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The Assembly of WEU and the parliamentary dimension
of security policies

REPORT

submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations
by Mr Woltjer, Chairman and Rapporteur

ASSEMBLY OF WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION
43, avenue du Président-Wilson, 75775 Paris Cedex 16
Tel 01 53.67 22.00 – Fax 01.53.67 22.01
E-mail aueo-aweu@calvanet.calvacom.fr
Internet: [http //www.wcu int/assembly/welcome.html](http://www.wcu.int/assembly/welcome.html)

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*submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations²
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¹ Adopted unanimously by the Committee.

² *Members of the Committee:* Mr Woltjer (Chairman); Lord Russell-Johnston, Mr Eversdijk (Vice-Chairmen); MM Aleffi, Amoruso, de Assis, Mrs Beer, MM Debarge, Erler, Evin, Ghesquière, Mrs Guirado (Alternate: *Arnau Navarro*) Mr Henry, Ms Jones, Mrs Katseli, MM *Kollwelter*, Legendre, Lummer, Micheloyiannis, Mignon, Niza, Onaindia, Mrs Pulgar, Mr Rodeghiero, Ms Smith, Mrs *Squarcialupi*, Mr Taylor (Alternate: *Vis*), Mrs Terborg.

Associate members: Mr *Akçali*, Mrs *Kaland*, Mr *Kulahli*.

N.B. *The names of those taking part in the vote are printed in italics.*

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*Draft Resolution**on the Assembly of WEU and the parliamentary dimension of security policies*

The Assembly,

- (i) Stressing the importance of national parliaments being more closely involved in the framing of security policies in Europe;
- (ii) Noting nonetheless the failure of attempts to coordinate action by the national parliaments of the member states of WEU and the European Union within the Conference of European Affairs Committees (CEAC),
- (iii) Stressing the need to develop contacts and improve the exchange of information between the foreign affairs and defence committees of the national parliaments of member states of WEU and of the European Union and also with the European Parliament,
- (iv) Taking note of the increasing role European interparliamentary assemblies are playing in the search for solutions to the security problems that exist in Europe and above all in central, eastern and south-eastern Europe,
- (v) Stressing the need to develop the parliamentary dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue,
- (vi) Considering that economic and social development, respect for human rights and the rights of national minorities, and environmental issues must be taken into account in the framing of security policies in Europe;
- (vii) Stressing the need for the WEU, Council of Europe, OSCE and North Atlantic Assemblies and the European Parliament all to consider what needs to be done to produce a blueprint for coordinating their activities for the purpose of devising a security system for Europe,
- (viii) Recognising the positive effect of subregional interparliamentary assemblies for political and economic stabilisation and for security in the regions of the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and in central and south-eastern Europe,
- (ix) Following with interest the development of cooperation among these institutions, which was launched in October 1997 at the Monaco Conference on "Subregional economic cooperation processes – a contribution to the new European architecture",

INVITES THE PARLIAMENTS OF THE MEMBER, ASSOCIATE MEMBER, OBSERVER
AND ASSOCIATE PARTNER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1. To encourage their foreign affairs and defence committees to intensify their dialogue and working relations with one another;
2. To consider the expediency of creating a body, similar to CEAC, for contacts between their foreign affairs and defence committees;
3. To promote, in accordance with the procedure used in each parliament, the coordination of the activities of the delegations to the Assembly of WEU, the Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Assembly of the OSCE and the North Atlantic Assembly,
4. To stimulate national parliamentary debate and interparliamentary debate on the objectives, priorities and resources of a security system for Europe and on the role of national parliaments in the European security architecture.

Draft Order

on the Assembly of WEU and the parliamentary dimension of security policies

The Assembly,

- (i) Noting that the work done by interparliamentary assemblies makes a useful contribution to the emergence and crafting of a European parliamentary approach to security,
- (ii) Stressing the political importance of the participation of parliamentarians from the United States and Canada in the activities of some of those institutions;
- (iii) Expressing the wish that the process of enlargement of the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance should not create any new dividing lines between the countries of Europe;
- (iv) Calling upon the interparliamentary assemblies whose members are representatives of the parliaments of all the European states, the United States and Canada to take appropriate action to ensure that this does not happen,
- (v) Stressing the need for national parliaments and their specialised committees to be closely involved in the activities of those institutions;
- (vi) Considering that it would be desirable to envisage the coordination, on a case-by-case basis, of initiatives taken by interparliamentary assemblies in the area of crisis prevention in order to address crisis situations or seek solutions to the problems existing in certain countries and regions of Europe,
- (vii) Expressing the wish to see working relations with the European Parliament develop on a basis of reciprocity.

INSTRUCTS ITS PRESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE

- 1 To express an opinion on the expediency of proposing an interparliamentary plan of action for the Assembly of WEU, the Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Assembly of the OSCE and the North Atlantic Assembly, which might include :
 - (a) holding an informal annual meeting of the presidencies of these assemblies;
 - (b) establishing regular contacts and making arrangements for the exchange of information between their working committees;
 - (c) coordinating their activities in the area of crisis prevention and seeking a common position on a crisis situation in Europe or elsewhere in the world that might affect European interests,
 - (d) setting up a computer network for the exchange of data among the four assemblies, making use of the possibilities offered by the Internet,
2. To assess the state of relations with the European Parliament and set objectives and priorities for cooperation between the EP and the Assembly of WEU,
- 3 To assess the state of relations with the United States Congress and the Canadian Parliament and study the possibilities for developing contacts with them

Explanatory Memorandum

(submitted by Mr Woltjer, Chairman and Rapporteur)

I. Introduction

1. In the wider debate on what has come to be known as the European security architecture, the involvement of national parliaments and the various European and transatlantic assemblies continues to be an unusually modest one. One reason for this is that security and, by extension, defence issues, are essentially marked by national considerations, notwithstanding the degree of convergence of opinions on certain aspects of the subject, such as the central role of the Atlantic Alliance or the importance of the OSCE in European security.

2. Within a state, responsibility for setting a course for security and defence matters lies with the executive, with parliamentary control being exercised most often when national budgets are being considered, when treaties or other international agreements are to be ratified, when debates are held on government policy in general or during the time set aside for questions to ministers. Assemblies, through their specialised committees, regularly discuss these problems and put proposals to governments, but in the majority of WEU member states decision-making powers are the sole prerogative of the executive.

3. Interparliamentary assemblies, made up of national delegations, offer a suitable framework in which to develop a European approach to matters that fall within their remit, which include, at least for some, the question of European security. Nevertheless, in practice national considerations remain to the fore and parliamentary representatives tend to put forward the ideas that hold sway in the policies and leanings exhibited by the states from which they themselves originate. This is not an obstacle to the formation of a European parliamentary opinion, of necessity a medium or longer-term phenomenon, due in particular to the changing composition of delegations in the wake of elections. As in intergovernmental institutions, this leads initially to the search for a wider consensus based on convergence of national perceptions.

4. In parallel, the issue of European security has widened to encompass parameters other than

the traditional ones governing the military balance of power. The economy, the environment and human migration are also important factors to be taken into consideration in a context of growing interdependence between European states and, at a lower level, between certain of their regional components. These myriad factors have generated a number of different approaches at interparliamentary level. These are at times complementary and have as their common aim to help strengthen European security, essentially through cooperation in those areas for which each institution has responsibility.

5. Nevertheless, it seems desirable that the procedures and machinery for cooperation between the various institutions involved be improved in order to avoid dissipation of effort. An essential factor for the success of this approach is for national parliaments to be actively involved in the work of interparliamentary organisations, above and beyond the mere presence of their national delegations. Effective participation by national and interparliamentary assemblies in the debate on European security can only be achieved by qualitatively strengthening cooperation between them so as to foster the emergence of a European approach within national parliaments while at the same time providing an outlet for the legitimate expression of national viewpoints within interparliamentary organisations.

II. Parliaments and the framing of security policies

6. European security is a concept which is not merely the sum of national perceptions of security, although it contains elements stemming from each of the European states. Similarly, national security policies encompass factors which are beyond the control of individual governments. They must be seen against a backdrop of increasing Europeanisation of individual perceptions, as a result of mutual commitments existing not only in the field of security but also, for example, in the economic sector. Increasing political coordination, the pooling of resources and the adoption of common standards all contribute significantly to accentuate this trend.

7 National parliaments and interparliamentary assemblies have an important role to play with regard to these developments. Indeed, they must check that the decisions taken in this field are compatible with the elementary rules governing democratic political systems, particularly in terms of the balance of power within them. In exercising parliamentary control they ensure that the policies adopted are in keeping with the interests of each state and contribute to enhancing all facets of European security, of which defence is an integral part.

1. National assemblies

8 In parliamentary democracies, governments are answerable to parliaments. However, the institutional rules and customs that apply in most WEU states limit the scope of parliamentary control, particularly when it comes to foreign and security policy issues, which one has to admit represent but a small number of the questions that are debated within national parliaments. At the same time, the growing technical complexity of certain issues with both domestic and foreign security implications, such as the use of global communication technologies like the Internet, limits the scope for parliamentary action vis-à-vis the bureaucracies and specialist circles dealing with these issues.

9 When it comes to security, in the wider sense, national parliaments must also take account of external factors which are beyond their control, such as the policies of other states or international organisations having security implications. This globalisation factor has direct consequences for national policies, especially within the framework of multilateral agreements or in the application of decisions taken in international organisations. While this does not obstruct the exercise of parliamentary control, it can – in certain cases – restrict the scope of national parliaments and their ability to influence foreign and defence policies.

10 This is already apparent in multilateral economic negotiations, such as those conducted by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) or, for instance, concerning the introduction of the euro. The transfers of sovereignty to the European Union defined or envisaged in the Treaties of Maastricht (1991) and Amsterdam (1997) have at times given rise to reservations on the part of

the parliaments of the states concerned but calling the treaties into question is no longer an option. Constitutional rules and the balance of power between the executive and the legislature are such as to give governments the wherewithal to circumvent parliamentary reservations by holding a referendum or by dissolving parliament. The fact that a party in government is the reflection of a parliamentary majority makes compromise easier and makes it difficult to contest an international commitment.

11 The intergovernmental nature of European cooperation, whether political (the European Union) or in the area of defence (NATO and WEU), is not conducive to national parliamentary control. Once an agreement has been concluded or a treaty signed, parliament is either informed or, where appropriate, asked to approve or authorise ratification. However, the ratification procedures applicable in most states do not allow for any revision of a text or for it to be accompanied by reservations. This being so, there is a straight choice between adoption of the law ratifying an instrument or its rejection, with the attendant risk of provoking a major political crisis. In the special case where a treaty may include provisions that infringe a country's constitution, it is the latter or the constitutional laws that must be amended before the treaty can be ratified. Some technical procedures can be used to circumvent parliamentary debate on ratification. Under the "voorhang" procedure in the Netherlands (valid for 13 days) and the "Ponsonby" rule in the United Kingdom (valid for 21 days), ratification can be held up for a certain period after which the treaty is considered as having been ratified by virtue of implied consent.

12 Notwithstanding political and constitutional constraints, parliaments still have a wide range of possibilities for influencing government decisions. The most important of these is the vote on a state's budget, which enables parliamentarians to familiarise themselves with and discuss the options proposed by the Executive in the field, for example, of foreign and defence policy. Plenary sessions, general or circumscribed political debate and oral or written questions all give parliaments the opportunity to obtain information and control government action in respect of national and international commitments.

13 The sensitive nature of certain decisions that have to be taken on security policy is an additional obstacle to public debate, including parliamentary debate. Having recourse to specialised committees in national parliaments, subject to certain conditions of confidentiality, is the solution adopted in the great majority of parliaments though it does limit the scope of parliamentary control by barring a section of members or senators, depending on the country, from the discussions. Such committees play an essential part in parliamentary control and enable their members to analyse in detail any questions submitted to them, in particular by organising hearings of the relevant political or military authorities as well as of experts, civil servants, or representatives from the various sectors falling within an individual committee's remit. Foreign affairs, defence and, where these exist, European affairs committees are *par excellence* the bodies concerned with security issues. Indeed their internal and external activities, such as the organisation of public symposia in conjunction with other competent institutions, highlight the active contribution they make to shaping security policy.

14. In some countries it is customary for these committees to play an active role in the decision-taking process. The Danish Parliament is often referred to as a case in point because under the Constitution, the Government must consult the Foreign Affairs Committee at the time of preparing its policy and before taking any major foreign policy decision. In Finland, Parliament has the right to receive, at its request or at the Executive's initiative, a report on Finnish foreign policy issues. In Norway, a special committee, consisting of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Chairman of the Defence Committee and a number of parliamentarians, has the task of studying, with the government, matters concerning foreign policy, trade relations or any questions having security implications, before a final decision is taken.

15. The limited membership and specialised nature of such committees allows parliaments to deal more effectively with security issues and their national and international implications. The relations between these bodies and their counterparts in other assemblies is conducive to dialogue among national parliaments and to the emergence of a European parliamentary perception of se-

curity matters. Nonetheless, direct discussion between national parliaments remains very largely contingent on national policy.

16 Hence, in spite of the cooperation efforts made within fora like the Conference of European Affairs Committees (CEAC) or the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments, they tend to exclude security and defence questions. One reason for this is that such questions are still perceived as being a matter of national sovereignty alone and as such not suited to discussion in a European framework. Thus the debate on European security has gradually been channelled towards interparliamentary institutions which may or may not be specialised and whose powers of control and decision-taking are not comparable to those of national parliaments.

2. European and transatlantic interparliamentary institutions

17 European interparliamentary institutions, the number of which practically doubled during the first few years of the present decade, play an important role in raising parliamentarians' awareness of security questions. The European Parliament occupies a special place by virtue of its status and the scope of its powers. Three institutions are directly concerned with European security: the Assembly of WEU, the North Atlantic Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE.

(i) The Assembly of WEU¹

18 The idea of a European assembly with extensive responsibilities which would not merely be a consultative body was first floated during discussions in 1948 on creating the Council of Europe but was not adopted. The plan for a European Defence Community, which was to be seen in a supranational perspective, also included the creation of a parliamentary assembly with powers to control what the Executive did. After the failure of that project, the idea eventually began to take firmer shape with the creation of the Assembly of WEU, while conforming nevertheless to the intergovernmental nature of political cooperation within that organisation. An interparliamentary assembly endowed with direct responsibility for security and defence was thus created for the first time in the history of western

¹ The Assembly's scope, working methods and activities are described in detail in Chapter III.

Europe by virtue of the Paris Agreements of 23 October 1954, modifying the Brussels Treaty of 17 March 1948. The new institution established under Article IX of the modified Brussels Treaty was given some power of control over the decisions of the WEU Council which is under an obligation to submit to the Assembly "an annual report of its activities and in particular concerning the control of armaments".

19 The fairly vague wording of Article IX of the modified Brussels Treaty², which does not provide any details of the scope of the Assembly's responsibilities, has enabled the Assembly to break out of the traditional mould of a consultative body and, in practice, it has been able to extend its activities to "any matter arising out of the Brussels Treaty and () any matter submitted to the Assembly for an opinion by the Council"³. In its activities the Assembly strives to promote greater awareness among its members of security and defence problems in a European perspective and, in its political dialogue with the Council, pursues the same objective vis-à-vis the governments of the countries present in WEU. The Assembly exercises its authority with a keen concern for maintaining independence in relation both to those governments and other European and transatlantic institutions.

(ii) The North Atlantic Assembly (NAA)

20 The North Atlantic Treaty, signed in Washington on 4 April 1949, does not contain any provision referring to interparliamentary cooperation which, as a result, has developed outside the structures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The idea of creating an interparliamentary assembly surfaced in the early 1950s and on 18 July 1955 the first NATO Conference of Parliamentarians was held in Paris in the presence of 158 members representing 14 states. It put down markers for the future North Atlantic Assembly, as the 1968 annual session of the Conference of Parliamentarians decided it should be known. On 25 March 1968 the then Secre-

tary-General of the Assembly and his NATO counterpart signed an agreement defining the framework and arrangements for working relations between the two bodies. However, the agreement did not establish an institutional link between the NAA and the Atlantic Alliance and, unlike the WEU Council, the North Atlantic Council is under no obligation to reply to recommendations and resolutions adopted by the NAA.

21 Today the NAA has 188 members and as many substitutes from the 16 NATO member countries as well as 74 associate delegates from 16 central and eastern European countries⁴ including the Russian Federation. The Assembly convenes twice a year in member countries. It has five committees: the Political Committee, the Defence and Security Committee, the Economic Committee, the Civilian Affairs Committee and the Scientific and Technical Committee. The committees have subcommittees (8) and working groups (2). Since the early 1990s, the Assembly has been conducting a programme of seminars and training courses for parliamentary officials in central and eastern European countries, known as the Rose-Roth Initiative⁵. The seminars address matters of general interest to the CEECs such as democratic control over armed forces, the relationship between political power and the armed forces, regional security, etc. Part of the funding for these activities comes from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) but this is due to cease at the end of 1998.

22 Since 1994 the NAA has been engaged in dialogue with the parliaments of seven Mediterranean countries⁶ including the Palestinian Council. The European Parliament has the status of parliamentary observer, its representatives attend meetings of the political groups and may speak in discussions in committee and in debates in plenary session. The NAA's budget is drawn

² "The Council of Western European Union shall make an annual report on its activities and in particular concerning the control of armaments to an Assembly composed of representatives of the Brussels Treaty Powers to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe."

³ Article I of the Charter of the Assembly, adopted on 24 October 1955.

⁴ Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Moldova, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Ukraine.

⁵ After two members of the US delegation to the NAA, Charlie Rose (House of Representatives) and William Roth (Senate).

⁶ Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

from contributions from the parliaments or governments of the 16 member countries on the basis of the criteria that apply to NATO's civil budget. NATO pays an annual contribution to the Assembly. The NAA Secretariat is in Brussels.

23 Although it has no institutional links with the Atlantic Alliance, the NAA sees itself in the role of a "consultative interparliamentary organisation for the Alliance"⁷, lending parliamentary support to initiatives and actions decided by the North Atlantic Council. In this sense it is different from the Assembly of WEU which considers that its job is to exercise a right of control, including the right to criticise choices made by the Council. The NAA is also an important forum for the transatlantic parliamentary dialogue that is essential for the future of European security in view of the central role the United States plays in this area by virtue of its membership of NATO. Contacts between European parliamentarians and their North American counterparts have the advantage of allowing the latter to obtain a better idea of European perceptions of security problems and helping to ensure that the definition of a joint approach in this field takes more account of the interests of European states.

(iii) The Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE

24. On 21 November 1990 the Paris Summit of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) concluded with the adoption of the "Charter of Paris for a new Europe" institutionalising the CSCE, a structure for establishing contacts and dialogue that had come into being in 1972 and was intended to promote détente between the Atlantic Alliance and the Warsaw Pact, the two politico-military blocs which were on opposing sides. The Charter of Paris recognised "the important role parliamentarians can play in the CSCE process" and called for "the creation of a CSCE parliamentary assembly, involving members of parliaments from all participating states". The first session of the Assembly of the CSCE was held from 3 to 5 July 1992 in Budapest. On 1 January 1995 the CSCE became the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

⁷ *L'Assemblée de l'Atlantique nord et le nouveau contexte mondial*, French National Assembly, information report No 2465, page 9, 21 December 1995.

25 The Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE consists of 315 members representing the 54 parliaments of the organisation's member states. It convenes once a year early in July when it adopts a declaration and resolutions on matters falling within its scope, notably security issues. The bulk of the Assembly's budget is funded from contributions from the member parliaments. The Secretariat is based in Copenhagen, Denmark.

26. The Assembly has three specialised committees: the General Committee on Political Affairs and Security, the General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment and the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions. Election monitoring and information missions are two of the Assembly's main activities directed primarily at the central and eastern European countries including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). There were also two information missions to Turkey in 1995 and 1997.

27. The OSCE Assembly is now a huge inter-parliamentary forum for parliamentarians from all the European countries, with the exception of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) whose participation in the activities of the CSCE was suspended in 1992 as a result of the outbreak of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United States and Canada, both OSCE members, are also represented in the Assembly. This promotes an extensive transatlantic dialogue in a framework in which, unlike that of the NAA, all delegations have the same status and rights. In its work, the Parliamentary Assembly mirrors the main activities of the OSCE by devoting most of its attention and resources to the Balkan region and the CIS while not taking much interest in the Mediterranean.

28 The scope of the responsibilities of the OSCE and its Assembly, which cover a wide variety of areas such as security, the environment, human rights, economic matters, conflict prevention and humanitarian aid, and the links that have been developed with the United Nations⁸, formally established by the framework

⁸ The OSCE is considered to be a regional organisation within the meaning of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which concerns regional agreements.

agreement⁹ concluded between the two organisations on 26 May 1993, have helped to give the organisation's work a stronger impact. Nevertheless, it has no real means for taking action or exerting pressure to ensure that the commitments justifying its existence are actually translated into practice

29 The organisation has developed a number of branches such as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the office of the High Commissioner for National Minorities, and also has legal instruments such as the Convention on Conciliation and Arbitration¹⁰, which entered into force on 5 December 1994. As regards the politico-military aspects of European security, the OSCE is directly involved in the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE1 and CFE1-A) and the Open Skies Treaty, and also has a Forum for security cooperation, which discusses armaments control and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs)

30 Despite the work that has been done since the 1990 Paris Summit, the OSCE – as the CSCE has become – has not yet succeeded in operating as a proper international security and cooperation organisation. Its membership and responsibilities place it half-way between the Council of Europe and the United Nations. The fact that some of its members are central Asian countries that used to belong to the Soviet Union means that its area of responsibility extends beyond the geographic boundaries of Europe as far as the frontier with the People's Republic of China (via Kazakhstan) or the frontiers with Iran and Afghanistan (via Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). In the absence of its larger member states generating the necessary political will to give the OSCE the means it requires in the field of crisis prevention, it was unable to prevent or contain the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992), or take action to defuse tension and find a solution to the more recent crises that erupted in Albania (1997) and Kosovo (1998)

⁹ This agreement, signed by the OSCE Presidency and the UN Secretariat, mainly concerns coordination and complementarity between the two organisations with regard to preparing and conducting information and peacekeeping missions.

¹⁰ This Convention makes provision for the intervention of a Court on Conciliation and Arbitration or for a conciliation procedure which involves states through the intermediary of the Council of Ministers

31 In the Commonwealth of Independent States, OSCE intervention in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and civil war in Georgia, Tajikistan and Chechnya has so far failed to lead to a lasting and acceptable solution for the parties concerned and the *status quo* remains unstable in those areas. The OSCE also depends to a very large extent on assistance from other international organisations and from its member states in terms of logistics and the material and human resources it needs to carry out its missions. Thus in the course of its work and the preparation of its plenary sessions, the Parliamentary Assembly has requested assistance from the British House of Commons, the Netherlands Parliament, the United States Congress and the NAA¹¹

32 The OSCE's wide-ranging responsibilities also mean that its work increasingly overlaps with the activities of other regional and sub-regional organisations such as the Council of Europe, the European Union, NATO, WEU, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation grouping, the Baltic Council, the Nordic Council and other institutions for political and economic cooperation in Europe

(iv) Regional and subregional interparliamentary assemblies

33 Security is not just about military balance – it also has an important economic and political aspect that takes in a number of other areas such as economic development, the stability of democratic institutions, human rights compliance, respect for the various ethnic groups present in the make-up of certain countries, and environmental issues. These problems, which primarily concern the EU, WEU, NATO and the OSCE, are also discussed more generally by the Council of Europe and, at subregional level, by a complex panoply of organisations, some of which have an interparliamentary component

(a) The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

34 The Hague Congress, also known as the Congress of Europe, was held on 7 May 1948. It was organised by the International Committee for the Coordination of Movements for the Unity (of Europe) and concluded with the adoption of a number of resolutions calling for the creation of

¹¹ OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Warsaw 97, p 16

an economic and political union to ensure security, economic independence and social progress. the convening of a consultative assembly elected by parliaments, the drawing-up of a European charter on human rights and the constitution of a court to apply the organisation's decisions. Thanks to the support of the Brussels Treaty organisation¹², which preceded WEU, these proposals were put into practical effect. Indeed, in the face of mounting cold-war tension, the Brussels Treaty signatory powers were acutely aware that it was urgent to act and make provision for a genuine association among the states of western Europe.

35 Two months after the Congress of Europe, Georges Bidault, the French Foreign Minister, invited the contracting parties to the Brussels Treaty to act on the proposals put forward in The Hague in cooperation with other states wishing to be involved. In the discussions that followed, France proposed creating a European assembly with wide-ranging powers, to be made up of parliamentarians from the various states who would take decisions by a majority vote. On 27 and 28 January 1949, the foreign affairs ministers of the five states of the Western Union agreed to create a Council of Europe consisting of a Committee of Ministers that would meet in private, and a consultative assembly whose debates would be conducted in public. On 5 May 1949, the five signatory governments of the Brussels Treaty and the governments of Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Norway and Sweden signed the Treaty establishing the Statute of the Council of Europe.

36 Today, the Council of Europe has 40 member states. Its Parliamentary Assembly consists of 286 members and an equal number of substitutes, representing each member state and grouped in national delegations. The Assembly has 13 permanent committees as follows:

- Political Affairs Committee;
- Committee on Economic Affairs and Development;
- Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee;

¹² On 17 March 1948 the Treaty of economic, social and cultural collaboration and collective self-defence was signed in Brussels by Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom

- Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights,
- Committee on Culture and Education,
- Committee on Science and Technology,
- Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities,
- Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography,
- Committee on Rules of Procedure,
- Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development,
- Committee on Relations with European Non-Member Countries,
- Committee on Parliamentary and Public Relations,
- Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme.

37 The committees study documents referred to them and monitor action taken on those recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Assembly which fall within their remits. They are also involved in the work of the steering committees, expert committees and working groups that come under the authority of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. On the basis of committee reports, the Assembly adopts recommendations, resolutions, opinions and orders:

- recommendations to the Committee of Ministers propose the inclusion in the intergovernmental work programme of European policies in various fields for which the Council of Europe is responsible,
- resolutions are addressed to governments and call upon national parliaments' support,
- opinions reply to questions put by the Committee of Ministers, for instance on accession requests,
- orders are instructions to subsidiary bodies or the Assembly Secretariat.

38. The work of the Council of Europe and its Assembly to promote social and economic progress – initially in western Europe and, since the end of the cold war, in central, eastern and south-eastern Europe as well – is also an important

factor for security. The focus on human rights issues, the protection of the rights of national minorities and the construction of Europe gives some idea of the contribution the Council of Europe makes. The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), signed in Rome on 4 November 1950¹³, is one of the major achievements of the Council and the Assembly. In 1992, so as to make it more effective given the considerable increase in the number of Council of Europe members, the Assembly proposed a reform of the Convention with a view to creating a single permanent Court. On 11 May 1994, Additional Protocol No. 11 to the ECHR, making provision for that proposal, was opened for signature by the member states. It will enter into force once it has been ratified by all the parties to the Convention.

39 Protection of the rights of national minorities is high on the Assembly's list of priorities. The number of conflicts and crises involving ethnic or religious minorities that are taking place in Europe, especially in the central, eastern and south-eastern (Balkans) regions of the continent are a factor of instability with major implications for European security as a whole. In 1961 the Assembly submitted a proposal, which at the time concerned only very few of its member states, for an additional protocol to the ECHR with a view to guaranteeing national minorities certain rights not covered by the Convention. In 1993, when the Council of Europe was in the throes of enlargement (over the period 1992-93 seven new members were admitted), the Assembly proposed a further additional protocol on the rights of minorities and a definition of the notion of a national minority. The Committee of Ministers for its part decided to draw up a framework agreement (opened for signature on 1 February 1995) and a protocol that would complement the ECHR in the cultural sphere through provisions guaranteeing individual rights, particularly for persons belonging to national minorities. The framework agreement is the first legally binding multilateral instrument on the protection of the rights of national minorities in Europe.

40 In its debates on European construction, the Assembly has requested that the issue of European Union enlargement be extended to the

¹³ The Convention entered into force on 3 September 1953.

wider context of the continent as a whole, the objective being to preclude further economic or political divisions. To that end, in September 1995 it submitted proposals, in Resolution 1068, designed to promote the complementary development of EU and Council of Europe activities through cooperation in a number of areas such as justice, culture and education, the media, health, the creation of a European legal area, and preparations for EU accession to the ECHR.

41 Although the scope of the Assembly does not include European security as such, it takes care to monitor situations and matters with security implications. At its first plenary session in 1998, it adopted a number of recommendations and resolutions which fall into that category, for example, on the situation in Algeria (Recommendation 1358), Kosovo (Resolution 1146), Bosnia and Herzegovina and the return of refugees and displaced persons (Recommendation 1357), business crime and corruption (Resolution 1147 and Order 540), lasting development in the Mediterranean and North Sea regions where crisis situations and potential conflicts are always a possibility (Recommendation 1359 and Resolution 1149).

(b) The Nordic Council

42 Cooperation among the Nordic states goes back a long way. From 1873 to 1914, Denmark, Norway and Sweden had a currency union and in 1907 the Nordic Interparliamentary Union, consisting of parliamentarians from the three countries, was set up. But it was in the second half of the century that this cooperation gave rise to the creation, in 1952, of a real subregional institution – the Nordic Council, a forum for cooperation between the parliaments and governments of Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, and, in 1971, of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Finland joined the Council in 1956.

43 Today the Nordic Council consists of 87 parliamentarians representing the five member states and the autonomous regions of Denmark and Finland¹⁴. Its members belong to national delegations and one of four political groups: the Social Democrat Group, the Conservative Group, the Liberal Centre Group and the Left

¹⁴ These are the Faroe Islands and Greenland in the case of Denmark and the Åland region in the case of Finland.

Socialist Group. The Council has a Presidium with 13 members. The chairmanship is held by each country on a rotating basis. The Presidium handles the Council's current affairs and conducts the work of the annual plenary session. The Council and Presidium have a joint secretariat based in Denmark under the responsibility of a Director. The committees and Presidium meet several times a year (the Presidium meets on average eight to ten times).

44. Since 1996 a plenary session has been held once a year in autumn at which members of the Council consider to what extent their objectives for regional cooperation have been met and set priorities for the following year. Those ministers of the Nordic states concerned by these matters also participate in the Council's work. The Nordic Council's three priority areas are cooperation among its member states, cooperation with Europe, the European Union and the European Economic Area (EEA), and cooperation with neighbouring countries. Three committees also work in these areas.

45. Despite the fact that foreign and defence policies are not covered under the cooperation arrangement in the Nordic Council of Ministers, matters concerning subregional security are discussed both in exchanges of views and in Council documents, especially where relations with neighbouring countries are concerned and more particularly Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Russian Federation. During its 49th session, for example, which was held in Helsinki from 10-13 November 1997, the Council adopted a recommendation on security policy (2/1997) in which it requested the governments of the Nordic states to

- "apply high priority on security policy issues in the Nordic cooperation,
- adopt the approach that every country has a right to decide its own security policy without external pressure, that this also applies to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, that this right must be respected by all states, and that every country has a responsibility for providing for its own security so that security is strengthened for all of Europe. The objective is a security order for all of Europe's countries,

- work for the establishment of a joint Nordic environment preparedness, and to take active part in the ongoing work of mapping the environmental threats to the Arctic area,
- clarify how far the concrete cooperation to fight nuclear pollution in Northwest Russia has come, and work actively for an increase in the international commitment to counter the problems of nuclear pollution in Northwest Russia and encourage the active political and economic efforts of the EU in this work,
- participate actively in the political consultations and peacekeeping, peace-promoting and humanitarian activities within the framework of the OSCE, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Partnership for Peace, and cooperate in order to contribute to the active participation of states in the adjacent area in these structures of cooperation;
- stimulate a broad, public, Nordic debate on security policy in the light of the new developing structures of security and cooperation."

(c) *The Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council*

46. On 5 November 1955, the agreement instituting the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council was signed in Brussels. This 49-member body, composed of representatives of the Belgian, Luxembourg and Netherlands parliaments, deliberates and submits recommendations to member governments on subjects directly linked with the objectives of institutional cooperation among the Benelux countries. The three governments jointly submit an annual report to the Council on the status and development of cooperation. The Council's work is conducted within 7 permanent committees:

- Committee on Regional Planning and Infrastructure,
- Committee on External Problems;
- Committee on Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Fisheries,
- Committee on Financial and Social Issues;

- Committee on Culture, Education and Public Health,
- Committee on Justice and Public Order,
- Committee on the Environment and Energy

47. Foreign and security policy issues fall within the remit of the Council which pays particular attention to the European Union's role in this area. The Council, like the Assembly of WEU, is anxious to preserve its political independence vis-à-vis governments and their approach to these issues. Document 568-2 of 24 March 1998, drafted on behalf of the Committee on External Problems in response to the 41st joint report on foreign policy submitted to the Council by the Belgian, Luxembourg and Netherlands Governments, is fairly critical of government action. In this document the Committee expresses the view, with respect to WEU and its possible integration in the European Union, that the Benelux Parliament should look into these issues more closely and seek contacts with other legislative bodies along the same lines as the monthly meetings held between the executives. The document also calls for the development of interinstitutional relations with other assemblies, in particular the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. Since 1992 the Council has developed close working relations with the Baltic Assembly with which it signed a declaration on mutual parliamentary cooperation on 18 November 1994.

(d) Other subregional assemblies

48. The situation in the regions of the Baltic Sea, Black Sea, European Balkans and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is one of insecurity, marked in the case of the latter three by the absence of any genuine subregional security structure. Neither the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) nor the Central European Initiative (CEI) have competence in this field and the CIS states have not yet been able to define a common position on the matter. Differing levels of political and economic development and the diversity of security alliances and commitments make it difficult for the members of these organisations to broach this subject during their discussions.

49. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are exceptions. These three countries share to some extent the same perception of their insecurity and agree that the solution is accession to NATO and the European Union. This approach is supported by the Baltic Council and by its parliamentary component, the Baltic Assembly, which was the subject of a report drafted on behalf of this Committee in 1995¹⁵. During its 10th session on 25-27 April 1997, the Assembly adopted a resolution and a declaration on this issue. The resolution on "NATO membership of the Baltic Sea States" called on the North Atlantic Council to include at least one Baltic state in the first round of enlargement while the declaration on "Integration in the European Union" indicated that these countries were ready to participate in accession talks. Negotiations on EU membership are now under way, but future membership of NATO for these countries remains a thorny issue. On 16 January 1998, the United States signed Charters of Partnership with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania which went some way towards supporting their aspirations for NATO membership.

50. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) was presented in a report in 1996¹⁶. It is composed of parliamentary delegations from the ten BSEC member states¹⁷ and contributes to the political dialogue in this region which comprises zones of actual or potential conflict. Economic cooperation is perceived as an important security factor, in that it contributes on a daily basis to forging the links, initially of a commercial, but subsequently of a social and cultural nature, which in time may help solve the political problems which are the root cause of instability. Two important decisions have been taken by ministers, with the support of PABSEC on 7 February 1997 in Istanbul, an extraordinary meeting of the foreign and economic affairs ministers adopted a declaration of intent with regard to the setting-up of a free-trade area in the BSEC region and on

¹⁵ *The Baltic Assembly*, Rapporteur Mr Masseret, Assembly Document 1460, 22 May 1995.

¹⁶ *Parliamentary cooperation in the Black Sea area*, Rapporteur Sir John Hunt (associate Rapporteur Ms Aytaman), Assembly Document 1544, 4 November 1996.

¹⁷ Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine.

22 October 1997 in Kiev, foreign affairs ministers adopted a draft Charter for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, which was a first step towards institutionalising this organisation

51 The 16-member Central European Initiative (CEI), which is described in detail in another report of this Committee¹⁸, is – like BSEC – an organisation for economic cooperation. Its members include four of the five successor states of former Yugoslavia: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Slovenia. In 1997 there was a serious armed insurrection in another of its members, Albania, which led to a humanitarian operation by European forces under Italy's leadership. The CEI has a stabilising influence with regard to all five of these states and will in the future possibly have a similar stabilising effect on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (composed of Serbia and Montenegro), thus contributing to security in this part of Europe. The CEI's concern in this respect is expressed in the final document approved by the members of its Parliamentary Conference in Trieste on 27 and 28 October 1997:

“16 *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

[The Parliamentary Conference of the CEI]

Reaffirmed its firm determination to further reinforce the peace process based on the Washington and Dayton Accords and requested that the SFOR mandate, due to expire in June 1998, be extended since that Force is still an essential factor of stabilisation and peace-making in the area,

17 *Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*

Emphasised the importance of FRY's participation in the CEI cooperative effort and expressed the hope that conditions may in time develop for this country to become a full member of the CEI”

52 The Commonwealth of Independent States is for its part almost *terra incognita* among subregional organisations. It was set up on 8 December 1991 by representatives of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine as a succes-

sor to the USSR, with voluntary participation by former Soviet republics. The CIS, consisting of 12 states¹⁹ has not yet succeeded in creating a genuine area of political, economic and security cooperation. The internal instability of and persistent crises and conflicts between the states of the CIS are great obstacles to its development and efficient operation. Security issues fall within its remit, but progress so far has fallen far short of needs. The conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the instability in Georgia and Tajikistan, the situation in Chechnya, discord between the Russian Federation and Ukraine and internal political developments in Belarus are persistent problems to which no durable or definitive solution can be found within the sole framework of the CIS

53 The Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS, composed of representatives from nine parliaments²⁰ plus Ukraine which has observer status, plays an important part in maintaining and developing contacts between the parliamentarians of member states. It meets once a year and has nine permanent committees covering the following areas

- economy and finance,
- legal issues,
- social policy and human rights,
- environment problems,
- foreign policy affairs,
- culture, science, education and information issues,
- defence and security issues,
- budgetary control,
- state-building and local government

The Assembly is concerned with many of the problems confronting CIS member states and its action in the field of parliamentary diplomacy is very important in a region afflicted by numerous crises which have dramatic consequences for the population, in terms of the ensuing economic,

¹⁹ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan

²⁰ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan

¹⁸The Central European Initiative (CEI), Rapporteur Mrs Squarcialupi

social and environmental difficulties as well as of the plight of refugees from the areas of armed conflict. Like other, similar institutions, the Assembly provides the support that is necessary for the success of measures adopted by the CIS ministerial organs and generates political impetus with its proposals. The development of cooperation with other interparliamentary institutions such as the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe and the OSCE is also an important aspect of its activities

54. Because quite a number of interparliamentary institutions sometimes have the same objectives or operate in complementary areas, cooperation between them needs to be developed to avoid a fragmentation of effort, duplication and a conflict of competence. It was partly to respond to this requirement that the subregional interparliamentary assemblies, in collaboration with the Assembly of the OSCE, met in Monaco from 8-10 October 1997. The participants²¹ in the Conference on "Subregional economic cooperation processes – a contribution to the new European architecture" adopted a declaration which stresses the role played by subregional organisations in the process of European construction and defines objectives and priorities for cooperation among them as follows

"The participants

5. Welcome the fact that the Conference has confirmed the essential role played by subregional cooperation in the European construction process to which they contribute an indispensable dimension of proximity, and the contribution they make to the Continent's stability and the analysis of the elaboration of the security model for Europe in the 21st century.

6. Point out that, in the new world configuration, security incorporates components of a geopolitical, political, economic, social and ecological type, in addition to the military aspect.

²¹ The following were represented: the Baltic Assembly, the Assembly of Baltic Sea Cooperation, the Parliamentary Assembly of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Nordic Council, the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council and the Parliamentary Conference of the CEI

7. Emphasise the contribution made by subregional economic cooperation processes in the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, in economic development, exchanges between populations and in the strengthening of civil societies.

8. Point out that subregional economic cooperation processes provide a permanent framework for dialogue and action to participating countries in transition and thereby contribute to avoiding the appearance of new lines of fracture in Europe by promoting the integration of these countries into European institutions,

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10. Welcome the fact that the Declaration of the OSCE Lisbon Summit of December 1996 emphasised in its paragraph 12 that "interaction with regional, subregional and trans-border cooperative initiatives in the economic and environmental field should be enhanced as they contribute to the promotion of good neighbourly relations and security",

11. Point out that subregional cooperation, which is based on the awareness of a geographical, historical and cultural identity and a common outlook, reflect a Europe close to citizens and local realities.

12. Observe that subregional cooperation is one of the components of the new European architecture and, on that account, fits into the dynamics of the mutual strengthening of institutions.

()

Means and methods

()

23. Stress the importance of coordination which it is important to master at national level, at interstate level, within subregional groupings, between the various subregional cooperation institutions and finally, with the main European and world institutions.

()

Relations with European institutions

25 Call for the development of synergy between subregional economic cooperation processes on the one hand, and between these processes and institutions with a broader outlook on the other hand, particularly the OSCE, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, as they are anxious to achieve complementarity;

(.)

27. Consider that, on account of their flexible and evolutionary nature, subregional cooperation processes are in a position to promote coordination between participating countries that are members of the European Union, countries that have a pre-membership strategy, and countries that remain outside the Union,

28. Emphasise the need to set up close coordination between all European institutions,

29 Underline the global dimension of the policies of cooperation in Europe, necessitating a closer collaboration with international organisations such as UNESCO, in terms of education and peace culture, and the International Labour Organisation in the field of social justice,

Follow-up to the Monaco process

30 Underline the pursuit of the process started in Monaco within the framework of the OSCE economic dimension and that the informal bodies of the conference may continue to work together in order to confirm the initiatives engaged therein.

31 Emphasise the importance of the parliamentary dimension of subregional cooperation processes

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55 All the interparliamentary assemblies referred to above form a close-knit web of exchanges, contacts and dialogue which are evidence of the new, albeit tentative role that is beginning to emerge for parliaments, as fully-fledged players on the international relations scene, alongside governments and international, regional and subregional organisations. All these

parliamentary institutions contribute to strengthening economic, political and security cooperation among European states. They pursue and develop the contacts initiated at government level and in some cases provide impetus when political will is faltering or absent. The wide-ranging fields of competence of interparliamentary assemblies and national representatives' cross-membership of different assemblies provides these institutions with a multidisciplinary approach to the problems confronting Europe, allowing them to assess possible solutions by considering all their implications and the work done in the various organisations working for European and transatlantic cooperation. In this context they must also take due account of the existence of a parliamentary institution *sui generis*, the European Parliament

(v) The European Parliament

56 Article 137 of the Treaty of Rome signed on 25 March 1957 stipulates that

"The Assembly, which shall consist of representatives of the peoples of the States brought together in the Community, shall exercise the advisory and supervisory powers which are conferred upon it by this Treaty"

Originally intended to be a consultative body, the European Parliament has seen its powers of control and co-decision enhanced, as cooperation within the European Communities has developed and deepened. Today, alongside the Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the Court of Justice, it has become one of the EU's power and decision-taking centres. It is not an interparliamentary institution, rather, its members have been elected by direct suffrage since 1979.

57 The EP is composed of 626 European representatives from the 15 European Union member states. They are elected for a five-year term and are divided among the following eight political groups

- Group of the Party of European Socialists,
- Group of the European People's Party,
- Group Union for Europe,
- Group of the European Liberal, Democratic and Reformist Party,

- Confederal Group of the European United Left-Nordic Green Left,
- The Green Group in the European Parliament;
- Group of the European Radical Alliance;
- Group of Independents for a Europe of Nations

The EP conducts its activities in some 20 permanent committees, some of which have sub-committees

- Committee on Foreign Affairs, Security and Defence Policy;
 - Sub-Committee on Security and Disarmament;
 - Sub-Committee on Human Rights,
- Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development,
- Committee on Budgets,
- Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy,
 - Sub-Committee on Monetary Affairs,
- Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy;
- Committee on External Economic Relations,
- Committee on Legal Affairs and Citizens' Rights,
- Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,
- Committee on Regional Policy,
- Committee on Transport and Tourism,
- Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection,
- Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media,
- Committee on Development and Cooperation;
- Committee on Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs,
- Committee on Institutional Affairs;
- Committee on Budgetary Control;
- Committee on Fisheries;
- Committee on the Rules of Procedure, Verification of Credentials and Immunities,

- Committee on Women's Rights,
- Committee on Petitions

58. The European Parliament has limited legislative powers as well as powers of scrutiny. The Council must, as part of the consultation process, seek the opinion of the EP before adopting legislation proposed by the Commission. The cooperation procedure enables the Parliament to amend the legislative texts submitted to it. In the event of disagreement a conciliation committee composed of representatives of the Council and the Parliament, with the participation of the Commission, is convened to find a common solution. The EP also has powers of assent with regard to international agreements entered into by the European Union, concerning, for example, the accession of new members.

59. The EP's budgetary powers are an important source of political influence. Indeed, it can use the budgetary procedure to propose changes and submit amendments to the Commission's initial proposals and to positions adopted in Council by member states, although the ultimate decision lies with the Council. The President of the EP adopts the budget. The Committee on Budgetary Control monitors EU spending to check that funds are being used properly. The EP carries out an annual evaluation of the way in which the Union budget is executed.

60. It is essentially with regard to the Commission that the EP exercises its powers of political control. Indeed, the EP plays a part in appointing the President and members of the Commission and may adopt a motion of censure which could require the Commission to step down. It has a written and oral procedure like that of national parliaments for putting questions to the Commission. It can put questions directly to Commissioners during its plenary sessions and sometimes also during committee meetings.

61. The Chairman-in-Office of the Council presents his country's programme to the EP at the start of a new term of office and, at the end of its mandate, reports back to the EP on the results obtained. He also presents the conclusions of each European Council to the EP. Ministers attend plenary sessions and may be directly questioned by MEPs. At the start of each European Council meeting, the President of the Parliament presents the main positions within the Parliament with regard to the items on the agenda.

62 The EP has legislative powers and powers of scrutiny over community policy. However its powers are more limited with respect to areas of intergovernmental cooperation, which include the common foreign and security policy (CFSP). Nevertheless, the Treaty of Amsterdam signed on 2 October 1997, which contains provisions relating to the CFSP (incorporated in Title V of the Treaty on European Union) gives the EP the right to have a say in the implementation of that policy which also concerns WEU.

“Article J 1

1 The Union shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy covering all areas of foreign and security policy, the objectives of which shall be:

- to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests, independence and integrity of the Union in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter;
- to strengthen the security of the Union in all ways;
- to preserve peace and strengthen international security, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the objectives of the Paris Charter, including those on external borders,
- to promote international cooperation,
- to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

(.)

Article J 7

1 The common foreign and security policy shall include all questions relating to the security of the Union, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy (.), which might lead to a common defence, should the European Council so decide. It shall in that case recommend to the Member States the adoption of such a decision in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

The Western European Union (WEU) is an integral part of the development of the Union providing the Union with access to an operational capability (.) The Union shall accordingly foster closer institutional relations with the WEU with a view to the possibility of the integration of the WEU into the Union, should the European Council so decide. It shall in that case recommend to the Member States the adoption of such a decision in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

(.)

3. The Union will avail itself of the WEU to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications.

The competence of the European Council to establish guidelines (.) shall also obtain in respect of the WEU for those matters for which the Union avails itself of the WEU.

(.)

Article J 11

The Presidency shall consult the European Parliament on the main aspects and the basic choices of the common foreign and security policy and shall ensure that the views of the European Parliament are duly taken into consideration. The European Parliament shall be kept regularly informed by the Presidency and the Commission of the development of the Union's foreign and security policy.

The European Parliament may ask questions of the Council or make recommendations to it. It shall hold an annual debate on progress in implementing the common foreign and security policy.

(.)”.

63 The provisions of Title V of the Treaty on European Union as amended by the Treaty of Amsterdam are the same, with some modifications, as those adopted in Maastricht in 1991. It must be said that progress so far on the CFSP is lagging far behind the ambitions of the signatories of the Maastricht Treaty. From the time of the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty in

1993 to that of the signing of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, the European Union was unable to act with the desired effectiveness in Bosnia, Africa (the crises in Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire) or Albania. During the period 1997 to 1998, marked by an aggravation of the crisis between the US and Iraq over weapons inspections by the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) and an escalation of the violence in Algeria and in the Serb province of Kosovo, the EU member states were unable to agree on a common position which would have enabled them to implement the provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty.

64. One should also bear in mind that the EU is embarking on four major projects which, when successfully accomplished, will lead to a reorganisation of community structures: the introduction of the single currency (with 11 participating states), the start of accession talks with Cyprus and 10 central European states, the reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP) and institutional reform resulting from the enlargement process. Against such a background the common foreign and security policy does not really appear to be an absolute priority and continues to be a matter falling within the sovereignty of each EU member state. This leaves WEU considerable room for manoeuvre in the field of security policy.

III. The Assembly of WEU and European security

65. The Assembly of WEU is the only assembly to have competence, recognised by an international treaty and confirmed in its Charter, in the field of security and defence. Since its first plenary session in 1955, the Assembly has endeavoured to give form and expression to a European parliamentary opinion in its particular field of responsibility, taking into account the different – in particular political, military, technical and economic – components required to establish a stable and effective European security system.

66. The Assembly, which is composed of national delegations of the parliaments of WEU's full members²² and associate members²³ and also

²² Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom

of representatives of the parliaments of the Organisation's observer²⁴ and associate partner²⁵ states, provides national members of parliament with a forum for debate in which they can compare approaches to and perceptions of security and defence issues and arrive at a common analysis while preserving those interests which each delegation perceives as vital. The fact that Assembly decisions are founded on consensus and therefore enjoy the broad support of a majority of delegations only enhances their political impact vis-à-vis the Assembly's main interlocutor, the Council of WEU.

67. The measured pragmatism often shown by the Assembly makes a significant contribution to consolidating its role and preserving its political independence of the ministerial bodies of WEU. However, it has not succeeded in becoming the key component of the parliamentary dimension of European security, and the impact of its actions is somewhat weakened by the multiplicity of interparliamentary initiatives emanating from other assemblies. The way to meet this challenge is to strengthen working relations with the national parliaments of the 28 WEU nations and to enhance coordination and cooperation with other European interparliamentary institutions and with the European Parliament.

1. Scope and working methods

68. The Brussels Treaty, signed on 17 March 1948, was a classic, intergovernmental agreement on collective defence. At that time the objective of its signatories was not yet to build a political Europe but rather to make it capable of defending itself against an armed aggression. The states committed themselves to collective defence with the means they had at their disposal and the decision was one for each government in accordance with the constitutional procedures of its country. In such a context the creation of an interparliamentary assembly, even a consultative one, was not envisaged.

69. In 1954, when the Paris Agreements modifying the Brussels Treaty were signed, the logic had changed somewhat. Western European Union was born as part of the project of Euro-

²³ Iceland, Norway and Turkey

²⁴ Austria, Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Sweden.

²⁵ Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia

pean unity that was launched by the Congress of Europe on 7 May 1948. The European Defence Community, a draft treaty for which was submitted in 1952, made provision for a supranational structure with a parliamentary component endowed with powers of control. After the EDC treaty failed to secure ratification, the idea of a parliamentary defence institution resurfaced in the Paris Agreements of 23 October 1954. WEU continued to be a collective defence organisation but also acquired another important dimension, namely, the control of armaments in its member countries. To ensure that this commitment was honoured and that decisions taken by the Council were followed up, it was decided to create a Parliamentary Assembly. Yet Article IX of the modified Brussels Treaty is rather vague as to the nature and scope of the Assembly's area of competence:

“The Council of Western European Union shall make an annual report on its activities and in particular concerning the control of armaments to an Assembly composed of representatives of the Brussels Treaty Powers to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe.”

70 As WEU is an intergovernmental organisation, it is the parliaments of the member states that continue to exercise parliamentary control – in the traditional sense – over their governments. Nevertheless, the Assembly of WEU has been able to extend the scope of its responsibilities and develop a role that goes further than the wording of Article IX, in which it exercises control and generates political impetus. This approach was decided with the adoption in 1955 of the Charter of the Assembly and was followed throughout the cold-war years when WEU did not really keep up with developments in European security. Today, the Assembly is resolved to play an active role in the Organisation's development and in the building of a new security system for Europe

(i) *The Charter*

71 From the start of WEU's activities and the Assembly's beginnings, the Council decided to grant a considerable measure of autonomy to this new interparliamentary institution and has never gone back on that decision. The first Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Affairs Minister Paul-Henri Spaak, made the following statement at the

first ordinary session of the Assembly in Strasbourg on 5 July 1955

“The Council of the Western European Union will be submitting to you, each year, a report on its activities () The general aims which the Member States of the Union have set themselves are numerous and ambitious. They intend to pursue a policy of peace, to reinforce their security, to strive for unity, and to encourage the gradual integration of Europe, with closer cooperation among themselves and between them and the other European organisations

This () offers a very wide field for activity and experiment, which you will be called upon to share (). The success of the undertaking depends to a great extent on your observations, the criticisms you may feel called upon to make, and perhaps even upon encouragement from you

The basic texts of the Western European Union (...) suggest immense possibilities. It rests with the men who make up its institutions – the Ministers in the Council and the Representatives in the Assembly – to transform these into realities. (...)

The Council of the Union has not wished to force its views upon you. On the contrary, we have been determined to leave you the greatest possible freedom, relying upon your experience and your wisdom: (..)

We consider that the organisation and working methods of the Assembly and the nature of its relations with other Assemblies are matters for its own decision, within the framework of the agreements setting up the Western European Union ()

The Assembly of the Western European Union is to be independent of all other Assemblies ()

With regard to relations between the Assembly and the Council, the Council's annual report will naturally be presented to the Assembly by the Minister who is then holding the office of Chairman, or by one of the other members of the Council. The Council will supply the Assembly with all

the necessary information to enable it to study the reports presented and to reply to them in full knowledge of the facts (.)”

72 The Assembly endorsed these principles in its Charter, which was adopted on 24 October 1955 Article 1(a) stipulates that

“The Assembly carries out the parliamentary function arising from the application of the Brussels Treaty.

In particular, the Assembly may proceed on any matter arising out of the Brussels Treaty and upon any matter submitted to the Assembly for an opinion by the Council”

73 In order to assert its independence vis-à-vis the other European parliamentary institutions, the Assembly decided to have its seat in Paris and hold its sessions there (Article IV of the Charter) Moreover, it set up an international secretariat directed by a Clerk elected by the Assembly (Article XI) The Assembly consists of national parliamentarians (115) from the ten WEU full member countries, who are also representatives in the Council of Europe Assembly (Article II(a)) In addition it receives delegations of representatives and substitutes from the parliaments of the associate members of WEU²⁶ who do not, however, have the right to vote during plenary sessions (Article II(c))

74 Each year the Assembly holds an ordinary session that can be divided into several parts (usually two) and it can also be convened in extraordinary session (Article III). A large part of the Assembly’s work is done in its permanent committees (Article VII) of which there are six

- the Defence Committee,
- the Political Committee,
- the Technological and Aerospace Committee,
- the Committee on Budgetary Affairs and Administration,
- the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges,
- the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations

²⁶ 3 representatives for Iceland, 5 for Norway, 12 for Turkey plus an equal number of substitutes

The Assembly also has a Presidential Committee and a Standing Committee (Article VII(a) and (b)) The Presidential Committee consists of the President of the Assembly, his predecessors, the Vice-Presidents, the chairmen of committees and one member appointed by each political group and by each delegation of associate member states The Standing Committee, which consists of members of the Presidential Committee and members of the Assembly, acts in the name of the Assembly

75 Article V of the Charter describes the Assembly’s powers as follows

“(a) The Assembly may make recommendations or transmit opinions to the Council on any matter consonant with the aims and falling within the terms of reference of Western European Union Resolutions may be adopted (.) When so directed by the Assembly, the President shall transmit such resolutions to international organisations, governments and national parliaments

(b) The Assembly shall consider reports transmitted to it by the Council (.)

(c) The report from the Council on the activities of Western European Union in other spheres dealt with in the annual report transmitted to the Consultative Assembly shall be considered by the Western European Union Assembly in cases where this is considered necessary

(.)

(e) Meetings of the appropriate committees shall be held before the opening or resumption of the session

These committees may formulate questions, which shall be transmitted by the President of the Assembly to the Council (.)

(f) The Chairman of the Council shall be invited by the President to make an oral presentation of the report to the Assembly. After presentation of the report, Representatives may raise matters in the course of debate, to which the Chairman of the Council may reply

(g) The reply of the Assembly to the report shall be adopted by simple majority

It may include recommendations to the Council

(h) A motion to disagree²⁷ to the content of the report, or to a part of the report, shall be tabled in writing by at least ten Representatives

The adoption of such a motion (...) shall require a majority of the Representatives in the Assembly.

(i) (...) Representatives may, through the President, put questions in writing to the Council on any matter relevant to the Brussels Treaty, to the Protocols thereto and on any matter submitted to the Assembly for an opinion. The text of such questions and of the replies thereto shall be printed and circulated as Assembly papers."

(ii) Activities

76 Political dialogue with the Council, in pursuance of Article IX of the modified Brussels Treaty, is the most important aspect of the Assembly's work. It takes place at two levels – one public and the other more confidential. In plenary sessions debates on the annual report of the Council and committee reports enable members of the Assembly and the Council to engage in a direct exchange of views. On the basis of committee reports, the Assembly adopts recommendations to which the Council replies in writing, or resolutions that are sent to other European and international organisations, including parliamentary and interparliamentary institutions. The Assembly also hears addresses from guest speakers, heads of state or government, ministers from the WEU nations and from other countries that are not part of the Organisation. Generally speaking, guest speakers agree to reply to questions put by members of the Assembly thus enabling the latter to obtain information about European and international security and defence matters.

77. In between sessions the Presidential Committee and the other committees are in regular contact with the Council via the Chairmanship-in-Office and the Permanent Council, which consists of representatives from the WEU

countries. Although meetings between the Council and the Presidential Committee have no official status or agenda, they are an important and regular feature of the political dialogue between the Assembly and the Council. Visits by the President of the Assembly to WEU countries, fact-finding visits by rapporteurs and committees, committee hearings of representatives of the subsidiary bodies, the armaments industry and the WEU military are also part of the confidential dialogue process.

78 The Assembly also plays an important role in raising awareness of European security and defence issues among its members and the public by providing experts, political leaders and representatives of industry and the military with the relevant information. To this end it organises colloquies and seminars to which – depending on the themes to be discussed – it invites representatives of parliaments, government administrations, the media and specialists. In 1996 for example, the Assembly organised a seminar on how parliaments can use the Internet for the purpose of communication and circulating information about their activities. Two colloquies are being held in 1998: one, in cooperation with NATO, on European security and the other on peacekeeping operations in Africa, in cooperation with the Portuguese Parliament. The proceedings of such seminars and colloquies are published and, as a general rule, are available to the public at large. They therefore have an impact that goes beyond the specialist circles primarily concerned with the topics they address.

2. Prospects and relations with other parliamentary institutions

79 Since 1955, the Assembly has succeeded in preserving its political independence. During the period prior to WEU's reactivation in 1984, it continued the debate on European security issues, while the ministerial bodies, adhering to a restrictive application of the modified Brussels Treaty, focused essentially on arms control activities. Since 1984 and during the present decade, the Assembly has made an active contribution to the development of WEU's political and military activities. Indeed, its action, in conjunction with that of the Council, led among other things to the creation of the Institute for Security Studies and of the Satellite Centre and to a strengthening of WEU's operational and armaments structures. At

²⁷ To date only one such motion has been approved – at the June 1967 session.

the same time it has never ceased to exercise its right to criticise the Council by contesting its decisions or deploring its failure to respond to crisis situations in various parts of the world. The Assembly keeps a close watch on the development of WEU and sometimes tries to anticipate it.

80 The structure and organisation of WEU and the activities of its Council are undergoing considerable qualitative changes due to the involvement of states which, although they do not enjoy full member status, participate fully in the activities of certain parts of WEU and contribute to its general budget. Council bodies with 13 (armaments bodies), 18 and 28 states make the workings of the Organisation complex. Because of its intergovernmental structure, it relies on a broad consensus for decision-taking. The complexity of WEU as it stands at present has been further increased by the strengthening of its working relations with the Atlantic Alliance, for military matters, and with the European Union, in a more political framework as defined in the Amsterdam Treaty. The task of armaments control for which Article IX of the modified Brussels Treaty makes provision is no longer one of WEU's activities. Instead, the Organisation has become the framework for European cooperation on armaments production and has made the creation of a European armaments agency its aim in the long run.

81 To this must be added the future consequences for WEU of the enlargement of both the Atlantic Alliance and the European Union to include states of central and eastern Europe, the arrival of a single currency in the EU with the euro and the development of transatlantic relations at a time when within NATO there is a technological gap between the United States on the one hand, and Canada and the European Allies, on the other, which has political ramifications. The Assembly of WEU may have an important role to play in this respect, by making a significant parliamentary contribution providing major political impetus, which gathers strength from the fact that the Assembly is composed of members of national parliaments whose task is to sanction the decisions taken by individual governments in the abovementioned fields.

82 It would be desirable, in parallel, for the Assembly to engage in a thorough examination of

its membership, structures, mode of operation, working methods and the means it requires. It must reaffirm its central role in the shaping and implementation of a parliamentary concept of European defence, since this role is entrenched in the modified Brussels Treaty and has always been recognised by the Council. This means strengthening its working relations with the national parliaments and their specialised committees as well as stepping up contacts with the other interparliamentary assemblies in Europe and with the European Parliament.

83 At the parliamentary level, the Assembly's dialogue is mainly with the national parliaments of WEU member states, since it is from them that the Assembly draws the delegations which make up its members. However, in compliance with Article IX of the modified Brussels Treaty, members are not directly appointed by the Assembly, but are first and foremost national representatives to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. This nomination arrangement was in keeping with the logic of European integration in 1954, at which time the Council of Europe and the European Coal and Steel Community formed the core for European integration. However, it is no longer in tune with the present circumstances in which European construction, in the sense of political integration, is founded on a project within the European Union.

84 This being the case, direct relations with the national parliaments, which have powers of control over the European policy decisions of national governments, have become essential for the Assembly's activities. The national parliaments in turn may use the Assembly as a relay and framework for the dialogue on European security which exceeds the national framework. Indeed, both in WEU and the EU, these issues are tackled at intergovernmental level and to a large extent are therefore not subject to the control of national parliaments. The Assembly for its part does have limited powers of control which it exercises by means of its dialogue with the Council, in particular through the recommendations and questions it submits to it and the replies it receives. The attendance of heads of state or government and of ministers of WEU countries at plenary sessions of the Assembly provides its members with an opportunity for putting questions and obtaining information on the positions

and decisions of the Council as well as on its future intentions.

85 One should also bear in mind that the complexity of certain questions, particularly in the military and technological spheres, may require a certain level of specialist knowledge to clarify the issues at stake. In such cases it would seem useful to strengthen working relations with the specialised committees of the national parliaments, as was done for the colloquy on security in Europe which the Assembly organised in 1994²⁸. However, the deliberations and studies of these committees, while they are often of excellent quality, have an essentially national scope, whereas the problems they are concerned with, such as the future of Europe's defence industries, call for cooperation and the pooling of the resources of a number of European countries. By cooperating with national parliaments, the Assembly of WEU provides an opportunity to compare and converge positions on issues of common interest which would otherwise be tackled in piecemeal fashion by each of the WEU states.

86 Relations with other interparliamentary institutions concerned with security questions, such as the Assembly of the OSCE and the North Atlantic Assembly, remain formal and sporadic. This is due partly to the concern of the WEU Assembly to preserve its political independence – which does not rule out cooperation – and partly to the status of the other two assemblies. WEU, including its parliamentary component, is a European collective defence organisation whose responsibilities arise out of the modified Brussels Treaty. The OSCE is the legacy of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and currently provides a forum for political debate on security matters among 52 states from both sides of the Atlantic. The North Atlantic Assembly is an informal parliamentary body which does not have any institutional link with the Atlantic Alliance. Both assemblies have an important point in common: a parliamentary delegation from the United States.

87 The status of transatlantic relations has a crucial effect on the future of European security, and the US Congress, by virtue of its influence in the foreign and defence policy spheres, has a say

in this matter. Hence it is important to have an interparliamentary dialogue which includes the United States. For the moment there is a shortcoming in this respect that the WEU Assembly, notwithstanding its efforts in the field of transatlantic relations, has thus far been unable to make good. More concrete working relations need to be developed with the OSCE and North Atlantic Assemblies if we wish to establish a dialogue with American and Canadian parliamentarians. Moreover, a number of WEU Assembly members also belong to the other two institutions, which may make it easier to establish contacts.

88 The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and subregional assemblies are also important dialogue partners for the Assembly of WEU. The Council of Europe and WEU Assembly delegations are composed of the same members, which is why the security and defence debates of the WEU Assembly sometimes spill over to such issues as human rights, the environment, and humanitarian, economic and social affairs, areas for which the Council of Europe is responsible. The working relations established over the last decade with the new subregional interparliamentary institutions of central and eastern Europe²⁹ are of a somewhat selective nature, due in part to the fact that, with the exception of the Baltic Assembly, they do not address security questions as such. By engaging in dialogue with these subregional assemblies, the Assembly of WEU could express its own views on security problems in the areas concerned. This would stimulate discussion of such matters as long as the assemblies themselves are also prepared to include them in their debates without causing tensions among their delegations.

89 At the same time, the Assembly can help consolidate security by promoting regional economic and political cooperation, such as that which followed in the wake of the European Union's Euro-Mediterranean Conference and the Monaco Conference on subregional economic cooperation. In today's world the economy is a major security factor while a climate of security is conducive to economic growth and to domestic and foreign investment. Persisting economic and

²⁸ Colloquy on *Organising our Security*, WEU Assembly, Paris, 17 October 1994.

²⁹ Namely, the Baltic Assembly, the Parliamentary Conference of the Central European Initiative and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

social imbalances are factors that can provoke a crisis with consequences for regional security, as shown by the events in Albania. The difficulties there have been with the reconstruction of the Bosnian economy are another example of the link between economic development and security. In the Mediterranean, differences between the northern and southern coast countries in the degree of economic, social and technological progress they have made are factors that may provoke a crisis in the years ahead.

90 The Assembly's relations with the European Parliament are particularly important in the context of institutional rapprochement between WEU and the European Union but progress in this area would appear to be slow. Although working relations between WEU and the EU have developed considerably since 1991 in application of the Declaration by WEU member states³⁰ appended to the Maastricht Treaty and, more recently, the Declaration of 22 July 1997³¹ referring to the Amsterdam Treaty, relations between their parliamentary components remain distant. This is due in part to the idea that each one has of what the form and substance of the European security concept should be. In this debate the two institutions to some extent embrace the standpoints of their respective ministerial organs, in that one refers to a European security and defence identity, of which WEU is one component within the Atlantic Alliance, while the other looks forward in the longer term to the integration of WEU, or of parts of it, in the European Union. Moreover, the fact that the two assemblies are not on an equal footing in terms of the scope of their responsibilities or their membership helps to keep them apart.

91 The European Parliament is composed of members who are elected by direct universal suf-

³⁰ *Declaration of Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which are members of Western European Union and also members of the European Union, on the role of Western European Union and its relations with the European Union and with the Atlantic Alliance*, Bonn, 18 November 1991. Assembly Document 1315, 25 May 1992.

³¹ *Declaration of Western European Union on the role of WEU and its relations with the European Union and with the Atlantic Alliance*, Brussels, 22 July 1997; Assembly Document 1582, 29 October 1997.

frage in each European Union member state³², and who are sometimes also members of their national parliaments. Within the EP, members belong to different political groups, of which there are currently eight. Such an approach makes the EP a melting-pot for ideas exchanged between the members of parliament of the 15 states and fosters the emergence of a European parliamentary perspective on all the questions it addresses, including that of security. The European Parliament now enjoys a certain power of co-decision which it shares with the Council of Ministers and the Commission, whereas it only had a consultative role when it was founded by the Treaty of Rome in 1957. It therefore has a right of oversight and can intervene in matters essential for European security, such as decisions on enlargement, industrial restructuring and conversion, including in the armaments sector (as in the case of the KONVER programme) or the setting-up of a European code of conduct for arms exports. The Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties also give the Parliament a consultative role in the field of the CFSP, which is an area reserved for European intergovernmental cooperation.

92. Notwithstanding the weaknesses of the CFSP, due in part to its intergovernmental nature and to a large degree also to the lack of a common vision of the EU's political future, the European Parliament, through its Committee on Foreign Affairs, Security and Defence Policy, is endeavouring to secure a central role in the parliamentary debate on European security. However, its scope for action is limited by the fact that the EU has not yet clearly defined its policy in this field. This shortcoming enables WEU to preserve a considerable degree of autonomy, in spite of the links established between the two organisations and outlined in the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties. Moreover, because of the responsibility it has for military matters, WEU has special relations with the Atlantic Alliance, which is not yet the case for the EU. With the modified Brussels Treaty and the Amsterdam Treaty as they stand at present, it is the Assembly of WEU which is the competent parliamentary body in the field of European security and defence.

³² Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

93 Unlike members of the European Parliament, members of the Assembly of WEU represent their national parliaments and are grouped together in national delegations and political groups. By virtue of Article IX of the modified Brussels Treaty, they are also members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe whereas there is no institutional link at ministerial level between WEU and the Council of Europe. The primacy of national delegations also means that in all its activities the Assembly of WEU must accommodate the different national viewpoints and reach as broad as possible a consensus. While the Assembly plays an important political role within WEU, it has only very limited powers of control over decisions taken by the Council of Ministers and has no co-decision rights. However, for as long as the modified Brussels Treaty remains in force, it will remain the only European interparliamentary institution with responsibility for security matters.

94 Cooperation with the European Parliament would appear to be necessary to ensure that parliamentary action has a positive effect in an area dominated by an intergovernmental approach which, in certain circumstances, can lead to paralysis where the countries concerned fail to reach consensus or generate the political will to adopt a common stance and act to resolve a crisis. In this context the main contribution the WEU Assembly can make to possible cooperation with the European Parliament is via its contacts with national parliaments, thus enabling them to participate directly, alongside European members of parliament, in the development of a parliamentary approach to European security policies. This could enhance the scope of decisions and choices made in national parliaments, interparliamentary assemblies such as WEU, and the European Parliament.

IV. Conclusions

95 The current period of growing economic and political interdependence, generally known as globalisation, is giving rise to a widespread feeling of a loss of sovereignty which produces withdrawal symptoms that are sometimes to be seen in national parliaments. At the same time transfers of state responsibilities to intergovernmental or supranational institutions, as is the case in the

European Union with, for example, the transition to the single currency, are on the increase and national assemblies are being presented with a *fait accompli* in that they are having to accept decisions that have not really been subject to the traditional methods of parliamentary scrutiny. This may also be said to apply in the case of security and defence if one considers the formation of multinational forces or the joint production of armaments.


96. In the process of European construction, personified in part by the European Union, each national parliament acts in accordance with its country's constitution or institutional traditions and attempts designed to federate parliamentary activities, mainly around the Conference of European Affairs Committees (CEAC), have not succeeded in giving parliaments an active role in the EU decision-taking process. In the intergovernmental framework of the CFSP, or in that of WEU or NATO, parliamentary control is limited even though the decisions taken in those bodies have important implications concerning, for instance, budgets or the deployment of armed forces – these also being matters for which national parliaments are responsible.

97 To intervene effectively in the field of security, national parliaments are required to talk with each other and share information and experiences of the control each of them exercises over foreign policy. European and transatlantic interparliamentary assemblies are the appropriate framework for such a dialogue not least because they do not harbour any intention of being a substitute for national parliaments. The mix and interplay among parliamentarians of the various states participating in those assemblies and their debates help forge a common approach which, notwithstanding the national components that underpin European construction – founded on a gradual and deliberate convergence of national policies – should serve to integrate different perceptions, foster mutual understanding and pave the way for the emergence of a vision of security questions that is not only European but also international.

98 This implies that the various institutions should open up to each other in a spirit of cooperation and exchanges, rather than allowing themselves to be bound by overly strict interpretations of their respective areas of competence.

They must not only move with, but also endeavour to anticipate, events and propose concrete and pragmatic solutions for dealing with the numerous challenges confronting European security. The Assembly of WEU, whose responsibilities were conferred upon it by the modified Brussels Treaty, is the legitimate and natural forum for parliamentary debate on security and defence matters, not only for the purpose of informing but also for the shaping of a European

parliamentary vision in this area. This process, to be carried through in cooperation with the national parliaments and other interparliamentary institutions in Europe, requires permanent dialogue and commitment from all the parties concerned, including the European Parliament. Its outcome will determine the parliamentary dimension of security policies, which needs to be dynamic if it is to promote stability and security throughout Europe.

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