

Report from the WEU Council of Ministers on the reactivation of the organisation (Paris, 12 June 1984)

Caption: On 12 June 1984, the Assembly of Western European Union (WEU) publishes a document by the WEU Council of Ministers on the reactivation of the organisation.

Source: Proceedings. Thirtieth ordinary session. First part., I. Assembly Documents. [s.l.]: Assembly of Western European Union, June 1984. 332 p. "Reactivation of WEU. Document 982. 12 June 1984", p. 333.

Copyright: (c) WEU Assembly - Assemblée de l'UEO

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/report_from_the_weu_council_of_ministers_on_the_reactivation_of_the_organisation_paris_12_june_1984-en-0fee2689-ae6e-4e91-b8c4-bab2b922b5cd.html

Last updated: 22/06/2015

Document 982

12th June 1984

Reactivation of WEU¹

The working group instructed by the Council and the political directors to examine the prospects for reactivating WEU considered that this question could be approached from three different angles as follows:

- Why reactivate WEU now?
- What content would such a reactivation have?
- What would be the implementing procedures?

The replies to each of these questions were as follows:

1. WEU is at present the only European organisation empowered by treaty to discuss defence and security matters. It has a well-developed institutional structure, in particular a Council and a parliamentary Assembly. Its reactivation is prompted by the following *considerations*:

1.1. Consultation and joint in-depth reflection by the member countries of WEU are needed on the problems liable to affect their security, together with a more assertive European presence in the field of defence and security.

1.2. The international situation and especially the continuing build-up of Soviet military forces deployed against Western Europe are a matter of major concern.

1.3. As partners in the Atlantic Alliance, the member states of WEU are aware of the need to step up their contribution to the transatlantic dialogue.

1.4. It is important that public opinion be involved in the debate about defence and security, principally through an improved dialogue between the WEU Council and the Assembly and by raising the profile of the activities of those bodies.

In these circumstances, a better utilisation of WEU would demonstrate that the member countries have the will to reflect jointly and in depth on the conditions of their security, in the face of the threat they have to meet. This will, however, require a determined effort to adapt and revive the organisation.

Such reactivation must, and perfectly well can, be achieved with due regard for the

areas of competence of the other existing Atlantic and European institutions. This will require an exchange of information, taking into account the activities of these institutions:

- As regards the Atlantic Alliance, with which WEU has very close links for co-operation under the terms of the modified Brussels Treaty (Articles IV and VII), the proposed reactivation should be seen as a contribution to the cohesion of the alliance itself and not as an attempt to create a substitute for it. It is along these lines that the other members of the alliance, who are not members of WEU, would be kept informed; the ambassadors of the Seven to the alliance could play a useful rôle in this respect.

- Whereas the Ten, as they declared at Stuttgart, are called upon to discuss the political and economic aspects of security, this does not at present extend to the field of defence. A reactivation of WEU would serve as an example of what can be achieved through co-operation on the European plane, and as a device to keep this important area of European co-operation active which the Community and the Ten are at the present unable to exploit to the extent that some of them would wish.

2. As to the *content*, a reactivation of WEU should lead to a fuller dialogue on topics of common and major interest, taking into consideration the European dimension of security questions.

2.1. An urgent topic is the growing threat to Europe in its various guises, i.e. military, political and psychological. This is a problem which, unquestionably, can profitably be discussed within the Seven, without duplicating work and studies carried out elsewhere. Such a discussion among Europeans is even complementary as it may be conducted from a different and specific angle. Moreover, European public opinion expects its leaders to give thought to the problem and to present reasoned arguments which meet its preoccupations and worries.

2.2. The discussions could, as provided for by Article VIII.3 of the treaty, also focus on the effects of the international situation on European security. Even if the Seven have no special interests to express on all these problems, they at least have specific viewpoints and ideas.

2.3. Another topic could be ways of strengthening the transatlantic dialogue in all its forms.

1. Text authorised for publication by the WEU Council of Ministers, Paris, 12th June 1984.

2.4. In the field of arms co-operation, the magnitude of the tasks to be accomplished in Europe – in particular as regards the use of new technologies to strengthen conventional defence – demands that no opportunity for consultation at European level be overlooked. Without encroaching on bodies such as the Independent European Programme Group (IEPG) or the Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD), which have their own structure and responsibilities, WEU could play a useful rôle as a forum for discussion and a source of political impetus.

3. As regards *implementing procedures*, this reactivation of WEU should lead to greater use of the existing institutions, with a number of changes. Special attention should be directed to the pair formed by the Council and the Assembly.

3.1. *The Council* has an essential rôle to play.

– It fulfils this rôle more particularly when it meets at ministerial level. These meetings thus provide the required political impetus and at the same time enhance the work of the Permanent Council. They could be held twice a year.

– The Permanent Council could, in turn, meet more frequently, these meetings being expanded, as appropriate, to include senior central government staff (political directors;

experts on politico-military and defence questions, ...).

3.2. Any reactivation of the Council will have implications for its subsidiary bodies – the Standing Armaments Committee and the Agency for the Control of Armaments.

3.3. The *Assembly* has a vital rôle to play as the link with public opinion on such an important issue as security. To this end, it would appear that a dialogue of greater substance should be established between the Council and the Assembly, independently of the work done by each.

In this context, it might be envisaged that:

- the exchange of views between the Assembly and the Council should be directed primarily to the reactivation of WEU and how this is to be brought about. The value of earlier Assembly studies and reports on the subject should be borne in mind;
- the procedure for answering Assembly recommendations and written questions should be improved.

Quite clearly the work of the Council and that of the Assembly interact and the debates in one of them cannot fail to stimulate discussions in the other.