

APPEAL OF STRASBOURG

REINFORCEMENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS: COUNCIL OF EUROPE, EUROPEAN UNION AND OSCE

Important elements of the “**Appeal of Strasbourg**” adopted by the participants in the seminar organised by the European Association of former members of Parliament of the member states of the Council of Europe or the European Union (Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg, 10th November 2000)

1. The “European Association of former Members of Parliaments of the Member States of the Council of Europe or the European Union” (with its eight national member associations) is complaining that the reform process of European institutions and the enlargement of the EU are not sufficiently influenced by national parliaments and the existing European parliamentary assemblies. In its view, the increasing dominant roles of governments in forging Europe must be seen negatively as they alter the balance between the executive and legislative powers.

2. Reinforcing the European construction and the European integration is the overall desire of the European Association of former MPs. In its view the continuing transfer of sovereignty and political decisions from the national level to the European institutions risks being hegemonised by the intergovernmental choices which are not yet sufficiently accompanied, controlled and guided by the respective parliamentary bodies of each nation (democratic deficit).

3. The former MPs are convinced that national parliaments and the European Parliament as well as international assemblies must have the primary task of ensuring democracy, human rights, peace, good governance, social, economic and sustainable development and the predominance of the human being and the quality of life over globalization. They know that the substantial strengthening of the parliamentary dimension of the Council of Europe, the EU, the WEU, and the OSCE will improve European parliamentary democracy, promote European integration and contribute to the citizens' awareness of and their participation in the super-national institutions. They underline the important role of political parties in this respect.

4. They call for ways and methods for obtaining greater citizens' participation through dialogue with the organisations of civil society making use of new information technologies and through referendums and consultations to enrich the participatory democracy as an important element of representational democracy.

5. To strengthen the parliamentary dimension the former MPs urge the European Parliament (EP), the Parliamentary Assembly (PA) of the Council of Europe, the Assembly of the WEU/interim European Security and Defence Assembly and the OSCE-PA, as well as the respective parliaments to

- a) Guarantee efficiency at the legislative level and control over the executive and the bureaucracy.
- b) Establish effective coordination and interaction among each other, establishing the conditions in a general systematic agreement to guarantee coherence for the building of Europe, while respecting each body's specific terms of reference and respective comparative advantages (Council of Europe : human rights and democratic security; control of the commitments of the member states, cultural cooperation; European Union : political, economic and - in the near future - civil and military security and crises management, thus taking over certain functions of the WEU and guaranteeing an adequate political and parliamentary control; OSCE : prevention of military conflicts and management of conflicts, regional actor in the sense of Chap. VIII of the UN-Charter).
- c) Aim at a better preparation of important political decisions and a better follow-up through closer cooperation with national parliaments.

Council of Europe

6. The former MPs recognise the pre-eminent role, experience and knowledge of the Council of Europe in the building of a greater Europe without dividing lines and express concern for too many

recommendations, of significant interest, of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that are not followed through by the Committee of Ministers.

7. They urge national governments and parliaments

- a) to give the Council of Europe sufficient financial means so that the topics discussed can be carried out and established;
- b) not to compromise the competence of the Council of Europe with regard to the defense of human rights and for exercising the Jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights, avoiding useless duplications of these institutions;
- c) to constitute a General Judicial Authority of the European Council for the uniform interpretation of treaties and conventions;

European Union

8. For the European Association further European integration must be guaranteed by more effective "strengthened cooperation" procedures geared towards the democratic constitutionalisation and legitimisation of the Union's institutions. It welcomes all plans to relaunch and improve relations between the European Parliament and national Parliaments within the framework of sharing democratic sovereignty in a spirit of subsidiarity. The topics of federalism and of a European constitution have been relaunched and the former MPs share and support these issues.

9. A "founding constitutional pact" must contain the Union's fundamental principles, the basis of its constitutional organisation, the rules that within such an organisation allow resorting to strengthened cooperation as well as norms for the European citizenship with particular reference to the Charter of fundamental rights. This "constitutional pact" should be approved by the European citizens of the countries concerned. The Association urges that the Commission takes on the role of an actual government whose president should be elected by a democratic process with wider executive power.

10. The former MPs consider as priority objectives:

- a) A global and coherent review of the institutional system of the European Union
 - that allows strengthening the Commission's authority and democratic nature as an executive body;
 - that introduces the generalisation of the qualified majority vote in the Union's Council - reasonably weighted - both in the constitutional issues (review of treaties, accession to its own resources) as well as legislative matters,
 - the consequent generalisation of power regarding constitutional, legislative and budgetary co-decision making of the European Parliament - reasonably weighted -
 - the communitarisation of foreign policy as well as the creation of a common area of law and internal security, including immigration and non-discrimination issues.
- b) The strengthening of the major common policies, in particular within the context of the economic Union, the fight against unemployment and economic and social cohesion so as to create the conditions for the development of a true macro-economic policy of the Union in the interest of its citizens with which the European Central Bank must act autonomously, sided by a political council.

11. For the evolution towards the "parliamentarization" of the European Federation the European Association faces two different options: the first is represented by a bicameral parliamentary system with an EP that is directly elected and by a second chamber of the member states; the second prefers the single-chamber system with a Parliament of the Federation that must remain the direct and sole expression of people's sovereignty and that assigns the COSAC (Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union) the relations with the national Parliaments.

OSCE

12. The former MPs ask to consider the transformation of the OSCE into a real international organisation, using the necessary means, controlled democratically and with a statute approved by the national parliaments.

13. They urge to reconsider the participation of the individuals elected non democratically in the OSCE-PA.

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