



Resolution 1289 (2002)¹

Parliamentary scrutiny of international institutions

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The emergence of issues of continental or global dimensions is increasingly challenging the effectiveness and remit of national policies, and more than ever requires greater international scrutiny and co-operation.
2. In response to this need, the international community has established a great many global or regional international institutions. Over recent years, their role in the system of governance and their influence over national policies have been constantly expanding.
3. Decisions taken in these institutions increasingly influence the lives of millions of citizens. Yet the latter are often poorly informed about the activities of international institutions and are rarely enabled to exercise influence on decisions affecting them. The imbalance between the increasing power of international institutions and the absence of democratic scrutiny of their activities constitutes a major challenge for democracy.
4. The insufficient transparency of their decision-making tools and the absence of machinery to monitor international institutions prompt the general public to reject them or even, in the case of certain minority groups, to react violently against them. Civil society's need to express itself on major current issues that international institutions are supposed to resolve finds expression in alternative fora. The potential for protest can also be exploited by extremist political movements.
5. It is accordingly necessary to make good the democratic deficit at present suffered by international institutions, which seriously hampers their efficiency, and to make them more accountable to society. The decision-making process needs to be made more transparent, and the public, through its democratically elected representatives, needs to be able to take part in it effectively.
6. The Parliamentary Assembly believes that parliamentarians, in both their national parliaments and international parliamentary assemblies, must play a leading part in this field.
7. It considers that parliamentary scrutiny of the work of international institutions must begin at national level. Consequently, it calls upon the national parliaments of Council of Europe member states to exercise their powers to the full in this sphere, and in particular:

to hold regular debates on the activities of international institutions based on reports submitted by the government;

to make use for this purpose of budgetary procedures and other means at their disposal;

to propose to the governments that they include parliamentarians in national delegations participating in meetings of international institutions.

1. Assembly debate on 25 June 2002 (19th Sitting) (see [Doc. 9484](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Toshev; and [Doc. 9485](#), opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mrs Zapfl-Helbling). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 June 2002 (19th Sitting).



8. The Assembly reaffirms its support for a parliamentary dimension of the United Nations, and believes that greater parliamentary involvement in the work of this worldwide international organisation would help enhance its authority and efficiency. It welcomes the fact that several national delegations to the United Nations General Assembly now include national parliamentarians and calls upon the governments of member states of the Council of Europe:

to make this practice more general by reserving seats for parliamentarians of both ruling and opposition parties in the delegations to the UN General Assembly;

to apply this practice to other conferences and meetings organised in the framework of the United Nations and its specialist agencies.

9. The Assembly stresses the importance of the debates it organises on the work of several international institutions, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), etc. For international financial bodies, transparency and accountability are necessary requirements if they are to command public support. It believes in this context that the proposal made by the Inter-Parliamentary Union to establish a parliamentary assembly of the WTO deserves careful consideration. Similarly, while underlining the already existing role of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council Europe in the accountability of OECD and EBRD, it believes that parliamentary accountability of the IMF, the World Bank and other global organisations deserve equally careful consideration.

10. Regarding the European Union, the Assembly considers that a role for national parliaments should be introduced to bring the European Union closer to the people. This could be done by introducing an inter-parliamentary chamber in the European Parliament as a body of representatives of national parliaments which would form, in due course, a second chamber.

11. This inter-parliamentary chamber could have responsibility for scrutinising policies that continue to be intergovernmental and areas in which competence is complementary or shared, such as foreign affairs and matters concerning the entire continent.