Resolution 661 (1977)[1]

European Space Agency

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Thanking the Council of the European Space Agency (ESA) for the transmission, in accordance with Resolution No. 10 of the Ministerial Space Conference of Plenipotentiaries of 30 May 1975, of the Agency's annual report for 1976, thereby, as stated in Recommendation 251 (1960), ensuring "the parliamentary influence of this Assembly" ;

2. Welcoming the progress made in 1976, which was the first full year of activity of the Agency and a year of consolidation, during which no launchings were made while preparations were being made for the five scheduled for 1977 ;

3. Noting with satisfaction the holding of the first ESA Council at ministerial level of 14 and 15 February 1977, where decisions of principle were taken in favour of an overall communications satellite programme consisting of four elements, namely the Marots maritime communications satellite, a European regional communications satellite system, a heavy satellite of some 900 kg devoted to direct television broadcasts, and an advanced research and development programme ;

4. Appreciating the progress made in the development phase of the Ariane launcher ;

5. Noting with satisfaction that the construction of Spacelab is making satisfactory progress, and that its finance has been assured both until completion of construction and for the first flight in 1980 as well as for its experiments ;

6. Noting with satisfaction that, of a total of 79 scientific and technological experiments to be carried out in Spacelab I, as many as 62 will be European, of which 37 are in the field of material science ;

7. Believing that Spacelab will probably play an equally important role in future communication, television, navigation and meteorological programmes ;

8. Welcoming the fruitful working relations between the Agency and the Council of Europe, including the existence of common projects in the field of geodynamics, remote sensing and life science research ;

9. Recalling the fruitful co-operation established in space research both between certain European countries and the USSR and between the United States and the USSR, symbolised by the rendez-vous in space in 1975 ;

10. Noting that, in addition to its ten original signatories (Belgium, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom), Ireland has also signed the ESA Convention, hopes that further Western European states will become members of or associated with ESA ;

11. Determined to take steps in national parliaments to accelerate the ratification procedures of the ESA Convention ;

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1. Assembly debate on 6 October 1977 (9th Sitting) (see Doc. 4017Doc. 4017, report of the Committee on Science and Technology). Text adopted by the Assembly on 6 October 1977 (9th Sitting).

12. Welcoming the decisions of the Ministerial Council on the role of Europe in the field of remote sensing from satellites, and the setting up of the Earthnet programme aiming at monitoring on a world-wide co-operative basis earth resources and environment from space ;

13. Recalling its opinion that the development and management of European operational systems is of paramount importance for Europe's future role in space, welcomes the view of the Ministerial Council that operational activities will enable the Agency to exploit its capabilities and capital investments to the full for the benefit of European users of space applications ;

14. Noting that the Ministerial Council stipulated that the Agency should limit its operational activities to the launching, placing in orbit and orbital control of satellites and space transport systems, welcomes the power entrusted to the Agency executive to recommend to member states measures for the harmonisation of the policies of user administrations and entities with the Agency's policy ;

15. Recalling that past European space failures stemmed from the unco-ordinated activities of separate space organisations ;

16. Recalling its view that any durable European space project depends in no little measure on finding external markets for Europe's space products, welcomes the ministerial resolution affirming its will to establish Europe in the space applications market ;

17. Noting that one substantial limitation has been put on the competency of the Agency to the effect that it will not itself enter into contracts for the development or provision of space systems for external markets, except in the case of launch services, expresses its satisfaction with the authority invested in the Agency executive to set up and maintain contacts with the potential users of space systems in non-member states and in international organisations, with a view to making the Agency's scientific and technological management capabilities better known ;

18. Recalling that the difficulties of the European Communities JET project were due in particular to the unanimity rule,

19. Invites the Council of the European Space Agency :

to use the unanimity rule with moderation, in order that it does not serve as a frequent brake on the Agency's internal and external activities ;

to launch a dynamic marketing policy ;

to let the Agency's executive exercise its powers in such a way as to enable the Agency to play the required coordinating role in relation to existing and potential users, as well as to assure a co-ordinated European space policy in regard to Unesco, UN, Intelsat, the World Meteorological Organisation and the International Telecommunications Union ;

to favour a close co-ordination between the European Space Agency and the Communities for the elaboration of a general European scientific and technological policy, in which the space programmes could play an important role ;

to transform in due course the Earthnet programme into a mandatory one whereby all member states participate according to their GNP ;

to integrate fully the know-how and experience of member states in the space field, and in particular telecommunications, into the Agency programmes ;

to take a final decision in favour of starting the production of the Ariane launcher before the end of 1977 ;

to explore, while respecting the major options taken at European level, the lines of mutually advantageous cooperation with the USSR and with other countries possessing space research potential, in accordance with the mutual commitments undertaken at the time of the signature of the Act of Helsinki.