

First meeting of the ECSC-United Kingdom Association Council (Luxembourg, 17 November 1955)

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[René Mayer] The session is open.

Your Excellency, Gentlemen,

I am most honoured today to open the first session of the Council of Association between the Government of the United Kingdom and the High Authority. I am particularly delighted to welcome to Luxembourg, on this significant occasion, several eminent British participants: the Right Honourable Peter Thorneycroft, Chairman of the Board of Trade, the Honourable Lancelot Joynson-Hicks, parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Fuel and Power, Sir Hubert Houldsworth, Chairman of the National Coal Board and Sir Archibald Forbes, Chairman of the Iron and Steel Board, together with other distinguished representatives of the United Kingdom.

This inaugural session bears witness to the positive culmination of lengthy endeavours. The Association Treaty, signed on 21 December 1954, entered into force on 23 September 1955 with the depositing of the ratifications obtained last summer from the various Member States of the Community. Association between the United Kingdom and the Community has become a reality.

Today must constitute the point of departure for constructive efforts which will see tangible results emerge from a formal text and, each day, provide a positive direction for the commitments set out therein.

For the first time, the United Kingdom and the Community will meet at the same table to tackle certain elements of their coal and steel policies and seek common solutions to problems facing each of them.

Our Community, which recently embarked upon its fourth year of existence, brings to our association its 160 million consumers and more than 50 million tonnes of steel and 246 million tonnes of coal per year.

On the other side of the table we have the United Kingdom, the pioneer of modern industry, among the greatest of the world's coal and steel powers, and itself at the heart of a vast Commonwealth of peoples.

In the United Kingdom and the Community alike, coal and steel are at the centre of economic activity. Therefore, we share similar concerns, interests and responsibilities. It is inevitable that we should recognise the usefulness of combining our efforts and exchanging our experience.

Soon after the High Authority took office, the British Government sent a delegation to Luxembourg headed by Cecil Weir and now chaired with distinction by Sir William Meiklereid.

With patience, and even obstinacy, several men — chief among them the Right Honourable Duncan Sandys and Mr Jean Monnet — worked together to draw up the Association Agreement. This Agreement makes our Council a permanent instrument for the exchange of information and consultation on all issues of common interest with regard to coal and steel, in particular subjects as fundamental as supply, the pricing system and its establishment, general development objectives and guidelines on investment policy, technical progress and — this point I wish to emphasise — a certain number of welfare issues.

Moreover, we have responsibility for reviewing restrictions and other factors restricting trade with a view to formulating proposals so that we may reduce or eliminate them. We sincerely hope that the conclusion of this work will lead to increased trade between the two countries.

In other words, gentlemen, the task ahead of us, and for which there is no precedent to dictate methods and, more importantly, solutions, lays heavy responsibilities on our shoulders. We shall assume those responsibilities, I have no doubt, with the determination to facilitate as best we can, through our united efforts, the harmonious development of the two largest industrial sectors of the contemporary economy.