Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1052 (1995)[1]

Activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. From its inception in 1947 and throughout the cold war, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) served as the foremost forum for East-West co-operation in the economic and related fields. Even today it is the only permanent intergovernmental forum for economic co-operation covering all the countries of Europe, Canada, the United States and Israel, as well as the central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. Since the fall of communism in central and eastern Europe the organisation has fundamentally reassessed its mandate, which, in addition to its priority sectoral activities, today consists primarily in fostering the economic reform process in the region and assisting the economies in transition in their integration into the European and global economy.

2. The Assembly notes with satisfaction the complementary efforts of the Council of Europe and the ECE to foster democracy and development in the transition economies of central and eastern Europe.

3. It also welcomes the convergence of interests and the collaboration which its Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities has for years enjoyed with the ECE, which is usually represented at all the events organised by the committee.

4. The Assembly emphasises the importance of the ECE's standard-setting activities in the sphere of the environment and welcomes the fact that the governments of ECE member countries - aware of the need to give priority to the application of the instruments drawn up, for fear of reducing these to a mere manifestation of the good will of the signatory states - have taken steps to set up machinery within the Organisation enabling application of the conventions related to the environment to be better monitored and supervised.

5. In view of the Council of Europe's expanding membership, its privileged links with countries whose parliaments enjoy special guest status with the Parliamentary Assembly, and its longstanding co-operation with the ECE, the Assembly resolves to strengthen its links with the ECE, notably by serving as the ECE's parliamentary forum for regular debates on its activities, on the basis of reports prepared by the Assembly's Committee on Economic Affairs and Development.

6. The Assembly invites the member states of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe:

   6.1. to reinforce the ECE's capacity for economic analysis of the transformation processes under way in the countries in transition, seeing that it provides an independent and highly professional assessment of the situation in those countries, and also considering the great importance attached by policy-makers, other international organisations and professional institutions to this analysis. This work also provides views and commentaries which foster the debate under way in the economies in transition, and which promote the process by which national policy-makers adopt within their own country reforms generally advocated for the region as a whole;

1. Assembly debate on 1 February 1995 (4th Sitting) (see Doc. 7199, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mr Malinowski). Text adopted by the Assembly on 1 February 1995 (4th Sitting).

6.2. to enable the ECE to intensify its regulatory work aimed at the establishment of international norms and standards, the elaboration of international legally-binding instruments, the adoption of regional strategies and the development of coherent international infrastructure networks. This work is as valid today as it was in the past when it provided, at times, the only vehicle for co-operation among countries unable to bridge the East-West divide at political level;

6.3. to enable the ECE to pursue and expand its programme of technical co-operation - in particular its workshops, seminars and regional advisory services - which has proved to be of great importance to the countries in transition;

6.4. to recognise the value of the ECE's work, including its contribution to global programmes and to developing countries in other regions, especially those of direct interest to the transition process in central and eastern Europe, while avoiding any duplication of work with other international organisations, and to improve toward this end co-operation with the Council of Europe;

6.5. to enable the ECE to pay greater attention in its future work to the social dimension of the transition process in central and eastern Europe.

7. The Assembly calls on the governments of Council of Europe member states, and on the European Union:

7.1. where applicable, to accede to ECE conventions and agreements in the field of transport and the environment;

7.2. to enhance access to their markets for the exports of the new democracies in central and eastern Europe - including their agricultural and other "sensitive" products. In this context the Assembly welcomes proposals aimed at establishing a European multilateral trading framework respectful of the principles of the future World Trade Organisation;

7.3. to improve substantially the co-ordination of their conceptual and material assistance to the countries of central and eastern Europe. In this context, the Assembly fully supports the efforts of the ECE for a better co-ordination of foreign assistance among donors, taking into account the needs of the transition economies and their capacity to absorb assistance, and recommends that the ECE be given the role of mapping current assistance efforts so as to make them more transparent;

7.4. to support financially the ECE Trust Fund for Assistance to Countries in Transition (TFACT), thereby permitting a continuation and, where necessary, an expansion of the programme of workshops, seminars and other activities on the problems of transition carried out under the auspices of the ECE;

7.5. to co-operate extensively with respective ECE bodies and participate fully in the elaboration of measures and techniques aimed at facilitating international trade.

8. The Assembly recalls its Resolution 1036 (1994) on the progress of economic reform in central and eastern Europe, and reiterates the need for all the European countries to be in a position to engage in closer co-operation in the economic and social fields, and proposes that the Council of Europe and the ECE take new initiatives toward this end, notably through joint projects.