

Resolution 1108 (1997) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (28 January 1997)

Caption: On 28 January 1997, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe welcomes the institutional prospects opened up by the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) organised by the Fifteen for the reform of the Treaty on European Union, with particular regard to the enlargement of the Union.

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RESOLUTION 1108 (1997)1 on the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference of the European Union

1. The Assembly welcomes the prospect of a stronger, wider and more democratic European Union. The Union and the Council of Europe should work in a complementary way in the interest of the whole continent, on the basis of their principles of solidarity, justice and freedom.
2. Of the Council of Europe's forty member states, fifteen are members of the Union, eleven are candidates for membership of the Union and all others have relations with the Union through bilateral or multilateral programmes, including certain programmes of the Council of Europe.
3. It follows that the future of the European Union is a legitimate foreign policy concern of all Council of Europe member states. This interest is natural as the Council of Europe is the only European structure in which forty European states have equal status and in which their national parliaments are represented.
4. The Intergovernmental Conference of member states of the European Union (IGC) opened on 29 March 1996. Its purpose is to revise the Union's treaties as foreseen in the Treaty of Maastricht.
5. The igc is taking place in parallel to discussions on a single European currency, and also on its agenda is the definition of a European defence identity related to the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).
6. The Assembly wishes the conference to continue until it is clear that:
 - i. the institutional changes will make it possible to carry out the foreseen enlargement of the European Union;
 - ii. expanding the Union's membership will not weaken the Union's capacity for decision-making;
 - iii. that the decision process of the Union is democratic and that therefore in most cases there will be a move from unanimous to majority voting;
 - iv. that relations with the Council of Europe will be formally strengthened and clarified _ especially in regard to the protection of human rights and the definition and verification of respect for democratic principles in the functioning of European states.

The Assembly wishes nonetheless that the Intergovernmental Conference should complete its work by the time of the Amsterdam Summit.

7. The Assembly takes note of the prospect of a single currency for the European Union. However, the currency must be introduced on a reasonably broad geographical basis and its introduction should not be a divisive factor in pan-European relations. To safeguard the project of European integration, the social dimension must be preserved and extended, notably for employment and working conditions. Social protection, as set forth in the Social Charter of the Council of Europe, is a key factor in the commitment of citizens to a properly functioning democracy.
8. The wars in the former Yugoslavia illustrate the need for the emergence of a credible European defence identity, in conformity with the osce's "common and comprehensive security model for Europe for the twenty-first century", as set forth in Lisbon on 3 December 1996. The Western European Union (weu) is the sole European institution competent in security and defence matters; an expansion of its membership, as expected, should establish it as the platform from which a credible European security identity can take

shape.

9. The Dayton Agreements for peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina show the potential for concerted action between the international institutions. For greater efficiency, joint programmes between the Union and the Council of Europe should be further developed. Moreover, political dialogue within the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe should be structurally related to the cfsp.

10. The Assembly reaffirms its view that there must be no competing human rights protection mechanisms in Europe, with the risk of divergent case-law. The institutions of the European Convention on Human Rights, operating within the framework of the Council of Europe, are competent to examine all questions of human rights under the Convention.

11. The Assembly recalls its Resolution 1067 (1995) and Recommendation 1279 (1995) in favour of accession of the European (Community) Union to the European Convention on Human Rights. The igc provides an opportunity for adjusting the treaties so that action can be taken following the opinion of 28 March 1996 of the European Court of Justice on possible accession of the European (Community) Union to the European Convention on Human Rights.

12. The Assembly further considers that there should be no competing mechanisms for evaluation of respect of democratic principles by European states. In this regard, the quality of the monitoring procedures carried out by the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe should be recognised.

13. The Assembly resolves to increase its efforts for concordant and complementary action with the European Parliament. The contributions of national parliaments of Council of Europe member states to all subjects dealt with by the European Union which affect the democratic functioning of the continent should be enhanced.

14. The Assembly requests that the Council of Europe and the weu be allowed to take part in the 2nd Euro-Mediterranean Conference (April 1997), as institutional protagonists for the protection of human rights, civil society and democratic security.

15. The Assembly welcomes the ratification by the Russian Federation of its agreement on partnership and co-operation with the European Union, and supports its entry into force as an important step towards the creation of "a common European home".

16. The Assembly requests its President to transmit this resolution to the governments of those of its member states which are members of the European Union, with a view to its presentation at the Intergovernmental Conference.

1. Assembly debate on 28 January 1997 (2nd and 3rd Sitzings) (see Doc. 7721, report by the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Masseret).

Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 January 1997 (3rd Sitting).