Resolution 246 (1963)[1]

Reactivation of the Council of Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly must itself make what contribution it can towards strengthening the authority of the Council of Europe and facilitating the implementation of its Recommendations.

Section A - Reinforcement of committees

1. It is to the advantage of committees that all persons interested should have the opportunity of being closely associated with the drafting of Recommendations, committees taking greater advantage of the opportunities offered by the following procedures :

a. the Ministers concerned or their representatives should be invited to attend, in the spirit of Rule 45 of the Assembly Rules of Procedure;

b. contact should be maintained with committees of experts and the governmental bodies concerned

c. independent experts should be consulted;

d. meetings should be arranged of the various categories of people qualified to consider any question (professional men, technicians, consumers, etc.).

It would be desirable to consider with the Ministers the budget problems involved in some of these procedures

2. Committees must recognise that the attempt to achieve unanimity at all costs robs the Assembly's Recommendations of their quality and their force, if such unanimity betrays an attempt to by-pass the true difficulties ; they must therefore acknowledge the inevitability of a majority and an opposition on most questions.

3. The combining of some committees might be considered. Each of the large committees, after such reorganisation, would have a greater number of members and could have several officials at its disposal.

Section B - Extension of the Assembly's action

The Assembly can, of its own initiative, promote a movement in favour of schemes that it recommends

1. Action in Parliaments

Since the Assembly consists of parliamentarians, its Recommendations can be directly presented to national parliaments in order to enlist their support ; the following methods should be considered and, in particular, practical procedure for carrying them through :

a. The Working Party on relations with national parliaments should increase its efforts, by methods to be agreed with the Secretariat, which should provide practical assistance;

1. Assembly debate on 17th and 18th January 1963 (24th and 25th Sittings of the 14th Session) and on 8th and 9th May 1963 (5th and 6th Sittings of the 15th Session) (see Doc. 1548, Report of the Political Committee).

b. The cohesion of national delegations in the intervals between Sessions should be strengthened, and in each parliament a "Parliamentary Secretariat for European Affairs" should be created, to be at the disposal of the national delegation, and to consist of parliamentary officials who will consider questions from the Assembly's point of view, in liaison with the Council Secretariat and keep Consultative Assembly Representatives informed of the Council's activities;

c. During sessions and, if necessary, between sessions, the Chairmen of parliamentary delegations should meet in Strasbourg to consider common action to be taken in national parliaments;

d. Visits and addresses to national parliaments by the President of the Assembly or by members of the Assembly or Secretariat should be arranged.

2. Action in the Political Groups

Political interest in Council of Europe projects could be encouraged by strengthening the resources at present available to the political groups in the Assembly, so that, for example, they could hold one meeting in each interval between part-sessions.

3. Action in European and international institutions and organisations

In order to establish more effective liaison with European institutions, the Assembly should agree with them on means of direct co-operation on the following lines :

a. The President of the Assembly should transmit to these institutions and organisations Recommendations and Resolutions likely to interest them, requesting their views;

b. The Bureau of the Assembly, on the initiative of committee Chairmen, should attempt to encourage working meetings between committee members and representatives of international organisations interested in the same subjects as committees and, in particular, should arrange for committee Chairmen and Rapporteurs to attend meetings of the Council of OECD whenever that would be helpful;

c. It would be desirable to hold joint meetings of the Presidents of the three European Assemblies (European Parliament, Consultative Assembly, WEU Assembly) or of members of committees dealing with the same subjects, to discuss all matters of common interest.

4. Action on public opinion

The Assembly feels that it should take part in the European information effort by establishing close links with private associations, Europe Houses, scholastic institutions and trade unions, apart from its profitable activity with local authorities. It also requests that the resources provided for the Directorate of Information should be rationalised and increased. The meeting of some committees outside Strasbourg and Paris has a publicity value that must not be disregarded. This action should be considered in the context of the increase in information resources.