

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

DELEGATION FOR THE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS

Information Note

Members will find attached a note prepared by the Secretariat for Interparliamentary Delegations on European Parliament-United States Congress relations.

DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR COMMITTEES
AND INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

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Introduction

Parliamentary contacts arise largely

- from formal agreements between the European Community and the country or countries in question; or
- from resolutions of the European Parliament.

Ad hoc visits are occasionally initiated by simple exchange of letters.

Delegations for interparliamentary contacts are made up of members of all political groups, where possible reflecting the political balance in the Parliament and the interests of the appropriate parliamentary committee(s). A wide variety of meetings between delegations, some more regular than others, now take place, besides the contacts made by the President (under Rule 53). Meetings with the United States Congress delegation have taken place regularly following initial ad hoc contacts and resolutions of the European Parliament.

EP - US Congress relations

Preliminary contacts were made in January 1972 when a delegation of eight members of the House of Representatives visited Luxembourg and Brussels and met with an EP delegation chaired by Mr Bersani, Vice-President. After a return visit to Washington in May that year the EP passed a resolution stating:

"The European Parliament,

- Considers it desirable for contacts between the US Administration and the Commission of the European Communities to be supplemented at the political level by a parliamentary dialogue between Members of Congress and Members of the European Parliament;
- Resolves to pursue and strengthen the new parliamentary relations in agreement with the United States Congress;
- Invites its President to take all the necessary steps, in cooperation with the appropriate American authorities, to organize and ensure the maximum possible effectiveness for future working meetings which would in principle be held twice each year, alternately in the European Community and in the United States."¹

After a further exchange in early 1973, the European Parliament passed a second resolution in October 1973 emphasizing the importance of direct parliamentary contacts for relations between the USA and the EC and hoping contacts

¹OJ No. C 82/6

would be intensified.¹ Later that month an EP delegation visited Washington. Since then regular meetings have taken place twice a year, alternately in Washington and in the EC (Luxembourg, Strasbourg, Florence, Munich, Dublin, London, Taormina and Paris). Joint working sessions were held with a pre-determined agenda. Working documents were prepared by individual members of the delegations on items.² Since April 1976 the meetings (with one exception) have begun with a question time at which each delegation has asked the other one or two specific questions, whose texts have been exchanged in advance.

The subjects covered in the first fifteen meetings and their frequency may be summarized as follows:

<u>Political themes</u>	<u>No. of meetings at which item appeared on the agenda</u>
<u>General</u>	
- East-West relations:	
security and defence	2
détente: CSCE	7
- Mediterranean issues:	
Greece, Turkey, the Aegean, Cyprus	7
Euro-Arab Dialogue	2
Other Mediterranean (Spain/Portugal)	3
Other South Mediterranean (Maghreb, Mashreq, etc.)	1
- Indochina and South East Asia	1
- The Middle East	3
- Africa	1
- Relations with nations emerging on the international political scene	1
<u>Institutional</u>	
- direct elections to the EP	3
- enlargement of the EC	2
- political parties and their role in parliamentary decision-making	1
- the role of Parliaments in foreign affairs	3
- progress towards European union; EC political developments	2
<u>Other</u>	
- human rights and fundamental liberties	6
- general review of political events since last meeting	4

¹OJ C 95 of 10.11.1973

²T. Junker 'Cinq ans de relations interparlementaires Parlement Européen-Congrès des Etats-Unis (1972-1977)' in Revue du Marché Commun No. 205 March 1977, pp 120-127, and C.P. Hackett 'Learning from the US Congress: are there any lessons for the new European Parliament?' in European Community November-December 1978, pp 29-32.

Economic themes

- US-EC trade, international trade, GATT, MTNs, etc.	11
- multinational enterprises	8
- government intervention in industry	1
- steel industry/trade	2
- international monetary issues, including EMS	10
- raw material supplies, UN Common Fund	1
- development issues, foreign aid, CIEC	5

Energy themes

- supplies	2
- energy policies	7
- nuclear non-proliferation	5
- energy research	2

Agricultural themes

- agricultural trade, the CAP and US agricultural policies	9
- food supplies	2
- social aspects of agricultural policies	1

The subjects are those formally on the agenda or the themes of questions asked during question time. Others have no doubt arisen during the discussions.

Certain specific initiatives have arisen as a result of this parliamentary exchange. In April and September 1974 hearings were held in Munich and in Washington by the two delegations on multinational companies. Representatives of interested groups were invited to give evidence. Two rapporteurs, Mr Lange for the EP Delegation and Mr Gibbons for the US Congress Delegation, then drew up a code of conduct which was the subject of a report in the European Parliament¹ and was introduced as a bill in the US Congress.² In September 1976 EP President Spénale chaired the delegation's visit to Washington; during the discussions the establishment of a joint working group on human rights was proposed. The proposal was approved by the appropriate authorities and the joint working group has been convened at all subsequent meetings, initially under the joint chairmanship of Mr Cousté and Congressman Don Fraser. The joint working group or its chairmen have made interventions in support of human rights, by addressing letters to governments or their representatives who have, according to reputable authorities, not safeguarded fundamental human rights, and specifically have imprisoned parliamentarians without due process.

¹Doc. 547/76 on the principles to be observed by enterprises and governments in international economic activity, OJ No. C 118 of 16.5.1977

²H.R.9878 of the 95th US Congress 1st Session introduced on 1 November 1977.

While in Washington, the EP Delegation had briefing meetings with senior members of the US Administration, such as the Secretary of State, Special Trade Negotiator, Secretary for Agriculture, National Security Adviser, Secretary of Energy, Council of Economic Advisers to the President. Briefing meetings with the EC Delegation in Washington and contacts with Member States' Ambassadors there have been important features of the programme.

During its recent visits to the United States in November 1977 and in January/February 1979 the European Parliament also visited the United Nations in New York where it met the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr Kurt Waldheim and was briefed by high officials of the United Nations on human rights and international economic and development issues. Contacts with the representatives of the nine EC Member States at the United Nations were made with the close collaboration of the EC delegation office in New York.

Conclusions

The late US Congressman Leo Ryan, a past chairman of the US Congress delegation, in his report to the chairman of the International Relations Committee subsequent to the thirteenth meeting of delegations, concluded:

"Without attempting to exaggerate the role of significance of our biannual deliberations, I would merely point out that they deal with issues which impact directly on the lives and fortunes of all Americans."¹

In an accompanying letter requested by Congressman Ryan, US Ambassador to the EC in Brussels Mr Dean Hinton states:

"Interchanges between the Parliament and the Congress not only reflect the current concerns and sensitivities among political figures on both sides of the Atlantic, but can give rise to practical understanding of the implications for the two regions of policy in specific areas. While Members of Congress who have participated in these exchanges are better able than I to judge their effectiveness, reports I have received from both sides suggest that such understanding has been improved in areas of mutual concern like trade policy, protectionist pressures, development aid, human rights, and nuclear energy, as well as policies regarding the Eastern Mediterranean, Southern Africa, and East-West relations."

Congressman Thomas P. O'Neill, Speaker of the US House of Representatives, in his message to the newly elected Members of the European Parliament 17 July 1979 stated:

".... The direct election of the European Parliament is a dramatic progression in the growth of representative democracy and an important step in

¹Congressional Record - Extensions of Remarks, E2656, 17 May 1978

the direction of greater European integration.

In past years, the House of Representatives strongly supported semi-annual conferences between appointed Members of the European Parliament and the United States Congress. Now, in the light of your new status as a fully elected representative body, the House of Representatives welcomes closer ties and additional parliamentary exchanges on subjects of mutual interest, including trade policies and economic cooperation."



