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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Political Committee

on European political cooperation

Rapporteur: Mr Erik BLUMENFELD

PE 50.829/fin.

On 7 April 1976 the enlarged Bureau authorized the Political Affairs Committee to draw up an own-initiative report on ways of improving the machinery of European political cooperation.

The committee had appointed Mr Blumenfeld rapporteur on 23 October 1975.

On 28 November 1977 it adopted the motion for a resolution by 14 votes to 2 with 2 abstentions.

Present: Mr Bertrand, chairman; Mr Radoux and Mr Johnston, vice-chairman; Mr Blumenfeld, rapporteur; Mr Bangemann, Lord Brimelow, Mr Durieux, Mr Galluzzi (deputizing for Mr Amendola), Mr Granelli, Mr Mitchell, Mr Prescott, Mr Rippon, Mr Scelba, Mr Schuijt, Mr Seefeld, Mr Sieglerschmidt, Mr Spinelli and Mr Zagari.

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A

The Political Affairs Committee hereby submits to the European the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory sta

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on European political cooperation

The European Parliament,

- noting the development of political cooperation machinery between over recent years ;
- considering that the links between the Foreign Ministers of the Ni the European Parliament must be improved and strengthened, particu with a view to providing the European Parliament with wider scope exercising influence over political cooperation ;
- regretting the instances of failure to coordinate the positions an action of the Nine Member States of the Community, particularly in cases in the General Assembly of the United Nations and in other international fora ;
- expressing its concern at the lack of substantive and up-to-date : given to the European Parliament by the Foreign Ministers of the N concerning measures of joint foreign policy ;

A. Requests the Governments of the Member States :

1. to ensure that the European Parliament is fully informed concern all joint foreign policy decisions taken by the Nine ;
2. to provide Parliament's Political Affairs Committee, in an appro with substantive and up-to-date information concerning the meeti and activities of the Foreign Ministers of the Nine outside the quarterly meetings and subsequent colloquies ;

3. to take account of the foreign policy guidelines adopted by the European Parliament ;
 4. to instruct the Foreign Ministers to submit a written annual report on European political cooperation to the European Parliament one month in advance of the annual debate in Parliament on European political cooperation ;
 5. to decide to end the artificial distinction between 'Community' and 'political cooperation' matters, and, in this respect, to invite the Commission to participate fully in all parts of all political cooperation meetings ;
 6. to instruct the Foreign Ministers to seek agreement on the political and related aspects of negotiations with third countries before the Council of Ministers gives a mandate to the Commission to open negotiations and to establish this mandate in the light of an orientation debate held by the Parliament ;
 7. to ensure that the Commission represents the Community in all major multilateral economic negotiations following agreement by the Foreign Ministers on the political and related aspects of such negotiations ;
- B. Instructs its President to forward this resolution together with the report of its committee to the Council and the Commission of the European Communities and to the Parliaments and Governments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTCHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1. The First Report on Political Cooperation was adopted by the Foreign Ministers of the Six in 1970. Since then, the Foreign Ministers of the Nine have approved a Second Report on European Political Cooperation (EPC), which established improved procedures for the coordination of the foreign policy of the Community Member States. The Parliament's own most recent report on political cooperation adopted by the Political Committee was drafted by its Rapporteur, Mr Mommersteeg, in early 1973.

2. In December 1974 the Heads of Government, meeting in Paris, approved the creation of the European Council, which met first in Dublin in March 1975. Mr Tindemans reported in December 1975 to the European Council on European Union, and made specific proposals on political cooperation.

3. Political cooperation has enjoyed some successes but has also suffered significant failures since 1973. It has, however, been going through a process of slow expansion welcomed by several governments of Member States. The moment therefore seems opportune for the Political Affairs Committee again to consider the objectives, structure and working of EPC and the participation of European parliamentarians in carrying out their duty of controlling EPC.

CHAPTER II STRUCTURE AND MACHINERY OF POLITICAL COOPERATION¹Operation of Political Cooperation

4. The Political Committee ('Davignon' Committee) now meets almost every month, and in addition is convened when its members are attending meetings, such as the United Nations General Assembly or the European Council; its meetings are increasing in frequency. The working parties of experts established by the Second Report discuss matters of immediate importance and also problems with long-term implications, in which cases their nature is that of a 'planning meeting'. The communications system between the Foreign Ministries² provides for instant communication of political information between Foreign Ministries, rather than through Member States' Embassies. The latter now, however, appoint one official to follow political cooperation, and these officials increasingly meet with the director of political affairs of the Foreign Ministry of that Member State.

¹ See Annex 1 for summary of contents of First and Second Reports on Political Cooperation

² Known as 'COREUNET'. Some 500 telegrams a month are now communicated through COREUNET.

5. The Commission sees most of the telegrams exchanged on the COREUNET system. The Commission is present at almost all parts of all political cooperation meetings and is invited to take part in some meetings of the working parties, but the Council secretariat is never present. Although the Commission is invited to give its views at such meetings, it does not participate in decisions. It is the Presidency which plays the prime role in coordinating political cooperation discussions and providing an element of continuity during the six-month period concerned.

Failures in Political Cooperation

6. The advances made in constructing the machinery of political cooperation are welcome as far as they go. But the widening and intensification of the Community's foreign relations and failures of the Nine to cooperate effectively in the field of foreign policy lead inevitably to the conclusion that new machinery is necessary. The major failure was not responding effectively or in a united way to the situation created by the Israeli-Arab war of October 1973 and the consequent oil supply crisis.

The specific failures in political cooperation are dealt with in a later part of this Report, but relate essentially to lack of cooperation on Mediterranean policy, and in particular on Cyprus and the Lebanon, to the recognition of the Republic of Angola and to voting on important resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly.

7. The shortcomings in the structure of EPC are several, but derive principally from the fact that the Davignon procedures are operated by Foreign Ministers and their officials, who in spite of their European vocation, are conditioned to furthering their own country's objectives and interests in foreign affairs. This fact imposes a fundamental limitation on the potential degree of coordination which is possible in the interests of the Nine or the Community. Even if the political will to achieve coordination exists on the part of several Member States, the whole operation of the Davignon procedure leads to decisions achieved on the basis of the lowest common denominator of national interests, largely as interpreted by foreign ministry officials.

Weaknesses in Davignon procedures

8. A major problem in the machinery for political cooperation lies in the difficulty of assuring continuity in the work of such specialist groups of officials as exist in discussing the present and future situation in a given field. But some groups, such as the "Africa" group, do manage to meet frequently and thus to achieve some element of continuity. As the Commission stated in their report on European Union, 'Hitherto, political cooperation has seldom led to anything more than the Community reacting to events.'¹ For example there has to date been little success in anticipating the possible outcome of events, particularly in Africa, within the machinery of EPC.

9. Linked with this shortcoming is the lack of continuity in the conduct of political cooperation. The Presidency changes every six months, and at each change the Chairmen of the Conference of Foreign Ministers, of the Council, of the Political Committee and of the expert working parties are all changed. The operation of the machinery in toto is entrusted to a different Foreign Ministry, with all the potential for disruption in methods of work which this entails. A stronger element of continuity is essential in order to render the operation of the machinery more efficient.

Tindemans proposals on foreign policy

10. Chapter II of the Tindemans Report on European Union, submitted to the European Council, essentially concerns the external relations of the Union²

11. Mr Tindemans makes two important institutional proposals. First, that the distinction between ministerial meetings dealing with political cooperation and those dealing with Treaty subject matter should be ended: 'in order to decide on a policy the Ministers must be able to consider all aspects of the problems within the Council.' Second, that the creation of a 'single decision-making centre' (the Council at the level of Foreign Ministers) would avoid confusion between 'Community activities' and 'political cooperation' activities. The creation of a political cooperation office, as proposed later in the present report, could help to realise both the proposals made by Mr Tindemans. In practice, EPC items are already often placed on the agenda of ordinary Council meetings. But when they come up for discussion although the Ministers remain the same, their advisers, for these agenda items, change and become national foreign office officials.

12. The Tindemans report was considered by the European Council at its meeting at The Hague on 29/30 November 1976. In the statement issued at the end of the meeting the members of the European Council stated that 'the general lines of the comments by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs' on the different chapters of the Tindemans report were 'approved' by them. The

¹ Supplement 5/75 to Bulletin of European Communities, paragraph 65

² Supplement No.1/76 to Bulletin of European Communities.

meaning of this cryptic statement seems to be, in effect, that both the Foreign Ministers and the members of the European Council responded positively to Chapter II of the Tindemans Report. But, although apparently welcoming the proposals concerning the establishment of a 'single decision-making centre' in principle, considering that this would be a suitable long-term objective, the Governments seemed to think that in the short-term the practicable pragmatic solution would be to ensure that all relevant inputs from different but related dimensions of any particular problem should be taken into account in the decision-making process. It is essentially the role of the Presidency of the Council to coordinate these different inputs at all levels. The two classic instances of cases where this has happened already have been in determining the approach of the Nine to CSCE and Portugal. High-level consideration of the proposals made by Mr Tindemans in Chapter II of his report still continues. A further report from the Foreign Ministers to the European Council is due at the end of 1977.

13. Concerning other proposals made by Mr Tindemans in Chapter II, there has been little enthusiasm on the part of the European Council or on the part of the Foreign Ministers about his suggestion that a prior legal obligation should be accepted by Governments to reach agreement on certain selected problems of foreign policy. But there has, under outside pressure, been some progress on the adoption of a common position by the Nine in major multilateral negotiations. The outstanding instance was that of CSCE where the country holding the Presidency gave the lead and spoke for the Nine as a whole, where countries with a particular interest or expertise in specific agenda items spoke on behalf of the Community as a whole, where the Final Act was signed by the country holding the Presidency on behalf of the Community as a whole, and where the Commission took part in the Conference, taking its place at the Conference table in the delegation of the country holding the Presidency. It was also agreed that one Member State should speak on behalf of the Community during the Conference on International Economic Cooperation in Paris. These two instances are in contrast to the humiliating spectacle of the Member States of the Community sitting in conclave in 1976 in Nairobi, during UNCTAD IV, trying to make their minds up as to whether or not they should have a common position at the Conference.

14. As far as representation at Western economic summits is concerned, a notable advance was made at the London summit in May 1977, when the President of the Commission attended those discussions at the summit in which the direct interests of the Community were involved. Although some Community Member States have strongly criticised the fact that the President of the Commission was not present, as of right, throughout the whole Conference, the