

Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (5 May 1989)

Caption: On 5 May 1989, the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers adopts a Declaration which marks a turning point in the organisation's history. In the light of the process of reform taking place in Eastern Europe, the Council of Europe is considering new prospects for cooperation with the countries of Eastern Europe, in particular in the fields of the promotion of human rights and the development of pluralist democracy.

Source: Declaration on the future role of the Council of Europe in European construction (adopted and signed at the 84th Session of the Committee of Ministers, 5 May 1989, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Organisation). [ON-LINE]. [Strasbourg]: Council of Europe, [18.11.2003]. Available on <http://cm.coe.int/ta/decl/1989/89dec3.htm>.

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Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the future role of the Council of Europe in European construction (5 May 1989)

Preamble

1. We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the 23 member States of the Council of Europe, meeting in Strasbourg on this day, the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Statute of the Council of Europe in London on 5 May 1949, reaffirm our belief that the Council's statutory role of achieving an ever greater unity between its member States on the basis of the principles of pluralist democracy and human rights is an essential contribution to any effort aimed at European unity.
2. We welcome the progress made over the past forty years in forging, on the basis of their common devotion to these principles, close bonds of trust and solidarity between an ever increasing number of European countries and peoples, a further addition being made to the Council of Europe's membership of democratic states by the accession of Finland this day.
3. Europe is at present witnessing important developments. The European Community is in the process of completing a European single market; the Community and the six countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) are working towards a wider European Economic area. In Eastern Europe some countries have embarked on policies of openness and reform which offer new scope for dialogue and co-operation. These developments demand that the Council of Europe should reaffirm and develop its own role.
4. We are determined to exploit the Council of Europe's potential in full by giving a new impetus and political direction to the intergovernmental co-operation conducted within its framework. We are counting on the promotional and initiatory action of the Assembly, which as parliamentary organ of the Council of Europe composed of members of national parliaments is in constant touch with the public's wishes and concerns and provides the essential link with national democratic institutions.
5. The priority objective of the Council of Europe's action is to promote co-operation in Europe. However, the Organisation must remain open to the world on account both of the growing interdependence of international relations and of the universality of its values and principles. It will consolidate its traditional ties of friendship with the major democracies of America and other continents. Within its political dialogue it will pay attention to events in the world where its principles and ideals are being either violated or promoted.

Relations with the European Community

6. We salute the progress accomplished by the European Community in its enlargement and the development of its action. It is important that the Council of Europe should respond to this new dynamism by intensifying co-operation with the Community. This should be done in a pragmatic manner, turning to full account each institution's approach, working methods and geographical coverage.
7. In addition to the full implementation of the Arrangement concluded on 16 June 1987 between the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the President of the Commission of the European Communities, we consider it essential to establish a regular political dialogue between the Council of Europe and the European Community. Particular responsibility in this connection lies with the Chair of the Committee of Ministers and its Bureau.
8. In agreement with the European Community, quadripartite meetings between, on the one hand, the Chair of the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and, on the other, the President of the Council of the European Communities and the President of the Commission of the European Communities will in future be held regularly, in order to create reciprocal awareness of programmes, mutual interests and possible joint activities.
9. Harmonisation and coherence of European policies should be improved not only at the level of the

European institutions but also at national level.

Relations with East European countries

10. We welcome the reform policy entered into by certain countries in Eastern Europe and the new prospects of co-operation thus opened up. We hope that the reforms started will lead to greater openness, greater respect for human rights and the development of genuine democracies throughout Europe.

11. We reaffirm our attachment to the commitments subscribed to in the framework of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and welcome the substantial progress made at the recent meeting in Vienna. In view of its responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the principles of human rights and pluralist democracy, the Council of Europe is prepared to contribute to the aims of the CSCE, particularly in its human dimension and in the fields of culture and education.

12. We encourage every development in the European non-member countries which is likely to lead to improved implementation of these principles. The Committee of Ministers, in contact with the Parliamentary Assembly, will take account of such developments in each of these countries when assessing the possibilities which lend themselves to developing contacts and extending co-operation.

13. Co-operation with these East European countries should lead to the promotion of human rights, the rapprochement of individuals and groups across frontiers and the finding of solutions to the challenges of society today, thus contributing to awareness of Europe's cultural identity and of the heritage Europeans share in the values of democracy and freedom. In this respect we are ready to engage in an open and practical dialogue with European non-member countries on the respect and the implementation at national and international level of the principles of human rights and pluralist democracy enshrined in the Council of Europe's Statute, the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter.

Priority lines of intergovernmental action

14. The European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter, the European Cultural Convention and many other instruments, actions and institutions within the Council of Europe constitute a vital contribution to the process of European construction. We are resolved to preserve these gains as well as to enhance and to develop them further for the benefit of the widest possible Europe.

15. In order to improve the effectiveness of the Council of Europe's intergovernmental action, efforts and resources should be concentrated on a select number of priority objectives which are directly connected with its statutory role.

16. For that purpose we shall develop the Council of Europe's intergovernmental action along three priority lines:

- safeguarding and reinforcing pluralist democracy and human rights by reference to the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter
- fostering awareness of, and enhancing, European cultural identity
- seeking common or convergent responses to challenges confronting modern European society.

17. The achievement of these priority objectives presupposes a reform of the procedures and structures of intergovernmental co-operation in the interest of greater simplicity and flexibility.

Strengthening of means of action

18. The new impetus and political direction we wish to give to the Council of Europe's action demand a strengthening of co-operation between all the Organisation's organs and bodies. We are therefore resolved:

- a. to develop a close and fuller dialogue between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, having regard to the special importance we attach to the Assembly's initiatory role;
- b. to integrate the Conferences of Specialised Ministers more fully into the Council of Europe's institutional framework and decision-making process;
- c. to maintain the political dialogue within the Committee of Ministers with emphasis on the political aspects of European co-operation in general and the Council of Europe's intergovernmental activities in particular;
- d. to seek to ensure that public opinion is better informed of the Council of Europe's aims and achievements.

19. Special attention will be given to the role of the Council of Europe in fostering direct contacts with as many European citizens as possible. The Parliamentary Assembly, the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and the involvement of numerous non-governmental organisations provide a mechanism for taking account of their needs and aspirations.

20. The Chair and the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers will play a more active part, in co-operation with the Secretary General, particularly in the political shaping of the Council of Europe's action, in relations with the Parliamentary Assembly and in the promotion of the Organisation's interests in other international forums and in contact with third countries.

21. Finally, the strengthening of means of action makes it necessary to take full advantage of the Secretary General's responsibilities for the development and the renewal of this action as well as of the Secretariat's expertise. We fully support the Secretary General to this end.

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Forty years after the founding of the Council of Europe, we, the Ministers, reaffirm our confidence in its ability to continue and intensify its contribution to the construction of a humane, ever more united and wider democratic Europe in harmony with other efforts aimed at European unity.