

Address given by Enrico Gibellieri on the occasion of his meeting with Carlo Azeglio Ciampi (Rome, 16 July 2002)

Caption: In a welcoming address to Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, President of the Italian Republic, given in Rome on 16 July 2002, a few days before the expiry of the ECSC Treaty, Enrico Gibellieri, President of the Consultative Committee, refers to the heritage left by the 50 years of the ECSC Treaty, with particular regard to the development of European industry, the management of social crises and research and innovation.

Source: Archives historiques de l'Union européenne, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo. Dépôts, DEP. Enrico Gibellieri, EGI. Comité consultatif de la CECA, EGI.A. Présidence Gibellieri, EGI.A-01. EGI-93.

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Meeting of the President of the Italian Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, with the President and Bureau of the ECSC Consultative Committee

Salutation by Enrico Gibellieri, President of the ECSC Consultative Committee (Rome, Quirinale, 16 July 2002)

Mr President,

I should first of all like to thank you for receiving the Bureau of the ECSC Consultative Committee, made up of people from all the Member States of the European Union.

The Consultative Committee, of which I am honoured to be the last President, is the only institution of the European Coal and Steel Community surviving in its original form.

It was the first example of sectoral and social dialogue at European level, as it was a body made up of representatives of producers, workers, consumers and traders in the coal and steel sectors.

It has been a genuine and exemplary European method of consultation of whose many and major merits you, Mr President, are undoubtedly aware.

I should also like to thank you and express our gratitude for highlighting the ECSC Treaty as a fundamental stage in the building of the European Union in your speech at the end of the year, and for granting your patronage and sending a thoughtful message to the Conference on the ECSC Treaty held in Terni on 16 and 17 May.

The ECSC Treaty will come to an end on 23 July, 50 years after it came into force. Although this period might seem short, the founding fathers of the European Coal and Steel Community felt that setting the duration of the treaty at twice the number of years between the end of the First and the beginning of the Second World War was an utterly utopian challenge.

The coal and steel industries, which had been protagonists of the two bloody world wars, thus came to be, in the postwar period, the main pillars on which the European economy was based and the main resources through which democracy and prosperity could be rebuilt.

The Treaty has played a key role in the development of the ECSC industries from a genuinely European point of view rather than the view of individual states.

Placing the dignity of workers, their families and communities on a par with the objectives of economic and technological progress has meant that this has been the only Treaty so far to be infused by such a high degree of ethical and spiritual inspiration.

Through its inspiration and the instruments through which it has been able to act, it has been very effective in overcoming the major crises that have taken place in the two sectors, enabling them to be managed through restructuring, despite its very high social costs.

For this reason it can be said that the generations of entrepreneurs, workers, technicians, researchers, managers and union representatives who have worked in the ECSC sectors, together with local, national and European institutions, have not only addressed the particular problems of their industries but have also made a key contribution to building Europe and consolidating peace.

As regards the future, the ECSC's wealth of experience will not be wasted, but will be put to good use and extended as a model of sectoral action to other economic sectors through the establishment of a consultative committee within the Economic and Social Committee. Research work and innovation will be continued in a specific programme for the coal and steel industries, financed from the EUR 1.6 billion assets that the ECSC is bequeathing.

Mr President, this year of 2002, which began with the adoption of the euro, will in a few days see the conclusion of the ECSC Treaty. This meeting will therefore be the last official meeting of an ECSC institution before it is finally wound up.

All the members of the Presidency and the Bureau are honoured and proud to be able to meet you today as Head of State of one of the first six countries to sign the ECSC Treaty and as a person who, throughout your personal, professional and political life, has chosen to play a key role in building Europe, in achieving a single monetary system, and in pursuing the genuine and real good of your own country with a clear vision and remarkable insight.