Resolution 805 (1983)[1]

European co-operation in the 1980s (General policy of the Council of Europe)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recalling its past work on the subject of European co-operation in the 1980s, and particularly its last report (Doc. 4949) and debate of 7 October 1982, leading to the adoption of Order No. 414 and the principles annexed to it, which retain all their validity, as well as subsequent intensivec consultations at both parliamentary and official level, and also its Recommendations 850 (1979) and 940 (1982), on European cultural co-operation ;

2. Recognising that the European Community, despite the difficulties recently encountered, is a very important element in the process of European co-operation, even though the necessary revitalisation of democratic Europe as a whole also requires that more advantage should be taken of the flexible instrument of co-operation which is the Council of Europe ;

3. Noting that the Council of Europe for its part draws its strength from the breadth of its membership, including almost all Europe's pluralist parliamentary democracies, and the breadth of its statutory mandate, which covers all matters except national defence ; and that its achievements over thirty-four years of existence have been particularly remarkable in the fields of human and social rights, and cultural, legal and environmental co-operation ;

4. Expressing some concern that the European Council meeting in Stuttgart in June 1983 nevertheless called for intensification of the intergovernmental work of the Ten in fields not foreseen in the Treaties of Paris and Rome, including those of culture, the environment and the approximation of laws ;

5. Noting the communique on relations with the Council of Europe issued by the Council of the Communities on 22 June 1983 which affirms that the Communities "in no way wish to encroach on the fields of jurisdiction or the activities of the Council of Europe" and will "continue constructive cooperation with it", while stating that "no line should be drawn a priori between matters within the province of the Council of Europe and those within the province of the European Communities, given the different aims of the two organisations and the developing nature of their tasks" ;

6. Aware that certain European political parties will be proposing far-reaching encroachment on Council of Europe activities in the manifestos being prepared with a view to mobilising electors for the important second direct elections to the European Parliament in June 1984 ;

7. Convinced, in the interests of clarity, vis-a-vis the European tax-paying public as well, that some de facto division of tasks is nevertheless necessary whereby subjects more appropriately treated by twenty-one European democracies cannot be limited to the Ten ;

8. Believing that, in the cultural field and in certain other areas of technical co-operation, it is helpful to distinguish the role of the Council of Europe in encouraging closer co-operation from the objectives of other bodies concerned with European unification or political union ;

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1. Assembly debate on 30 September and 1 October 1983 (17th and 18th Sittings) (see Doc. 5131,report of the Political Affairs Committee). Text adopted by the Assembly on 1 October 1983 (18th Sitting).

9. Welcoming the decision of the Committee of Ministers to set up working parties at Deputy level to make recommendations on increasing the depth and scope of European political dialogue, on relations with the Communities, on working methods and relations with the Assembly, and on the work of the Council of Europe in the fields of human rights and of culture, and looking forward to clarification of the real implications of the Stuttgart Summit ;

10. Noting that the work of these working parties has reached an advanced stage and is being pursued in close co-operation with the Assembly, with reciprocal invitations culminating in a joint discussion between several Ministers' Deputies and representatives of several Assembly committees, on 30 June 1983, at a round table on European co-operation in the 1980s in Luxembourg ;

11. Concerned about the lack of official relations between the Council of Europe and the majority of Eastern European countries ;

12. Welcoming the increased utilisation of the Council of Europe's conferences of specialised ministers, and in particular the recent proposals for European ministerial conferences on human rights, on research and on the architectural heritage, which confirm the increased parallelism in the work of the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly ;

13. Welcoming recent innovations in political dialogue within the Committee of Ministers, in particular meetings of political directors of the non-Community countries with their colleagues representing the presidency of the Ten, which will help to further stimulate shared thinking on foreign policy matters of all member states and to strengthen the collective political impact of Western Europe on the world scene ;

14. Convinced that the Council of Europe's role in promoting democracy in Europe and worldwide also has implications for relations between the organisation's executive and parliamentary organs, which include systematic involvement of the Assembly, as the elected organ, in the finalising of European conventions and agreements, as well as full and prompt explanation from the Committee of Ministers in all cases where the latter does not act on Assembly recommendations,

15. Believes that it is urgent to improve the Council of Europe's working methods to ensure greater impact at national level of, on the one hand, European conventions and agreements which are too often implemented restrictively, and on the other hand the recommendations made to governments by the Committee of Ministers ;

16. Recognises, where relations with the European Communities are concerned, that unremitting efforts to achieve greater complementarity, reciprocity, coherence and effectiveness are required in the interets of democratic Europe as a whole, especially in the light of the decisions taken by the Community at Stuttgart ;

17. Urges, in this connection, the implementation of the recommendation formulated by both the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament that the European Communities as such should accede to the European Convention on Human Rights ;

18. Urges the Committee of Ministers to consider what possibilities might exist for joint ventures, such as European Music Year 1985, where the Council of Europe's role can be clearly asserted, and to press for greater Council of Europe participation in certain activities organised and sponsored by the Communities and improving liaison mechanisms to this end, notwithstanding the often-quoted differences between the organisations while recognising that good working relations between parliamentary bodies and administrations often defy codification, and that the generally satisfactory relations achieved at the Bureau and Secretary General levels need to be much more fully reflected at the operational level of committee chairmen, rapporteurs and secretariats if they are to become fully effective ;

19. Follows with keen interest the work of the European Parliament in preparing proposals for revision of the treaties instituting the Communities and resolves to intensify its own independent reflections on the future of European co-operation in the light, inter alia, of the findings of a commission of prominent statesmen from Community and non-Community countries, sitting in an individual capacity, which could be set up to work out future perspectives beyond the present decade and, when the time is ripe, make its own contribution to a debate which must not neglect the interests of the wider Europe ; this commission is to involve members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, as well as members of the European Parliament, who would report on the proceedings to their respective parliamentary institutions ;

20. Urges the Committee of Ministers, in the light of the enlargement which has already taken place in the European Communities and is likely to take place in the next few years- and taking into consideration recent proposals for reform of the European Communities- to inform the Assembly of its views on the position and role of the Council of Europe as well as on the institutional structure of European co-operation in the 1980s and beyond ;

21. Calls upon all the governments of member states and the Committee of Ministers to explore the possibility of participation by Eastern European countries in the intergovernmental activities of the Council of Europe such as culture, education and environment ;

22. Invites the Committee of Ministers to discuss at regular intervals political questions affecting European East-West relations and to report back to the Assembly.