

Press release issued by the Assembly of WEU on the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Brussels (Paris, 18 March 2008)

Caption: In a press release issued to mark the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Brussels Treaty on 17 March 1948, the Assembly of Western European Union (WEU) emphasises the importance of the residual functions carried out by WEU and its Assembly which have not been transferred to the European Union: their role in ensuring the implementation of the mutual defence clause in the Modified Brussels Treaty and the role of the Assembly as an interparliamentary forum for the European security and defence policy (ESDP).

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Sixtieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Brussels (Paris, 18 March 2008)

The Assembly's Presidential Committee met yesterday and took the occasion to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Brussels on 17 March 1948. This Treaty was the first to include a mutual defence clause which clearly stated that if any of the signatory states should be the object of an armed attack, the others would "afford the Party so attacked all the military and other aid and assistance in their power" (article V). As regards the role of NATO, the Brussels Treaty stipulated that "in the execution of the Treaty", member states should "work in close co-operation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation" (article IV). Following the failure of the ambitious project for a European Defence Community (EDC), a number of European states decided to forge ahead with European defence integration through the Treaty of Brussels. The Treaty was amended and completed by the Paris Agreements, signed on 23 October 1954, which led to the creation of Western European Union (WEU), in particular its Council (article VIII) and Parliamentary Assembly (article IX).

Over the years, WEU and its Assembly have worked actively and effectively to promote European security. Since WEU operational activities have been transferred to the EU, the Assembly is being developed as an interparliamentary forum for the European security and defence policy (ESDP). It addresses the governments of the 27 EU member states, as well as those of EU candidate countries and neighbouring states, inviting them to cooperate to strengthen the ESDP. It also plays an important role informing and convincing the public of the need to act together in this vital area.

Neither the mutual assistance clause (article 42(7) TEU) nor the solidarity clause (article 222 TFEU) of the Treaty of Lisbon constitutes an equivalent to the collective defence clause of the modified Brussels Treaty and cannot replace it. On the contrary, a protocol to the new Treaty concerning article 42(2) proposes enhanced cooperation between the EU and WEU, where it is clearly stated that the "European Union shall draw up, together with the Western European Union, arrangements for enhanced cooperation between them". As the only European interparliamentary assembly specialising in this important area, the Assembly is an essential asset for national parliaments and a sounding board for governments.

It is more than ever necessary for national parliaments to participate in the development of a security and defence policy in Europe. At the interparliamentary level, the Assembly supports intergovernmental activities in the area of the ESDP, leading in-depth and targeted political discussions and organising hearings on key subjects of current interest. To this end, the Assembly brings together the national parliamentarians of the 27 EU member states and other European countries which participate in EU operations. The parliamentarians meet in specialised committees and in plenary session. Assembly members produce concrete political recommendations accompanied by detailed explanatory memoranda which are discussed, amended and voted on in committee before being presented and voted on in plenary session. On 17 and 18 March, the Assembly's specialised committees met for the first reading of the draft reports that will be submitted at the next plenary session to be held in Paris from 3 to 5 June (see the list of reports below).

List of reports for the first part of the fifty-fourth session to be held at the Palais d'Iéna, Paris, from Tuesday 3 to Thursday 5 June 2008

Defence affairs

1. European Union operational chains of command – reply to the annual report of the Council
Rapporteur: Mr Doug Henderson (United Kingdom, Socialist Group)
2. The European Union mission in Chad: EUFOR TCHAD/RCA
Rapporteur: Mr René Rouquet (France, Socialist Group); co-Rapporteur: Mr Ruhi Açıkgoz (Turkey)
3. Russia's defence policy
Rapporteur: Mr Andrea Rigoni (Italy, Liberal Group)

Political affairs

1. Revision of the European Security Strategy – reply to the annual report of the Council
Rapporteur: Mr Daniel Ducarme (Belgium, Liberal Group)

2. 2008: a decisive year for the western Balkans
Chairman and Rapporteur: Mr Pedro Agramunt (Spain, Federated Group)

3. Political developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan
Rapporteur: Mr Detlef Dzembritzki (Germany, Socialist Group)

Technological and aerospace affairs

1. Space systems for Europe's security: GMES and Galileo – reply to the annual report of the Council
Rapporteurs: Mr Edward O'Hara (Chairman) (United Kingdom, Socialist Group) and Mr Giannicola Sinisi (Italy, Socialist Group)

2. Defence equipment procurement in Europe
Chairman and Rapporteur: Mr Edward O'Hara (United Kingdom, Socialist Group)

3. Unmanned combat aerial vehicles: European programmes
Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur: Mr Nigel Evans (United Kingdom, Federated Group)

Parliamentary and public relations

1. Environmental protection and armed conflict
Rapporteur: Mr Gianpaolo Silvestri (Italy, N.I.)

2. Parliamentary cooperation on security in the Black Sea region
Rapporteur: Mr Hendrik Daems (Belgium, Liberal Group); co-Rapporteur: Mrs Anca Petrescu (Romania)

About the Assembly : The Assembly of WEU, Europe's only interparliamentary security and defence assembly, was founded in 1954 when the 1948 Brussels Treaty was modified. The Treaty contains an unconditional mutual defence clause (Article V) and provides an organic link to NATO (Article IV). It established the Assembly, to which some 40 European countries send their parliamentary representatives. These include all the EU member states and the European NATO countries as well as Russia, Ukraine and all the Balkan states. The Assembly scrutinises and supports European intergovernmental activities in all areas of security and defence, including armaments cooperation. Following the transfer of WEU's operational activities to the EU, the Assembly also serves as the interparliamentary forum for the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) on the basis of the parliamentary instruments for which the treaty's legal framework makes provision.

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