

Speech by Mr. Pierre Harmel,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium  
in the Belgian Senate on 1st December 1971  
during the Second Part of the Seventeenth  
Ordinary Session of the WEU Assembly

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, I feel quite a greybeard at being introduced by your President and my friend Mr. Housiaux as one of the oldest Foreign Ministers in office. These are temporary dignities. I am deeply conscious of this, but I am more conscious of the warmth of your welcome.

It is true, Mr. President, that during the past few years I have had the privilege on numerous occasions of addressing the WEU Assembly, the oldest-established and most comprehensive organisation, if I may say so, in respect of its European political objectives. I would add - and I have pleasure in coming forward with this testimony immediately after having carefully read, during the nights of the European discussions on fishing, every one of the reports you have prepared - that your Assembly bears all the characteristics that give Parliaments their dignity, in other words, it is a place which does its work in a thorough, systematic and meticulous manner. I have rarely read reports from which Foreign Ministers could learn so much. I should like to thank your Assembly and all of the Rapporteurs on their behalf.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you asked me to come here and have one hour's discussion with you this morning. I shall keep my introduction as short as possible so as to leave more room for "question-time" - that is, the exchange of views, if it is still your custom, Mr. President, to have one. I should like, if you would allow me, to concentrate on a few ideas which I believe I share with you concerning the great importance of the year 1972 that will be soon upon us. I should like to deal with the basic European problems relating to 1972, and also with the problems of form, that is, the institutional problems.

Substantively, we would all probably agree that of all the years experienced by the older among us in respect of European development, the year about to begin will be a crucial one. It will be the year, in fact, covering the period between the accession of new members and the enlarged treaty's entry into force. It will be the vital European parliamentary year, for the accession treaties will have to be voted on by ten parliaments, and in some countries to be voted by referendums. It will also be a year of development, for the master plan for setting up an economic and monetary union between the ten countries, which was first considered at

the Summit meeting at The Hague in December 1969, must now, because of the incidents or accidents that have since occurred, be the subject of further discussions and new decisions and be set on a course such as to permit, by the 1980s the achievement of that solid, consolidating, result for Europe: an economic union linking up with customs union, with union in the agricultural sphere and above all with monetary union.

In this connection, we are very alive to the fact that the creation of a single European currency - the culmination of that effort - will be of decisive importance in creating the European "central nervous system", in other words, all the involvements which render inseparable the various elements of our economic and financial systems. The year 1972 should also be an important one, I think, for European foreign policy, for it is the events taking place around us which will compel us to see that European foreign policy and Europe itself assume their proper stature. It is in relation to the large world units - the USA, Russia, China and the countries of the southern hemisphere - that Europe must now take on its true dimension. On the extent to which we succeed in framing the broad lines of Europe's foreign policy in 1972 will depend the ability of Europe to present itself in its new guise to all those peoples anxious to know what Europe's contribution to the modern world is to be.

Lastly, 1972 will be the year when, as far as the question of institutions is concerned, we shall be at the centre of discussion.

We have institutions stemming from the Treaties of Brussels and Rome. The same seven countries will soon be associated in both institutions. Clearly, we must bend our minds more and more actively towards ensuring that in 1972 the institutions do not lag behind events.

In preparation for this vast European political transformation, we are now sure of having an important appointment to keep in 1972.

The great European problems will have to be dealt with by men who bear the heaviest responsibility in leading their peoples. It is therefore right and proper that on the basis of various proposals - the first of which, if I recall correctly, emanates from President Pompidou and Chancellor Brandt - a new Summit meeting is scheduled to be held - and I hope it will be as successful as that at The Hague in 1969 - as soon as possible, as we stated at the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Six, and then at that of the Ten in Rome at the beginning of this month. This Summit meeting will have to meet precisely in order to tackle the problems I have briefly mentioned.

This Summit meeting of Heads of State and Government - preferably of the Ten, but in any case of the Seven or more - will take place as soon as possible after the signature of the accession treaties, and especially after provision has been

made for its detailed preparation. According to the statements by several Heads of State, who have already expressed their views on this subject, decisions will have to be taken on the three main lines of policy of the enlarged Europe that I have outlined. You will be gratified to know that the timetable - if I may use the term - for the preparatory stage and also the agenda for the Summit have already been prepared for consideration by the Rome meeting scheduled for 5th and 6th December.

I consider that the choice of the three main lines of policy selected is very much in keeping with current events.

The first decision taken in respect of this preparatory stage of the Summit - and to which the current Rome meetings give increasing point - is to take up again at the Summit, in the light of the developments in the world monetary situation since 15th August, all the decisions necessary to ensure that, between the European countries at any rate, the course mapped out for achieving solid economic monetary union, following the stages envisaged in the Werner Plan, is scrupulously adhered to. The Summit must be able to give a new and decisive impetus to the resolutions approved by the Council of Ministers of the Communities in February this year. It must be able to weave a solid fabric for the economic and monetary union and thus give a new start to the construction of Europe on the firmest foundations: those relating to economic and monetary fields.

The proper course must be to await the outcome of the deliberations now proceeding in Rome: preparatory work for the Summit can be done during the months ahead, but both the Six and the Four have already decided that this will be the first theme on which decisions could be taken.

The second theme selected for consideration by the Summit meeting, which would be held next spring or in the early summer, is the establishment of the three main guidelines for a European foreign policy.

I should like to stress the importance of this choice, to which I draw attention at the outset. It seems to me that rather than talk about a political Europe, it would be better for Europe to manifest itself in various political fields. It also seems to me that Europe would show its true face more effectively were it to make choices and take decisions with a view to defining the nature of the relations it wishes to maintain with the great peoples of North America, to which it is linked by so many memories and so many reciprocal needs. We would also need to be able to define very clearly what choices are open to a unified Europe in its relations with the rest of Europe, that is, Central and Eastern Europe. It is vital for us, in that connection, not to lose the initiative in constructing a Europe free of tension, and if possible bringing about conciliation between opposing systems. Again, we have to adopt new lines of approach as regards the European Security Conference and balanced force reductions. We must see to it that the Warsaw Pact foreign ministers, now meeting,

do not take new decisions regarding Western Europe without Western Europe, as such, maintaining the initiatives we have taken as regards the other fragment of Europe that we are in process of constructing.

Let us never forget that it was the Westerners who took the initiative in favour of balanced force reductions in Europe, and that it was after having consulted our North American and European allies that we took major decisions in 1968 which have to be brought to fruition.

Finally and perhaps this is the most important point - there must, at the time of adoption by the European countries of decisions in respect of the economic and monetary union, be a major text, intimately linked therewith, establishing unified Europe's future relations with the southern hemisphere, in other words, this Europe is a major project which bears primarily on the economic field of investments, commodity prices, and industrialisation relations between our countries and those of the southern hemisphere as far as guaranteeing capital investments and large-scale infrastructural works are concerned. Europe has the right, the duty and the power, given its continuous development and the 14-year doubling of its national incomes, to sow the seeds of hope and prosperity not only in Europe but also and above all, for the rest of the world, in the southern hemisphere.

As I have repeatedly stated on recent occasions - and I am happy to be able to do so once again at an Assembly whose deliberations have so large an audience - completely new rules of trade must be drawn up, arranged and proposed by us, for Europe, against the time immediately ahead when the GATT rules are to be drastically revised. Justice and foresight dictate that our countries devise a massive European Marshall Plan, spread over a period of more than ten years, for the developing countries' benefit.

My strongly-felt personal conviction is that action along these lines is not utopian, is not a philanthropic dream, but a sheer necessity, a duty and an act of reason, a guarantee of peace and at the same time the assurance that vast and essential markets will be opened up.

Such are the fields chosen by the representatives of the governments of the Six and the Ten as being those concerning which decisions are to be taken, at the 1972 Summit meeting of Heads of State and Government, in respect of the lines of Europe's foreign policy.

The final subject chosen for this major decision-making meeting concerns, of course, the existing institutions of a Europe which, having acquired wider dimensions through enlargement and been given new fields of activity as a result of economic and monetary union and new tasks in respect of political unification, must obviously have institutions appropriate to its programmes.

During the interval between now and the Summit - in other words, during the next five or six months - the best thing would be for all Europeans to whom the creation of Europe is a matter of importance to do the most effective thing they can in Europe: to encourage the thinking of the Heads of the Ten States in the direction I have just referred to.

It gives me much pleasure, Mr. President, to say once again at this juncture that in scanning your records and reading your reports and the texts emanating from your discussions,

we discover a wealth of ideas and fertile suggestions relating, precisely, to the main themes with which the Summit meeting will have to deal, be it the European Security Conference or balanced force reductions in Europe - one only has to read Mr. Boyden's and Mr. Nessler's reports - or the main line of Europe's foreign policy in the southern hemisphere - and in that regard, also, I was particularly pleased to note how Mr. Judd, in his report, brought fresh thought to bear on the subject.

If all the forces building Europe concentrated their thinking on the subjects now mooted for joint consideration and decision-making by the Heads of State in 1972, we would, I think, be helping them to shoulder their heavy responsibility in determining what will probably be the future of Europe for the next ten years.

So much for the substance of the question. The points can be summed up very easily.

1972 will be a crucial year. It confronts the new Europe of the Ten with the choice of decisive lines of action. They concern not only policy-making as regards new economic and monetary groupings: they affect the birth of a foreign policy, and hence major options which will determine Europe's future aspect. Lastly, they affect the institutions.

Having spoken of what I shall call the content of Europe's action in the immediate future, I should now like to take up the question of its content - of the forms, in other words.

So long as we live - or as we still do - on abstract hopes, our concern, as the Europeans that we all are, was with political philosophy and procedural matters. You are too aware of the mysteries of foreign policies not to know that when politicians find themselves in difficulties in dealing with substantive problems, they find relief in engaging in disputes and discussions regarding institutional problems. But you are also very well aware that once action is in command - and I think this is the case today - the institutions adapt themselves to the facts, and so we are now embarking on the concrete phase so far as the European institutions are concerned.

I should now like to formulate three ideas, which seem to me to be very simple, and perhaps too simple.

Firstly, I consider it very important that, until the Summit meeting, the date of which has not yet been fixed and which should remain fairly open so as to ensure that the Heads of State and Government do not meet until they are sure of being able to reach concerted and mature decisions (this should certainly allow us five or six months' grace), the various European institutions, beginning with our own, should maintain the pace of their activities without slackening or alteration.

This applies both to the WEU Council of Ministers and to the Assembly. In the case of the latter, indeed, there is no problem. As to the Council of Ministers, there may be some, for the multiplicity of meetings of the same persons in different places will definitely take up a certain amount of time. However, it would be unwise to slow down the progress of work of our various institutions pending the Summit meeting.

To quote what you yourself said the day before yesterday, Mr. President, the main thing is to hold fast to what has been gained.

The second simple idea - and this follows from what I have so far been saying - is that the adoption of decision must, I think, be left to the Summit meeting.

I will rest with the Heads of State and Government to lay down the guidelines for the ten Ministers of Foreign Affairs, particularly on institutional matters, it having been decided at the Summit meeting at The Hague that the latter would proceed to formulate proposals for a European policy which, as you know, have already been the subject of a first report and an outline programme of work, so as to ensure that the second report which had been requested by the Heads of State would not be prepared or even started before the Summit meeting is able to take place and the Foreign Ministers are given new directives.



Accordingly - and it is at this precise point that I shall make so bold as to express a personal choice, binding only myself, among the various possible methods proposed by Lord Gladwyn in his report - it is the last one, in the final analysis, which I consider to be the best: the one which specifies that between now and the Summit no one, and especially not the Foreign Ministers should be entrusted, for the time being, with the task of further preparing any proposals regarding the European institutions before having received, at the Summit, the new directives and initiatives emanating from the Heads of State and Government.

Actually, this is no great sacrifice on the part of the Foreign Ministers, for everyone knows that their task consists precisely in preparing the Summit meeting, while leaving that major gathering vested, of course, with full responsibility.

The third simple idea is that not only in this Assembly itself but also as regards all publicity concerning the work we are doing and the positions we are adopting here - and this is something we must all aim at between now and the Summit - all of the circles engaged in formulating European thinking should strive to intensify and develop such thinking on the part of Heads of State and European and national parliaments. Nor is a contribution by political groups unwelcome in adding and concerting their thinking on the themes now widely current.

I should like to reiterate that in this respect your Assembly set a rather shining example. For it is at this point, talking of institutions, that mention should be made of all the material prepared by your Rapporteurs - the reports I have already referred to and especially the documents compiled by Lord Gladwyn, Mr. Boyden and Mr. Péronnet.

Drawing my inspiration, if I may so express myself, from this material, I should now like, on the subject of institutions, to put forward five ideas which are not, of course, the sum total of all that could be said - I would make no such claim - but which constitute "tentative" ideas, if I may use the term, and I believe that it is around the themes that I am about to outline that the Heads of State and Government should develop their thinking at their 1972 meeting.

The first tentative idea - important, I would say, despite its tentativeness - is this: we should remind ourselves that the two Treaties, our own Treaty signed here in 1948 and the Treaty of 1958 - the Treaty of Brussels and Paris, and the Treaty of Rome - contain the whole range of commitments that will soon bind seven States out of ten, and these two Treaties are really complementary.

In one of them, as Mr. Schumann reminded us the other day when he presided over the meeting of WEU Ministers - and he reiterated this three times - the future of WEU is considered by each of the member governments as decisive and, if I may put it thus, as absolutely indispensable in the construction of Europe.

Indeed, the Treaty which occasions our presence here today contains commitments on political unification more forcefully expressed than in any other European treaty subsequently concluded, just as the system of concerting policies is already spelled out in full in the Brussels Treaty documents, to which we must accordingly go on referring. Similarly, our Treaty contains special commitments for a fifty-year period in the sphere of European defence - commitments which are likewise not to be found in such detailed form in any subsequent treaty.

It would be out of the question, therefore, to scrap what has been achieved through these mutual commitments on structures for the very reason that in no other treaty so far concluded can they be found expressed with equal force and precision.

In the other Treaty, that of Rome, we find by way of complement commitments on the supranational organisation of agricultural economy and customs systems; pledges of joint action, which today are being honoured, in furtherance of economic and monetary union; and above

all, as the culmination of this will to unification, community structures along increasingly perfected lines. For this is a community, it can be said in passing, which today possesses its own resources, supranational resources matching its own expenditure, with all that that in its turn implies for unification, since a political community which has its own resources has obviously come of age, if I may use the term, and is no longer a minor, no longer a ward, but master of its own finances.

And so, at the 1972 Summit meeting, the political aims, in the broad sense enshrined in these two Treaties, should not only be confirmed - that goes without saying - but should be brought up to date, for the relevant decisions were taken twenty-three years ago in one case and thirteen years ago in the other.

It must, I think, be stated that it is upon these twin pillars that a soundly constructed Europe should rest, and that the more mergers there are between the aims and methods of the same peoples, acting henceforward in partnership, the better it will be.

The second idea concerning our aims and institutions - I trust I shall not be misunderstood - is that we must move forward - and I must, of course, stress the use of that term - towards a unified Europe, towards unity in respect of legislative, executive, judicial and community power so as to cover the whole range of specific activities in every field.

I refer at this point to one of the observations contained in Lord Gladwyn's report - an observation which I fully endorse - to the effect that the progress made in economic unification and that made in concerting diplomatic action and defence have not proceeded side by side, and that in consequence we find a certain imbalance in the developments in one direction and in the other. This is a fact.

So long as the ten countries do not possess unified sources of supply, particularly of basic industrial materials, so long as these sources remain different, or in other words so long as the big European industrial companies are not transnational, some aspects of diplomacy and even some aspects of military policy might prove difficult to harmonise. This, too, is self-evident.

We are, however, well aware that we are moving towards such industrial unification, towards unification of the sources of supply in the major European transnational companies. The process will take time, but as it moves towards realisation, it will be easier to unify our diplomatic policies. Thus community action is