

PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION

NINTH ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION

SUMMARY RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Friday, 30 March 1973

Part II

KINSHASA

The meeting was reconvened at 4.15 p.m. with Mr BERSANI, Vice-President, in the Chair.

Joint discussion on the reports by Mr Perret on the 8th Annual Report on the activities of the Association Council and by Mr Aigner on Community development aid policy (continuation)

Mr DAH Ould SIDI HAIBA, speaking both on behalf of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and in a personal capacity, thanked the authorities of the Republic of Zaire for the warmth of their welcome. He also congratulated the Secretariat of the Association and the staff of the Legislative Council on the high standard of organization which had done so much to smoothe the work of the Conference.

He then observed that progress in human societies was best accomplished when they formed themselves into large associations and that the present imbalance in the world could only be corrected by a common desire for co-operation among nations.

It was for this reason that the countries of the EEC and the AASM had adopted a system of association based on equality, on mutual respect for sovereignty and on the interests of each of the partners.

Addressing those who were critical of the form the Association had taken, he pointed out that accession had been the consequence of deliberate and independent political decisions by the governments concerned.

He stressed, moreover, that the Association was destined to play an historic role in the struggle against under-development in the world. It should therefore adapt its structures to this role and seize the opportunity offered by the negotiations next August to set up a structural system adapted to its needs. He was convinced that his hopes in this respect would not be disappointed.

He then touched briefly on some of the problems which had been discussed by the Conference. The most important of these had been the enlargement of the Community, something which had opened new horizons and strengthened the Association's means to meet its commitments.

Then there had been the accession of Mauritius. He hoped that other countries, especially those of the Commonwealth, would now participate in this joint venture.

As far as trade was concerned, he agreed with the conclusions reached by the Joint Committee, but drew the attention of the EEC to the difficulties which Mauritania had been having in selling its beef production. Given the world meat shortage, it was of vital necessity that urgent measures be taken

to improve production and facilitate sales to the consumer countries.

As far as technical and financial co-operation was concerned, the Conference should pay special attention to the serious drought currently affecting certain African countries, notably Mauritania. The countries concerned had just held a meeting to work out a programme to combat this disaster, but international assistance would be required to implement it.

(Applause)

The CHAIRMAN congratulated the representative of Mauritania for his clarity and expressed the solidarity of the Conference with his country which for more than 3 years had been ravaged by a merciless drought.

Mr DEWULF said he wished to add a few points to Mr Perret's report. As he saw it, the main problem concerned the future of the Association. We were the first to voice our fears and our hopes as to the future of the Association in public. We had hoped to see the new members take a specific part in this debate. The latter, with commendable courage, had indicated that they would honour all the commitments made by the Community. But the matter was complex: apart from the partnership between Europe and Africa, other talks were in progress which might have unexpected consequences. The world appeared to be in the throes of violent convulsions which did not bode well for the future of the Third World. One felt sometimes that certain decisions could be taken before negotiations began for the renewal of the Association.

He briefly recalled that the Community achievement consisted of a series of particularly privileged associations encompassing the Mediterranean area, the countries of northern Africa and those of Africa south of the Sahara. It had been the right, indeed the duty of Europe to establish these associations, and the Africans had responded by making a deliberate political decision to establish relations not with the governments of individual European countries but with Europe as a whole. On top of this, the problem of the worldwide responsibilities of the enlarged Community and of its Member States had to be considered with all its implications.

It had to be made perfectly clear that the two sides to this question, namely the policy of association and the problem of worldwide responsibilities, were complementary rather than contradictory. This implied that the measures to be taken would have to be put into effect gradually. The problems of development required political decisions on corrective procedures. Failing such corrective procedures, the poor countries would become still poorer, and the rich even richer. On the other hand, it was necessary to give the Association a legal and political framework which was clearly recognisable both to its members and the outside world.

It should also be clearly stated that the system envisaged, together with the political choice which it involved, could not be offered to all developing countries. It would have to remain limited to the Mediterranean countries in particular and to Africa in general.

The Paris Summit Meeting committed us to reconciling our worldwide responsibilities with the need to preserve the achievements of the Community. A great deal of imagination and creativity would be necessary to accomplish this.

Mr Dewulf emphasized that, if negotiations on world agreements on primary commodities had reached deadlock, this should not give rise to undue pessimism: the idea put forward by Mr Deniau on supplementary finance at a regional level would help the Associated States by guaranteeing export income on which their development and production diversification programmes were dependent.

Having rapidly reviewed the various questions raised in Mr Aigner's report, Mr Dewulf congratulated the Commission department which had drawn up the plans of action and roused Europe's awareness to the development problem. Nevertheless, though the memorandum might constitute a plan of action, it did not actually propose a strategy. It took stock, but did not constitute a forward-looking evaluation which might serve as a useful guide to all the institutions working in the field of development.

Turning to financial aid and monetary problems, Mr Dewulf expressed concern over financial movements and the regularity of aid to the Third World: we were growing so clever that we had now reached the stage of proving that by cutting the budget we were in fact increasing the volume of aid. At the moment this is running at 3000 million units of account, and was supposed to reach 6000 millions in 1975. The Community was unlikely to reach this target. However, the proposal to establish a link between the amount of aid and the Community's own resources would doubtless solve the problem.

Another question of concern to Mr Dewulf was the public's ignorance of the problems confronting the Third World. The 'credibility' of public aid was being challenged but even if opinion was currently against this type of assistance individual aid could be mobilized by the numerous men of goodwill in private organizations, as a complement to public aid.

Mr DEWULF said in conclusion that he was very impressed by the efforts of African countries to be true to themselves. This did not imply a break with the past for it was not a denial of historical ties but rather a way to a more humane and a more socially conscious society. Europe too was still in search of its true identity. What should unite Europe and Africa was the concern shown on both sides for the fundamental dignity of man and the social objectives of development.

He wound up by referring to the words of President Nyerere, who had said that what was important was to combine the teachings of East and West with Africa's own traditions and to integrate them into a new society. If Africa succeeded in this task, the world would have every reason to rejoice.

The CHAIRMAN declared the general discussion on the Perret and Aigner reports closed and announced that the vote on the resolution would take place on the following day.

(Applause)

Co-ordination of the activities of the Association partners in international organizations

The PRESIDENT stated that Mr Glinne would not be able to submit his report because he had become a member of the Belgian Government, on which he congratulated him.

Mr FELLERMAIER, who submitted Mr Glinne's report, first of all paid tribute to the late Mr Hein, who had drafted it.

Mr Glinne's report, he said, put the political aspects of the problems into proper perspective. To illustrate the importance of political co-operation, Mr Fellermaier quoted the example of the Helsinki Conference, where despite the great differences dividing the participants, every effort was being made to initiate a major dialogue between East and West. With this in mind, was it not appropriate to increase cooperation between North and South?

Quoting President Senghor, who had described the Association as an excellent example of dialogue between industrial states and the Third World, he said that in his view, the new Association should be as open as possible, as this would help, at least to some extent, to create better understanding between the Africans themselves. It went without saying that membership should not be open to States which practised racial discrimination. It was also important that the African countries should cooperate to a much greater degree among themselves.

Cooperation between the 24 partners had led to the various successes quoted by Mr Glinne in his report; two of these deserved special attention:

First, the cooperation between the EEC and the AASM which had manifested itself at the third UNCTAD Conference.

Secondly, the question of fruit and vegetables originating in Africa. By not awaiting the outcome of the consultations, the Council of Ministers had acted against the spirit and letter of Protocol No. 5. The European Parliament remained on the side of the African States as far as this matter was concerned.

Mr Fellermaier recalled that Mr Sissoko had said in Luxembourg that the more the European States honoured their commitments, the more the African States would be interested in a political dialogue.

What had to be aimed for was the establishment of a permanent dialogue, but this should take place within the framework of the international organizations which already existed in great number in Africa. The pre-condition to success was to seek to understand and to recognize the partner's problems.

In a rapidly changing world, it was vital that a dialogue survived, based on the idea of the common struggle for peace, for liberty and for human dignity.

(Applause)

Speaking on behalf of the delegation from Upper Volta, Mr BOUDA thought that three things could be said on the subject of Protocol No. 5. First of all, it was exactly the same in both Yaoundé Conventions. Secondly, its last paragraph simplified discussion on the problems of the sale of tropical products. Finally, the protocol did not specify any commitment, nor did it lay down any set procedure. It simply implied cooperation, consultation, and mutual assistance.

The Association was based on the political will to work together. Where necessary it took joint action on problems which did not formally fall under the terms of the Convention.

All this had the effect of giving the Association added weight in international forums. Protocol No. 5 therefore had genuine significance and was not simply a declaration of intent.

Still, nothing was perfect and the procedure would require occasional review and correction.

Mr Bouda agreed entirely with the conclusions of the Glinne report.

As far as Upper Volta itself was concerned, he considered that the co-ordination effort should effectively give the least favoured countries the benefit of the entire political weight of the AASM in their dealings with industrialized third countries. Moreover, Upper Volta had very few primary commodities to export, and for this reason coordination was required in order to minimize the differences between it and the other partners.

Protocol No. 5 should be retained in the interests of all of the AASM and to demonstrate their active solidarity. This solidarity, moreover, should benefit the least developed countries so that they would not have to remain for too long in the wake of progress.

(Applause)

The CHAIRMAN closed the debate on the Glinne report. The resolution would be put to the vote on the following day.

Working document by Mr Louis Briot on the growth of tourism in Africa and the development of the tourist resources of the Associated African States and Madagascar

Mr BRIOT pointed out that his working document did not set out to lay down a policy for tourism in Africa, nor to offer advice on the subject to the African countries. The development of tourist resources in Africa was essentially a matter for the Africans themselves. It was simply the rapporteur's intention to list the problems involved.

Europe had already had a great deal of experience in the field of leisure organization, but the African countries enjoyed two advantages over the Europeans: firstly, the riches of nature which had remained intact and had not yet been destroyed by industrial encroachment. Secondly, Africa still had the wide-open spaces which were lacking in over-populated Europe.

Stock should be taken of existing resources and the necessary infrastructure established in order to open these countries to tourism on a wide scale.

Europe regularly witnessed a mass exodus to the sun. In Africa, the sun always shone and this fact should be exploited.

Tourism also served to bring out the cultural and artistic heritage of a country; in this respect the products of African craftsmen could play an important role.

The numerous speakers on the subject at the Ouagadougou meeting were evidence of the interest which it aroused. Particular stress had been laid on the importance of taking precautions against importing specific ideas and modes of behaviour which would conflict with the habits and way of life of the native population.

Mr Briot said he would restrict himself to these few remarks because the delegates had had time to study his working document at their leisure. He thought that the Africans were not always aware of their riches, so much admired by the Europeans and should do more to attract attention to them. The Europeans would follow the efforts made in this direction with keen interest.

(Applause)

Speaking on behalf of the Cameroon delegation, Mr NGO' O'MEBE thanked the rapporteur who, starting from the conclusions reached by the Yaoundé colloquium and the UNCTAD Conference at Santiago, had touched upon a range of basic problems facing the development of tourism in Africa.

The AASM States had great hopes for tourism as a factor in their economic development.

Of the four vital factors in the development of tourism cited by the rapporteur, one of them was seldom mentioned except in passing: the training of specialists in tourism.

Africans were by nature hospitable, but foreign visitors often failed to understand the way in which this hospitality was expressed. It was therefore vital to take the necessary steps to ensure the training of qualified hotel and holiday staff and to make the inhabitants aware of the real purpose of tourism. Indeed, a great deal depended on the tourist's first impressions of the country he was visiting. The hostess or the guide could contribute much to the image of the country concerned.

The speaker supported the establishment of training schools jointly sponsored by a number of States. The curriculum in these schools should be largely given over to Africa itself, because tourists wanted information on the history, the language and art of the areas visited.

On the other hand, the inhabitants should be advised to safeguard their cultural heritage, a major touristic attraction. In this connection, Mr Ngo' O'Mebe found it deplorable that some craftsmen should for the sake of convenience, run the risk of discrediting African art by mass-producing hundred of copies of the same item.

The third economic and social development plan for the Cameroon called for greater efforts with regard to the training of qualified hotel and tourist personnel. Despite this, EEC assistance in the form of scholarships would be necessary. He agreed with the rapporteur that the development of tourism in Africa was a matter for the Africans themselves, but he observed that developing countries had to go cap in hand if they wanted to achieve concrete results.

(Applause)

Mr James HILL stressed the importance of African art and craftsmanship. This was a factor which should not be under-estimated in any policy to promote tourism in Africa. But the use of ivory in the production of artefacts should not be allowed to lead to a depletion of wild life, which is already seriously threatened by hunters and poachers.

He emphasized the importance of creating a favourable climate for tourism in the African countries. Tourists should feel at ease and never be given an impression of hostility. Thus it would be desirable to do away with the occasionally niggling and meddlesome manifestations of officialdom.

Referring to paragraph 24 of the resolution, he reminded the Conference of the need for more substantial progress on the question of the reduction of air fares.

In conclusion, Mr Hill stressed the importance of the tourist resources of Africa which were a source of pleasure for all and a means of increasing the Continent's revenue.

Mr POUNDER said he wished to endorse what Mr Hill had said. First of all, however, he wanted to thank the Zaire authorities for the warm welcome extended to the Conference delegates and express his gratitude for the words of welcome addressed specifically to the delegates representing the new members of the EEC.

He went on to say how much importance he attached to the protection of the environment. Pollution and the destruction of the environment were acts of folly. For a long time, particularly in England, industry and agriculture had been regarded as the mainsprings of prosperity. The tertiary sector, including tourism, had been no more than an appendage, neglected and under-estimated. Mr Pounder rejected this view. The prosperity of the part of the United Kingdom he came from was founded on tourism. Africa should take the same approach. It would be a great mistake to spoil the African countryside by an indiscriminate development of industry. Whatever happened, he felt it was vital to avoid the error of thinking that the development of tourism and similar activities was of secondary importance.

(Applause)

There being no further speakers, the Chairman closed the discussion and informed the Conference that the working document drawn up by Mr Briot was being referred to the Joint Committee.

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At the proposal of the CHAIRMAN, the Conference decided to adjourn and to meet again on the following day, Saturday 31 March 1973, at 9.30 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 6.00 p.m.