Recommendation 1367 (1998)[1]

Reform of the United Nations

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly welcomes and supports the on-going reform of the United Nations which is preparing the organisation to face new challenges at the turn of the millennium.

2. The Assembly supports the package of structural reforms presented by the Secretary General in July 1997, and the subsequent related resolutions of the General Assembly. It considers that these measures, which are largely already being implemented, constitute a solid basis for an improved management structure and a more effective use of available resources.

3. The precarious financial situation of the United Nations, resulting from the non-payment of dues by a number of its member states, represents a direct and imminent threat to the proper functioning of the organisation.

4. The Assembly considers that the reform of the United Nations will not be complete without a reform of the Security Council, including the right to veto, which should make this body more transparent, democratic and representative of United Nations membership.

5. The Assembly considers that the United Nations should reflect the executive and the legislature as two components of the state. Consequently, the Assembly calls for a greater involvement of representatives of parliaments in the work of the United Nations, in order to make it more democratic, legitimate and effective. The Assembly welcomes the signing of an agreement between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which represents parliaments at the global level, as a first step towards associating parliaments with the work of the United Nations.

6. With the same purpose, the Assembly pledges its support for the initiative recently adopted by the IPU to call a conference of speakers and presidents of all parliaments of the world to take place in the year 2000 in New York, where a summit of heads of state and government and a forum of non-governmental representatives of similar scope are already foreseen. Such a conference would allow parliamentary leaders to debate the future of the United Nations and would show that, in a democratic perspective, parliaments should be recognised and identified as the most genuine political representation of our societies and therefore as an essential part of each state which cannot be excluded when it comes to policy making and decision taking at the United Nations.

7. New challenges facing the United Nations also require new instruments. The Assembly notes with satisfaction that talks on the establishment of an international criminal court are nearing a conclusion. The future court should be fully independent within its mandate and should have at its disposal sufficient funds to carry out its tasks. The Assembly considers the establishment of such a court as an urgent further step towards the world-wide rule of law, as already requested in its Recommendation 1189 (1992) on the establishment of an international court of justice to judge war crimes.

8. The Assembly believes that the reform of the United Nations is an opportunity to review and strengthen co-operation with the Council of Europe. This is particularly important in the light of the growing United Nations involvement in peacekeeping, humanitarian and other missions in a number of Council of Europe member states and states which have requested such membership.

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1. Assembly debate on 22 April 1998 (12th Sitting) (see Doc. 8052, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mrs Severinsen). Text adopted by the Assembly on 22 April 1998 (12th Sitting).

9. The Assembly again regrets that the observer status, granted to the Council of Europe by the United Nations General Assembly on 17 October 1989, is still not being used on a regular basis.

10. The Assembly welcomes the high-level tripartite meetings, between the Council of Europe, the UN and the OSCE, which have been held regularly since 1993, and the target-oriented meetings, focusing on a specific issue or region. It recalls its position that the Assembly should be represented at these meetings.

11. The Assembly resolves to step up its efforts to establish closer contacts with the United Nations – through regular contacts between its committees and relevant United Nations bodies and specialised agencies.

12. The Assembly recalls that the Council of Europe has a unique mechanism for establishing political and legal standards and has developed a monitoring system which also contributes to conflict prevention. The United Nations should benefit from this experience.

13. The Assembly considers that the Council of Europe's unique experience in the promotion of democratic security – based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law – qualifies it to be regarded as a regional organisation for conflict prevention within the meaning of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. Consequently, the Council of Europe should be associated with all forms of co-operation between the United Nations and regional organisations.

14. The Assembly calls on the governments of Council of Europe member and Observer states to:

14.1. continue to provide support for the reforms undertaken by the Secretary General of the United Nations;

14.2. pay their dues, regularly and unconditionally, and where appropriate, their arrears, in order to ensure the proper functioning of the organisation;

14.3. ensure that budgetary cuts proposed by the Secretary General will not affect the organisation's operational capabilities and that savings will be channelled into economic and social programmes for the developing world;

14.4. continue their talks on the reform of the Security Council with a view to making it more transparent and representative of United Nations membership. A direct link between the payment of dues and the right to participate in the decision-making process, which already exists in the General Assembly, should also be applied to the Security Council;

14.5. introduce a parliamentary dimension to the work of the United Nations through:

a. greater involvement of representatives of parliaments in the work of their national delegations in the General Assembly;

b. the participation of interparliamentary institutions or assemblies, both at a global and regional level, in the work of international conferences organised by the United Nations;

c. meetings of parliamentarians from United Nations member states, to be organised in co-operation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and regional parliamentary bodies, at regular intervals at a United Nations location;

d. joint activities involving representatives of governments and parliaments;

e. increased participation of global and regional interparliamentary institutions or assemblies in the activities of the United Nations in the field of democracy and governance, where these institutions or assemblies have a specific competence.

15. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

15.1. recognise that the Council of Europe is a regional organisation within the meaning of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, on the basis of its contribution to democratic security in Europe, and the observer status it enjoys in the United Nations General Assembly;

15.2. examine practical possibilities for the Council of Europe, including the Parliamentary Assembly, to be effectively present at the United Nations General Assembly's sessions in New York;

15.3. discuss, as part of its political dialogue, items which will be dealt with by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and are of direct concern to the Council of Europe, with a view to presenting a common Council of Europe position in New York;

15.4. agree that such a common position be presented by the delegation, or representative, of the state holding the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers;

15.5. give their full support to the setting up of an international criminal court along the lines of Recommendation 1189 (1992) of the Assembly and of Resolution B4-0297/98 of the European Parliament;

15.6. develop further dialogue with the United Nations, including with its Secretary General, with a view to achieving maximum synergy in the action of the two institutions in the Council of Europe area;

15.7. invite the Parliamentary Assembly to be represented at all high-level tripartite meetings with the United Nations and the OSCE.