

Address given by Ernest Bevin (London, 5 May 1949)

Source: Conseil de l'Europe Discours 1949-1999 / Ernest Bevin.- Strasbourg: Conseil de l'Europe [Prod.], 1999. Conseil de l'Europe, Strasbourg. - SON (00:01:28, Montage, Son original).

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Last updated: 04/07/2016



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Gentlemen,

We have met together now for the ceremony of signature of the statute of the Council of Europe, and of the agreement concerning the establishment of the preparatory commission. Like the rest of my colleagues I want to express my feeling that this is a truly historic occasion. This statute which we are signing today is the result of many months of friendly negotiations between ten of the principal countries of Western Europe. It took shape in Paris during the discussions of the end of last year under the chairmanship of that distinguished French statesman Monsieur Herriot, and it has been continued in London by the diplomatic representatives of the ten countries. Now it has been put into final shape in this treaty. This agreement lays the foundations of something new and hopeful in European life. We are witnessing today the establishment of a common democratic institution on this ancient continent of Europe.