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Report by Mr Leo Tindemans,
Prime Minister of Belgium,
to the European Council

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EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
Commission

contents

<i>Text of Mr Leo Tindemans' letter to his European Council colleagues.</i>	5
Report on European Union	9
I. <i>A common vision of Europe</i>	11
A. Europe today	11
B. European Union	13
II. <i>Europe in the world</i>	14
A. A single decision-making centre	14
B. Towards a common foreign policy	15
C. Immediate positive action	16
III. <i>European economic and social policies</i>	19
A. Economic and monetary policy	19
B. Sectoral policies	23
C. Social and regional policies	24
IV. <i>A citizen's Europe</i>	26
A. Protection of rights	26
B. External signs of our solidarity	27
V. <i>Strengthening the institutions</i>	29
A. The Parliament	29
B. The European Council	30
C. The Council	30
D. The Commission	31
E. The Court of Justice	32
F. Other Community bodies	32
G. The delegation of executive power	33
VI. <i>General conclusion</i>	34

Text of Mr Leo Tindemans' letter

to his European Council colleagues

sent on 29 December 1975

At the Conference of Heads of Government of Member States of the European Communities, which was held in Paris on 10 and 11 December 1974, you asked me to define what was meant by the term 'European Union'.

When attempting to do this I obviously took into account the reports drawn up by the European Parliament, the Commission of the European Communities and the Court of Justice and also the opinions voiced during the past year by members of your governments and other powerful forces in the various States.

Throughout these contacts I was struck by a contradiction.

On the one hand, some people believed that it was particularly inappropriate to draw up a report on European Union at a time when the European concept was passing through a crisis and the incompleting European structure was swaying. Furthermore, there was the feeling that the economic recession has made itself felt in our Member States throughout 1975 without any large-scale joint action having been planned to counter the effects of economic depression and unemployment.

And yet—and this is most significant—almost all the people to whom I spoke stated that they could not imagine a better future for their country than that offered by the building of Europe. They could not conceive of doing this other than by strengthening the Community.

In this respect, there is a distinct divergence of views between public opinion and those who fulfil a political role in their respective countries.

Public opinion is extremely sceptical on the will to establish a genuine European Union and solve the real problems of the day at European level. It wants results and questions the lack of political will on the part of its leaders.

For me, the conclusion is obvious: if we wish to safeguard the achievements of the Treaties and conquer new ground the Member States must agree on new aims.

At this stage, the stakes are political, that is quite irrefutable.

This is the reason why I deliberately refused to draw up a report claiming to be, at least in part, the Constitution for the future European Union. Nor did I wish to describe what Europe ideally should be, while remaining personally convinced that Europe will only fulfil its destiny if it espouses federalism.

The crisis in Europe is so serious that we must, in the immediate future, save what has already been achieved and, working on this basis, take drastic measures to make a significant leap forward.

I had to make a difficult choice. My proposals do not directly concern the final phase of European development. They state the objectives and the methods whereby Europe can be invested with a new vitality and current obstacles can be overcome.

My choice is based on the belief that at the present time any other approach would either be unworthy of our faith in Europe, or else, because of its utopian nature in the present circumstances, would lose all credibility with the parties in power. Consequently, it represents a realistic yet feasible approach.

For me, European Union is a new phase in the history of the unification of Europe which can only be achieved by a continuous process. Consequently, it is difficult to lay down, at this stage, the date of completion of the European Union. It will only achieve its objectives by means of institutions which have been adapted to its new requirements. It is in fact by means of institutions which have been strengthened and improved that the Union will be able to give increasing expression to its own dynamism. In this respect, the role of a directly-elected European Parliament will be decisive in the development of the Union. Finally, I am convinced of the need, in 1980, to assess what we have already achieved so as to open up new prospects and make further progress.

That, after much reflection, is my conclusion.

Seen in this light, the proposals put forward in my report should help us to overcome the present crisis, improve the functioning of the institutions, give shape to yesterday's and today's political options and work out new ones. As I see it, this is the main task at the present time.

If we succeed in this, the European concept will be preserved once and for all and because of this the future of our peoples assured.

I remain firmly convinced—as do the great majority of our fellow-citizens—that we can only really develop if we have common policies in most sectors.

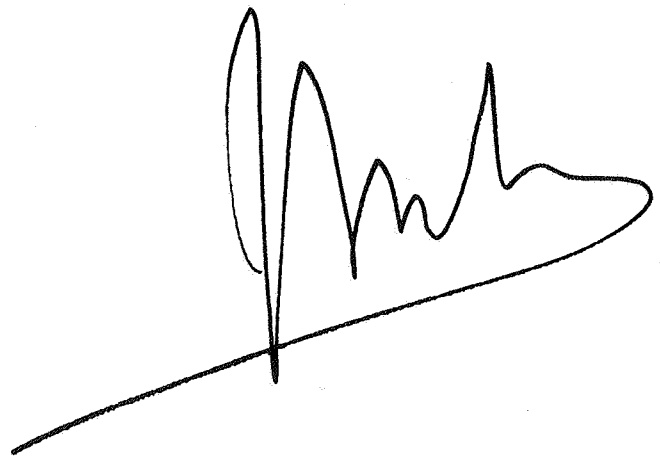
Efforts to reach an agreement on vital questions of international policy and concertation on security are the basis of our policy which aims at safeguarding our identity. They are indispensable to Europe if a better world is to be built.

The aim of European Union should be to overcome the age-old conflicts which are often artificially maintained between nation States, to build a more humane society in which, along with mutual respect for our national and cultural characteristics, the accent will be placed more on the factors uniting us than on those dividing us.

Such a Europe could awaken new hope in everyone and could be the focal point in an ideal and significant resurgence.

Any discussion which the European Council may wish to hold on my report should lead to a commitment to achieve by appropriate decisions the qualitative change characteristic of European Union.

I am convinced that after a detailed study of this report you will feel able to endorse its objectives and ensure that they are carried out.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Report on European Union

I. A common vision of Europe

A. Europe today

Why has the European concept lost a lot of its force and initial impetus? I believe that over the years the European public has lost a guiding light, namely the political consensus between our countries on our reasons for undertaking this joint task and the characteristics with which we wish to endow it. We must first of all restore this common vision if we wish to have European Union.

In 1975 the European citizen does not view the reasons for the construction of Europe in exactly the same way as in 1950. The European idea is partly a victim of its own successes: the reconciliation between formerly hostile countries, the economic prosperity due to the enlarged market, the *détente* which has taken the place of the cold war, thanks particularly to our cohesion, all this seems to have been achieved and consequently not to require any more effort. Europe today is part of the general run of things; it seems to have lost its air of adventure.

Our peoples are concerned with new problems and values scarcely mentioned by the Treaties. They realize that political union does not automatically follow from economic integration; too many fruitless discussions cast doubt on the credibility and topicality of our joint endeavour: to this extent the European idea is also a victim of its failures.

In this state of mind we plunged into a crisis and are experiencing rates of inflation and unemployment the likes of which have never been seen by the present generation. It is therefore hardly surprising if the Community is crumbling beneath the resurgence, which is felt everywhere, of purely national preoccupations. Especially as the Community, in its present state, is unbalanced: in some fields it has been given far-reaching powers, in others nothing, or practically nothing, has been done, very often because our States were too weak to undertake anything new: the fragile

nature of Europe in some ways also reflects the powerlessness of our States.

An unfinished structure does not weather well: it must be completed, otherwise it collapses. Today Community attainments are being challenged.

Basically, however, Europeans are still in favour of closer links between our peoples as laid down in the Treaties of Paris and Rome, first between the Six, later between the Nine. They even take this *rapprochement* as a matter of course and regret not having more evidence of it in their daily lives. A return to selfish national attitudes, to national barriers, and to the antagonisms which they have frequently engendered would be seen as a historic defeat, the collapse of the efforts of a whole generation of Europeans.

If this extensive will for *rapprochement* is to take on a political dimension vital to ensure that action is taken, Europe must find its place again among the major concerns of public opinion thus ensuring that it will be the focal point of the political discussions of tomorrow. We must listen to our people. What do the Europeans want? What do they expect from a united Europe?

1. A voice in the world

During my visits I was struck by the widespread feeling that we are vulnerable and powerless. This is a new experience for our peoples in recent history. Inequality in the distribution of wealth threatens the stability of the world economic system; exhaustion of resources weighs heavily on the future of industrial society; the internationalization of economic life makes our system of production ever more dependent. Our States seem very weak to face these challenges alone. What weight do isolated voices have unless they are those of the super powers?

And yet the will to make an active contribution is still very strong as we can see from the 100 000 young Europeans who are working in cooperation programmes throughout the world. Our peoples are conscious that they embody certain values which have had an inestimable influence on the development of civilization. Why should we cease to spread our ideas abroad when we have

always done so? Which of us has not been surprised to see the extent to which the European identity is an accepted fact by so many of the foreigners to whom we speak? It is not only from within that there is a call to the countries of Europe to unite.

Our peoples expect the European Union to be, where and when appropriate, the voice of Europe. Our joint action must be the means of effectively defending our legitimate interests, it must provide the basis for real security in a fairer world, and enable us to take part in this dialogue between groups which clearly characterizes international life. How can we reconcile these requirements in today's world if we do not unite?

Europe must guard against isolation, against turning inwards on itself which would reduce it to a footnote in history, and also against the subjection and narrow dependence which would prevent it from making its voice heard. It must recover some control over its destiny. It must build a type of society which is ours alone and which reflects the values which are the heritage and the common creation of our peoples.

2. A new society

We all feel that our society is in the state of anxious expectancy and conflict which is the forerunner of major changes. New and sometimes contradictory scales of values are making their appearance in all fields of social life. The task of the present generation is to seek a transition to a post-industrial society which respects the basic values of our civilization and reconciles the rights of the individual with those of the community. If we fail our democracies will be at risk and our children will inherit a decadent society.

Despite the sometimes radical divergencies in the solutions advocated there does exist a minimum consensus of opinion between the democratic forces in Europe on the nature of the changes required. A new type of economic growth displaying more respect for the quality of life and the physical and human environment and better able to reconcile economic and social objectives. Growth which is oriented towards highly special-

ized activities and makes full use of the skills available in Europe, management and organizational capacities in the most advanced and complex fields of human activity; this is our one specific advantage in the international economy: Europe's 'grey gold'. Finally, the development of individual personal responsibility in the social and economic sphere by associating workers with the decision making, the management or profits of undertakings, by greater freedom in the organization of work, by more openness, decentralization and consultation in public administration.

Our peoples wish European Union to embody and promote the development of our society corresponding to their expectations, to provide a new authority to compensate for the reduced power of national structures and to introduce reforms and controls which often cannot be implemented at State level, to give an organic form to the existing solidarity of our economies, our finances and our social life. Europe can and must identify itself with the concerted and better controlled pursuit of the common good with economic resources being reoriented towards the collective interest, a reduction in regional and social inequalities, decentralization and participation in decision making. We will then have created a new type of society, a more democratic Europe with a greater sense of solidarity and humanity.

3. A positive solidarity

No one wants to see a technocratic Europe. European Union must be experienced by the citizen in his daily life. It must make itself felt in education and culture, news and communications, it must be manifest in the youth of our countries, and in leisure time activities. It must protect the rights of the individual and strengthen democracy through a set of institutions which have legitimacy conferred upon them by the will of our peoples. The image of Europe must be in line with its motivations and opportunities, it must demonstrate to those within and without the solidarity of our peoples and the values of our society. I am convinced that this Europe, a progressive Europe, will lack neither power nor impetus.

B. European Union

The basic choice made by the Founding Fathers of Europe and embodied in the Treaties of Rome and Paris was to bring about an ever closer union between our peoples. This option is still ours. In the face of the internal and external challenges of our society, felt by the whole of Europe, six countries initially and then nine decided to fight back by joining forces.

The 1972¹ and 1974² Paris Conferences decided that European Union was the best means of doing this at the present stage of the construction of Europe.

As the aims and nature of European Union are not today clearly understood the first task of our governments is to decide within the European Council what precisely are the scope and consequences of these choices. It is now up to the European Council to decide in which general perspective the joint endeavour will be pursued during the Union phase. The time to enshrine in a legal text all the changes which have been gradually made to the European structure will be when the process of building the Union has acquired its own momentum.

As a result of my consultations in all our countries, *I propose that the European Council should define the different components of European Union as follows:*

(1) *European Union implies that we present a united front to the outside world. We must tend to act in common in all the main fields of our external relations whether in foreign policy, security, economic relations or development aid. Our action is aimed at defending our interests but also at using our collective strength in support of law and justice in world discussions.*

(2) *European Union recognizes the interdependence of the economic prosperity of our States and accepts the consequences of this: a common economic and monetary policy to manage this prosperity, common policies in the industrial and agricultural sectors and on energy and research to safeguard the future.*

(3) *European Union requires the solidarity of our peoples to be effective and adequate. Regional policy will correct inequalities in development and counteract the centralizing effects of industrial societies. Social*

action will mitigate inequalities of income and encourage society to organize itself in a fairer and more humane fashion.

(4) *European Union makes itself felt in people's daily lives. It helps to protect their rights and to improve their life style.*

(5) *In order to achieve these tasks European Union is given institutions with the necessary powers to determine a common, coherent and all-inclusive political view, the efficiency needed for action, the legitimacy needed for democratic control. The principle of the equality of all our States continues to be respected within the Union by each State's right to participate in political decision making.*

(6) *Like the Community whose objectives it pursues and whose attainments it protects European Union will be built gradually. So as to restart the construction of Europe straight away and increase its credibility its initial basis is the political commitment of the States to carry out in different fields specific actions selected according to their importance and the chances of success.*

The different facets of European Union described above are closely connected. The development of the Union's external relations cannot occur without a parallel development of common policies internally. Neither can be achieved without consolidating the authority and effectiveness of common institutions. In this vast scheme everything goes together and it is the sum of the progress achieved in parallel which constitutes the qualitative change which is European Union. The rest of this report will examine in each of the fields referred to the aim and the first positive actions which need to be and can be taken.

The general framework which I propose should be adopted by the European Council must serve as guidelines for our efforts to build Europe. The will of our States, expressed in this way, is based on the deep-seated motivations of public opinion and can convey to it the guiding light of our common action.

The political consequences of these choices must be carefully assessed. They cannot occur without a transfer of competences to common institutions. They cannot occur without a transfer of resources from prosperous to less prosperous regions. They cannot occur without constraints, freely accepted certainly, but then enforced unre-

servedly. This is the price of Union. But what price would we pay for inaction? The crumbling away of the Community, voices isolated and often going unheard on the world stage, less and less control over our destiny, an unconvincing Europe without a future.

II. Europe in the world

Our States' reasons for presenting a united front in world discussions are convincing from an objective point of view: they stem from power relationships and the size of the problems. From a subjective point of view they are felt very strongly by our peoples: our vulnerability and our relative impotence are in the thoughts of everyone. The convergence of these two factors means that external relations are one of the main reasons for building Europe, and make it essential for the European Union to have an external policy.

A. A single decision-making centre

The examination of our possibilities for action in the world should be based on one obvious fact: the increasing intermeshing of different sectors of international activity.

In the framework described in the preceding chapter the European Union should not only be concerned with foreign policy in the traditional sense, including security aspects, nor solely with tariff and trade policies which are already common policies by virtue of the Treaty of Rome, but also with all external economic relations. The traditional distinctions maintained by diplomatic chancelleries in this field make increasingly less sense in the modern world. Recent developments of international life show that economic, industrial, financial and commercial questions will all in the future be the subject of negotiations, the significance of which will be highly political. If the European Union did not have the means to cover all aspects of our external relations it would not be equal to its task. The Union must have a comprehensive and coherent outlook, and act accordingly. *I propose that the European Council should now decide:*

(a) *to put an end to the distinction which still exists today between ministerial meetings which deal with political cooperation and those which deal with the*

subjects covered by the Treaties: in order to decide on a policy the Ministers must be able to consider all aspects of the problems within the Council.

(b) that the institutions of the Union can discuss all problems if they are relevant to European interests and consequently come within the ambit of the Union.

The existence of a single decision-making centre does not mean that there will be confusion between those activities which today are the responsibility of the Community and those which lie in the field of political cooperation. The nature of the problems is not such that they must all be dealt with in the same way. But coherence of activity, which is essential, does require that the different aspects of the often complex problems which the European Union will have to examine be dealt with together, at least at ministerial level, by the same people and in the same place.

With this in mind I propose changing the political commitment of the Member States which is the basis of political cooperation into a legal obligation. A very short protocol taking up paragraph 11 of the Copenhagen Report³ ought to give competence to the Council and thus clarify the legal framework in which it is to operate.*

The development of new policies on the basis of the Treaties does not cause any particular problem: the provisions binding us are clear and there are numerous precedents. The same thing does not apply in fields not covered by the Treaties. The way in which future developments are to take place must be specified here.

* This paragraph reads as follows:

'Governments will consult each other on all important foreign policy questions and will work out priorities, observing the following criteria:

- the purpose of the consultation is to seek common policies on practical problems;
- the subjects dealt with must concern European interests whether in Europe itself or elsewhere where the adoption of a common position is necessary or desirable.

On these questions each State undertakes as a general rule not to take up final positions without prior consultation with its partners within the framework of the political cooperation machinery.'

B. Towards a common foreign policy

In those fields of foreign relations not covered by the Treaties the Nine nowadays coordinate their policies, and in recent years this arrangement has been extended and has met with considerable success. Such an arrangement would not, however, be adequate within the framework of the European Union. It explicitly incorporates within its structure the possibility of failure: the pursuit of different policies whenever coordination has not been achieved. The European identity will not be accepted by the outside world so long as the European States appear sometimes united, sometimes disunited.

European Union obviously implies that, within the fields covered by the Union, the European States should always present a united front, otherwise the term would be meaningless. The coordination of policies, which is important during a transitional period, must therefore gradually make way for common policies, which means that within the framework of the European Union, our States must be able together to draw up a policy and to enact it.

Chapter V of this report gives details on the respective roles of the European institutions in the formulation and implementation of a common foreign policy. Here suffice it to say that the European Council has a vital role to play in stating general policy guidelines based on a global political analysis, without which there can be no common policy. The political decision, which is the application of agreed general policy guidelines to the realities of everyday life, is the responsibility of the Council.

The main difference between the coordination of policies, as practised at present, and a common external policy, which distinguishes the Union, does not arise from the kind of procedure adopted or the nature of the relevant institution. It lies in the obligation to reach a common point of view. The States will undertake to define the broad guidelines for their policy within the European Council. On this basis, the Council then has the obligation to reach a common decision on specific questions. This obviously means that the

