

Opening address by Piet De Jong (The Hague, 1 December 1969)

Caption: On 1 December 1969, meeting in the historic 'Knight's Hall' of the Binnenhof in The Hague, the Heads of State or Government of the Six listen to the opening address of the Summit, delivered by the Netherlands Prime Minister, Piet de Jong.

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“It is a pleasure and honour for me to welcome you all. I do so in the first place as Prime Minister of the country which has the privilege of being your host for a few days. Our country’s welcome is all the more cordial because you are the high representatives of countries to which we are bound very intimately by political, economic and military links as well as by our common history and civilization. We consider that your stay here consolidates our close mutual friendship.

I also welcome you in my capacity as Chairman of the conference. We took on a difficult task when we agreed to hold this meeting. A gathering of those who carry the highest responsibility, in their respective countries, for the issues with which we shall have to do in the next few days is an occasion that arouses expectations among our peoples. I would mention that in the past days, and even today, I have had visits from leading European figures, and have received petitions and many letters. They all expressed the hope that this conference would find a solution for the problems which now face us and which we are to discuss. By meeting here, we are also assuming obligations to our peoples. And it was for this reason that some of us reacted somewhat hesitantly at first to the proposal of our French friends. The doubters asked themselves whether such a meeting could really be a success. We have overcome this hesitation and thus created confidence in the willingness of all partners to make a genuine contribution to solving our problems. So I know that I am speaking for our six Governments when I voice the hope that we shall accomplish the task we have set ourselves by holding this conference.

Our membership of the European Communities has brought us together here. This is far from being the only bond between us; but it is the decisive factor in the composition of this conference, and it will also dictate the topics we shall discuss. As partners in a Community which, in the limited form of the European Coal and Steel Community, has existed ever since 1952, we must examine our achievements to date, and see where we have failed and what we still can and must do to attain our objectives. It will not be for us to take decisions which the Treaties vest in the European institutions. However, the Member States are required to facilitate achievement of the aims of these institutions under Article 5 of the EEC Treaty, and the States have also been assigned their own tasks. It seems worthwhile for us to consult together with a view to fulfilling these aims and tasks. The Commission will be able to assist with this tomorrow.”

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