



Recommendation 1886 (2009)¹

The future of the Council of Europe in the light of its 60 years of experience

Parliamentary Assembly

1. At this point, when the Council of Europe is commemorating its 60th anniversary, we are celebrating the undeniable achievements the Organisation has made during its six decades of activities and the role that it has played in the democratic transformation of the continent of Europe. At the same time, this occasion provides us with an opportunity to reflect on and analyse, in a frank and objective way, the position of the Council of Europe in the European institutional system, its strengths and its potential, not forgetting its flaws, weaknesses and limitations. This is essential if we wish to adapt the Council of Europe to new challenges so that it remains a key institution in the process of building a united Europe based on the principles and values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and continues to guarantee the effective promotion and protection of these principles and values.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers, the two statutory organs having general responsibility for the Council of Europe, have a duty to undertake this reflection together. In this context, the Assembly refers to [Resolution 1689 \(2009\)](#) on the future of the Council of Europe in the light of its sixty years of experience, and invites the Committee of Ministers to take due account of the ideas, concerns and proposals contained in that text.

3. The Assembly is convinced that the effectiveness of the Council of Europe and its position in the European institutional architecture primarily depend on its member states' degree of commitment to the Organisation. It believes that it is essential to ensure that this commitment leaves no room for doubt and is confirmed by tangible acts. To this end, it urges the Committee of Ministers to:

3.1. strengthen the political scope of the Committee of Ministers' ministerial sessions, so that each session becomes a major political event at which substantive political decisions are taken;

3.2. study the advisability of holding, at regular intervals, Council of Europe summits, to decide on the strategic direction to be taken, with due consideration being given to the momentum they give to the Organisation's activities;

3.3. promote more actively the legal instruments drawn up at the Council of Europe and encourage the signature and ratification of these instruments by member states;

3.4. avoid any possibility of new dividing lines emerging within the Council of Europe itself on account of the fact that some of its member states may belong to other organisations, and in particular to seek to reduce the influence of the European Union and its presidency on decision making within the Committee of Ministers;

3.5. review the Council of Europe's budgetary strategy in order to provide it with the resources it needs to carry out its tasks;

3.6. give greater significance to the Council of Europe's conferences of specialised ministers and their links with, and impact on, the Organisation's day-to-day activities, and in particular to consider the possibility for the specialised ministries to contribute to the financing of certain Council of Europe

1. *Assembly debate* on 1 October 2009 (34th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12017](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Mignon). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 1 October 2009 (34th Sitting).



activities within their areas of responsibility in exchange for delegating some of the Committee of Ministers' powers to a given conference, notably with regard to the choice of priorities for the Council of Europe's intergovernmental activities, as proposed in Committee of Ministers Resolution (89) 40 on the future role of the Council of Europe in European construction.

4. The Assembly considers that greater prominence should be given to the various activities of the Council of Europe in the field of democracy. It recommends that the Committee of Ministers study with it the setting up – on the basis of the different mechanisms and structures existing in this field such as the annual Forum for the Future of Democracy, the Assembly's biennial debates on the state of democracy in Europe, the Venice Commission, the Summer University for Democracy and the Schools of Political Studies network – of a "Davos of democracy", a real laboratory for ideas, thoughts and expertise which could become a high-profile model of excellence and an international reference in the field of democracy.

5. The Assembly is convinced that the Council of Europe cannot function properly unless there is genuine, substantive and ongoing dialogue between its two statutory organs. The channels of dialogue and consultation between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers must be revitalised. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the positive spirit prevailing in the recent informal meetings between its Presidential Committee and the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers. It urges the Committee of Ministers to:

5.1. review its working methods regarding the preparation of replies to Assembly recommendations to ensure that these replies are drafted more speedily (in principle, within six months) and with greater attention being paid to substance;

5.2. pay more attention to promoting the implementation of positions contained in its recommendations;

5.3. provide for a reasonable timeframe (in principle, not less than three months) for the statutory consultation of the Assembly on draft conventions, and to keep the Assembly regularly informed of the follow-up given to the draft amendments contained in its statutory opinions;

5.4. study, together with the Assembly, the ways and means of making the Joint Committee a genuine forum for substantive dialogue and effective consultation between the two organs, for example by convening it only when necessary and at the level of political decision makers;

5.5. study, together with the Assembly, how to give a higher profile and greater political substance to the traditional exchanges of views between the Assembly's Standing Committee and the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers;

5.6. step up dialogue with the Assembly in all the ways that have proved effective, such as the contacts between the President of the Assembly and the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, the informal meetings between the Presidential Committee of the Assembly and the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers, the working contacts between the Assembly committees and the Committee of Ministers' rapporteur groups;

5.7. consider establishing mechanisms for co-operation between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers and, if appropriate, other Council of Europe bodies, to ensure a co-ordinated response in the field of crisis prevention and conflict resolution;

5.8. consider setting up an appropriate framework for exchanges of views between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers regarding the Council of Europe's priorities for the coming year and the results obtained the previous year.

6. The Assembly considers, therefore, that the Council of Europe's internal functioning, particularly as regards relations between its statutory organs, should be brought more fully into line with the democratic principles and values it defends. It reiterates its proposals set out in [Recommendation 1763 \(2006\)](#) on the institutional balance at the Council of Europe, and urges the Committee of Ministers to:

6.1. pursue dialogue with the Assembly on the institutional aspects of the functioning of the Organisation;

6.2. reflect in greater depth on substantive follow-up to all the proposals contained in [Recommendation 1763 \(2006\)](#).