Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1476 (2000)[1]

The United Nations at the turn of the new century

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly recalls its Recommendations 1367 (1998) on reform of the United Nations and 1411 (1999) on relations with the United Nations aiming at promoting the United Nations reform process and stepping up co-operation between this organisation.

2. It regrets that the reform of the Security Council has so far failed. It fears that the United Nations will not be able to enjoy the legitimacy it merits without adapting the Security Council to today's world and challenges, including economic, social and environmental dimensions of security, and without making the Security Council more effective and transparent.

3. It fully supports the efforts made by all states within the framework of the United Nations, including during the Millennium Assembly, to adapt the Security Council to new world realities and challenges, to upgrade its functioning capacity and to further strengthen the central role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security as well as in establishing the rule of law in the world of the twenty-first century based on the strict and unconditional implementation by states of the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

4. It encourages further improvement in the relationship with civil society as well as in making the United Nations a more modern and flexible organisation through structural reform.

5. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the role of the United Nations in the world security system needs to be more clearly defined. Since the Assembly's last recommendation events in Kosovo, East Timor and Africa have prompted a debate of world-wide importance on the role of the Organisation and, especially, on the right of a regional organisation to take military action in the absence of a mandate of the United Nations Security Council.

6. The Assembly fully supports the Secretary General of the United Nations in his efforts to reconsider how the organisation should respond to crises and which means should be employed in cases of massive and systematic violations of human rights with grave humanitarian consequences. The Assembly understands the difficult balance between legal, political and moral factors and the collision between national sovereignty and the rights of individuals. Humanitarian intervention should be based on the legitimate and universal principles set out by the United Nations.

7. The Assembly also gives its full backing to the initiatives taken by the Secretary General of the United Nations to enhance the organisation's capacity for preventive diplomacy. It strongly encourages the United Nations to develop a strategy of conflict prevention.

8. The Council of Europe can substantially contribute to the prevention of conflicts. Its legal framework for protection of human rights and its mechanism for monitoring the obligations and commitments stemming from membership of the Organisation, as well as its activities in the field of building democratic security, confidence-building measures, child protection, social cohesion, protection of national minorities and the fight against racism, demonstrate its expertise in the field.

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1. Assembly debate on 27 September 2000 (28th Sitting) (see Doc. 8822, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mrs Severinsen). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 September 2000 (28thSitting).

9. The decision of the Committee of Ministers, to seek the inclusion on the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations of an item on co-operation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, is very welcome. Such debate could allow the two organisations to step up co-operation while making better use of available resources and avoiding duplication.

10. Reiterating its Recommendation 1367 (1998), the Assembly considers it important that the Council of Europe participate fully in the work of the United Nations not only as an observer, but as a regional organisation as defined in Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

11. The Assembly regrets that the United Nations' normal functioning has been hampered by the lack of financial resources. It finds it unacceptable that certain Council of Europe member states have failed to respect their financial obligations to the United Nations.

12. The Assembly welcomes the Declaration of the Conference of Presiding Officers of Parliament, which was organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in co-operation with the United Nations on 30 August and 1 September 2000 in New York.

13. The Assembly encourages the United Nations to start developing, in close co-operation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a parliamentary dimension of the organisation with competencies similar to that of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Such a body could contribute to finding new solutions where government policies have reached a deadlock.

14. The Assembly calls on the parliaments of Council of Europe member states to debate annually the activities of the United Nations with a view to producing policy guidelines for their governments based on reports of parliamentarians participating in their national delegations to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

15. The Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to call on the governments of the Council of Europe member and observer states to:

15.1. reaffirm their commitment to the United Nations as the source of legitimacy of international military interventions and peace-keeping operations;

15.2. ensure that the United Nations is given the necessary resources to carry out its mandate;

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

15.4. support the proposals of the Secretary General of the United Nations for renewing the role of the organisation as contained in his Millennium report, and in particular in:

a. supporting reform of the United Nations Security Council in order to make it more effective in cases of conflicts and more representative of the organisation's membership;

b. moving from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention with a view to elaborating a real strategy of conflict prevention;

c. strengthening the United Nations' capacity to conduct peace operations in order to forge lasting peace and avoid the return of violence;

d. ensuring that budgetary cuts will not affect the organisation's capabilities, in particular with respect to peace-keeping operations, and that savings will be channelled into economic and social programmes for the developing world.

15.5. start developing a parliamentary dimension in the work of the United Nations, by:

a. including representatives of parliaments in their national delegations to the General Assembly;

b. informing their national parliaments of the activities of the United Nations through annual debates;

c. organising, in co-operation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, meetings between parliamentarians;

15.6. ratify as soon as possible the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and act according to Assembly Recommendation 1408 (1999);

15.7. actively contribute to the follow-up of the Millennium events.

16. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers introduce a procedure of identifying, on a regular basis, questions of common interest debated in the United Nations in order to take a stand on them and co-ordinate initiatives taken by Council of Europe member states.