many years as parliamentary forum for OECD, with annual debates including a report presented by the Secretary General of that organisation ;

35.8. bear in mind the need to preserve and strengthen the valuable tradition of intergovernmental and parliamentary co-operation, over a wide range of activities, with like-minded democracies and organisations outside Europe ;

35.9. stress with the governments of the Twelve their particular responsibility for ensuring that better account is taken in the Community framework of the Council of Europe's work, and entrust the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers with a general mandate to defend the interests of the Organisation ;

35.10. urge member governments to take a more positive attitude towards the Council of Europe with regard to the provision of financial and other resources, so that it can efficiently perform the tasks with which it is entrusted, and notably :

- a. by no longer applying the practice of zero growth for the Council of Europe and replacing it by a reference to average annual growth in their gross domestic product,
- b. by ensuring that there is a clear distinction between national budgetary contributions to organisations for co-operation between European democratic states (first and foremost the Council of Europe) and contributions to other international organisations ;

35.11. institute gradually a European civil service by ensuring that the staffs of the two main European institutions (European Communities and Council of Europe) are afforded similar conditions of employment ;

35.12. transform Vote II of the Council of Europe budget into a budgetary package, so that the Secretary General is able to transfer appropriations within that package depending on the development of activities, results obtained and new priorities which might emerge.