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SUMMARY OF VICE-PRESIDENT VREDELING'S SPEECH TO THE MID-ATLANTIC CLUB IN WASHINGTON  
ON 8 SEPTEMBER 1978

In a speech to the Mid-Atlantic Club in Washington on 8 September, Vice-President Vredeling put forward the view that the European Community would not ultimately be able to avoid developing a common security policy.

Although the question of defence had been outside the Community's brief since the failure to establish the European Defence Community, Mr. Vredeling felt that: "It would be unrealistic to act as though this meant that all the associated problems were dead and buried". He drew attention to the points of contact between the activities of the European Community and defence policy in areas such as the production of defence materials. It would, for instance, be impossible to draw up common policies for the Community's aircraft and shipbuilding industries without considering the production of military aircraft and naval vessels. Nor could a Community foreign policy be set up without defence playing a part.

"Should the European Community deal with its own security policy, too? I realize that the political climate is not yet ripe for such a development, but I also realize that in the future, when we are taking decisions concerning future political cooperation, we cannot avoid entering this sphere, particularly if effective cooperation with the United States is to continue", so Vice-President Vredeling argued.

It was equally important, he said, for both Western Europe and the United States that the conflicts between their interests be reconciled. Bearing this in mind, he discussed a number of major problems of the day for which the two continents needed to seek common solutions. Energy supplies for instance, must not be allowed to become increasingly dependent on nuclear fuel until the problems of proliferation and waste disposal had been solved. As a first step towards this, Americans and Europeans needed to come to terms with each other. Mr. Vredeling also stated that the monetary integration of the Community was, in his view, in the interests of the United States: "A strong European currency, together with the dollar and the Japanese yen, will constitute the foundation for a worldwide economic and monetary system".

Mr. Vredeling also discussed the possibility of promoting better working conditions and social protection for workers in developing countries by making aid and preferential treatment for such countries subject to the application of minimum standards in these fields. He stressed that these minimum standards, which were being drawn up by the European Commission, were not intended as a barrier to protect Western economies against competition from the low-wage countries of the Third World.

The aim of the minimum standards was rather to offer support to the great number of those who still had to struggle for a decent existence: "Our aim is not protectionism, but protection".

The International Labour Organization had done a valuable job in preparing and formulating the minimum standards and Mr. Vredeling felt that it should also play a role in ensuring the application of these standards in the future. He therefore hoped that the United States Government would see its way clear to rejoining the ILO as Western Europe could not do without the partnership of the United States in drafting and applying these minimum standards.