Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 642 (1976)[1]

Control of manufacture and trade of arms

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Concerned at the continuing increase in the manufacture of heavy armaments and their trade both among industrialised countries and between industrialised and developing ;

2. Convinced that stricter national and international control of the manufacture and trade of arms would help to maintain peace and reduce tensions in the world ;

3. Considering that governments and powerful industrial interests use arms supplies as a means of increasing their political influence in the world and over individual developing countries ;

4. Realising that industrialised countries increasingly rely on international sales of even the most sophisticated war material to recuperate otherwise prohibitive research and development costs ;

5. Considering that public opinion in industrialised countries is concerned that a substantial share of the aid to developing countries takes the form of arms supplies or is used by the recipients to buy armaments ;

6. Aware that governments supplied with arms often use them for pursuing policies of aggression towards other countries or for repressing democratic forces within their own countries ;

7. Mindful of the fact that attempts to reduce production and to curb sales are opposed by powerful economic and social interests, and meet particularly with problems of redundancy and industrial reconversion ; but believing that, once there is the political will to consider production and trade restrictions as a priority, such problems are avoidable through the restructuring of the industries concerned and the retraining of manpower ;

8. Alarmed by the readiness with which European governments and industries have rearmed the countries of the Middle East after the 1973 war and have consented to sell arms to oil-rich countries ;

9. Stressing the responsibility borne by all Council of Europe member states and their involvement, either as exporters or importers, in the arms race ;

10. Considering that the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international co-operation, as advocated in the preamble to the Statute of the Council of Europe, requires of member states that they set an example in the control of the manufacture and trade of arms ;

11. Regretting that, in countries with a democratic parliamentary regime, parliaments are not in a position to exercise effective control over the manufacture and trade of arms for lack of the necessary information,

12. Urgently appeals to the parliaments of the member states to take the necessary steps to ensure :

a. that governments make available to them the fullest possible information on the details of domestic armament production and international arms trade in which their countries are involved, either as suppliers or recipients, so that they may exercise effective control in this field ;

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1. Assembly debate on 22 September 1976 (19th Sitting) (see Doc. 3817, report of the Political Affairs Committee). Text adopted by the Assembly on 22 September 1976 (19th Sitting).

b. that the manufacture and trade of arms is subjected to highly stringent public oversight ;

c. that restrictive rules are enacted enforcing international embargoes, strictly controlling exports to areas where tensions exist, refusing deliveries which are incompatible with the protection of human dignity or humanitarian and development programmes, and listing weapons that may not be exported ; and that these rules are coordinated among Council of Europe member states ;

d. that Western European governments draw up co-ordinated plans for domestic armaments production and equipment, in order to benefit from a larger and more uniform European market, and consequently depend less on sales to other countries ;

e. that obsolete weapons being replaced by new ones be destroyed, instead of exported, and that governments endeavour to conclude appropriate international agreements to this effect ;

f. that studies on the feasibility of industrial reconversion, with safeguard of employment and retraining of labour, are carried out in depth.