

## Extract from minutes of the joint meeting between the Assembly Committee on Defence Questions and the WEU Council (London, 2 December 1958)


**Caption:** The minutes of the joint meeting between the Council of Western European Union (WEU) and the Committee on Defence Questions of the WEU Assembly on 2 December 1958 in London record the debates held in the morning and afternoon sessions. At this meeting, the first session, chaired by Lord Henry Lansdowne from the United Kingdom, focuses on cooperation in the field of armaments. Lord Lansdowne notes that close cooperation in armaments research, development and production is necessary for financial reasons, in view of the cost and complexity of modern weapons, and also for political reasons, particularly given the role that armaments cooperation can play in achieving closer European unity in the light of the communist threat. Cooperation on a case-by-case basis has been established through various bilateral and trilateral arrangements under the aegis of WEU and between the WEU countries through the Standing Armaments Committee (SAC). Two lists of proposals for cooperation have been put forward, one by the United Kingdom and the other by France, Italy and Germany, and are considered to come within the field of action of WEU. Lord Lansdowne underlines that the security considerations are not the main obstacle to armaments cooperation, that the Council is satisfied with the progress made by the SAC and that there is no need to step up the work at the current time. Finally, he points out that WEU should not take decisions entirely independently of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) unless cooperation with third countries does not yield results.

**Source:** Council of the Western European Union. Extract from minutes of the Joint meeting of Assembly Committee on Defence and WEU Council held on 2 December 1958 in London. C(58)177. pp. 1-13 Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Organs of the Western European Union. Year: 1958, 01/01/1958-28/02/1959. File 202.411.03. Volume 1/1.

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EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF *Joint* MEETING

OF W.E.U. COUNCIL HELD ON 2-12-58 in London

*Ass. Cttee on Defence*

#### A. Morning Session

Lord LANSDOWNE, representing the Chairman in Office of the Council of W.E.U., was in the Chair.

He welcomed the members of the Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments, on behalf of the Foreign Secretary, who was unfortunately not able to come to the morning meeting but would be present in the afternoon, and also on behalf of his colleagues.

He wished to add a personal note to this welcome to parliamentarians who, only a short time ago, had been his colleagues in the W.E.U. Assembly.

He recalled that this was the second joint meeting the Council had held with the Assembly Committee under the procedure agreed earlier that year. The first one was in Rome and was, he believed, generally regarded as successful. He was sure that the present meeting would be equally fruitful. Certainly that was the hope of the Council.

Lord Lansdowne thought the meeting should confine their attention at the morning session to the important subject of armaments co-operation. He knew that it was a subject which interested the Committee greatly and he could assure them that the Council warmly welcomed this interest.

The meeting could turn to the other defence questions which interested the Committee in the afternoon when, as he had said, Mr. Selwyn Lloyd hoped to take the Chair. There would then be present two observers from SHAPE and one from NATO.

Before turning to the Committee's questions, Lord Lansdowne would like to make a few remarks about the importance that governments - and he knew he could speak on behalf of all member governments of W.E.U. - attached to armaments co-operation; and on some of the problems involved.

This was a difficult subject to understand, as all present must have found. The need for close co-operation in the research, development and production of armaments was self-evident. It was necessary, not only in the interests of military efficiency, but also because of the cost and complexity of modern weapons, and the high proportion of the total cost which was spent in the development stage.

There was also the political factor. Everybody recognised the important contribution armaments co-operation could make to the achievement of closer European unity. It was not possible to have the unity and to survive in the face of the disruptive tactics of the Communists without an efficient system of military defence. There could not be an efficient system of defence without compatibility of armaments and a good deal of co-operation in the research and development and production of those armaments. There were two ways of achieving this co-operation.

/The first ...

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The first was to proceed from the general to the particular: to lay down general directives and then proceed to apply them to individual weapons.

The second was to proceed from the particular to the general, in other words to seek agreement on weapons, or weapon systems, one by one or group by group, and build from precedent to precedent.

The first method had obvious attractions. But there were immense difficulties. The Committee, which had taken such a keen interest in this subject, were now well aware of the nature of these difficulties. Lord Lansdowne proposed to take one example, just to illustrate what was involved technically and commercially, not to mention politically and economically. Many members would remember the Herod plan, launched in the early days of NATO with the intention of devising a common production programme for defence equipment as a whole. This was a failure. The scale of the plan was such that it involved industrial dislocation and a distribution of scientific effort which was politically unacceptable.

The alternative approach was to seek agreement on specific issues between the national Governments principally involved. In this way, developing from precedent to precedent, it should be possible to establish an atmosphere in which co-operation between the various countries was accepted as the normal approach to a problem, and not treated as a new departure. As an example, he quoted the joint manufacture of the Hunter aircraft by Belgium and Holland, or more recently the announcement by the United Kingdom that she was considering adopting the Belgian sustained fire machine gun, and abandoning her own comparable development projects.

This case by case approach had established itself in the various bilateral and trilateral arrangements which had grown up under the aegis of W.E.U., and also in the discussions of the W.E.U. nations under arrangements made by the Standing Armaments Committee.

It was generally recognised that there was no conflict between those two sets of arrangements; they interlocked and helped each other. Thus the nineteen proposals for co-operation put forward by the United Kingdom, and the seven proposals put forward by France, Italy and Germany, had been immediately accepted as a W.E.U. field of action, and the problem had been solved of introducing the U.S.A. and other NATO countries into these discussions. There was now an accepted procedure by which projects which were initiated in W.E.U. could be brought into a NATO forum.

An outstanding example of this was to be seen in the naval field, where it is proposed that the NATO Naval Steering Group take over the exchanges begun under W.E.U. auspices.

/Marchese LUCIFERO ...

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Marchese LUCIFERO, Chairman of the Committee, expressed the satisfaction of his colleagues regarding the procedure for co-operation instituted to govern relations between the Assembly and the Council with regard to defence questions. This procedure, which had been tried for the first time at the Rome meeting in March last, had already produced results. The Chairman had emphasised that the Council were seeking the establishment of an effective system of co-operation within W.E.U. and had recalled the two possible methods in arms study, development and production. It was with great interest that the Committee had heard this declaration.

The CHAIRMAN then turned to the Committee's questions.

He hoped to answer them as fully as possible with the help of M. CRISTOFINI, but asked the members of the Committee to treat the information given to them with the greatest discretion. A lot of it was highly confidential and would be strictly off the record. It was only being given to them in this Committee for their own background information. He asked them not to quote it publicly in any context without at any rate clearing it with the Council.

Marchese LUCIFERO undertook that the information which was to be given to the Committee would be treated with all the reserve necessary.

I. SECURITY (Committee question 7.)

The CHAIRMAN read out the question put by the Committee:

"If member countries are to communicate technical information on armaments to the Standing Armaments Committee and other members of Western European Union, the internal security arrangements of members must be mutually satisfactory.

Can the Council state that security considerations are not now an inhibiting factor in the exchange of technical information, or alternatively, will the Council say what machinery exists to ensure that the internal security arrangements of member countries are brought up to mutually satisfactory standards?"

/Lord Lansdowne ...

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Lord Lansdowne replied as follows:

Secret technical information is regularly communicated on various subjects by different W.E.U. countries, either in writing or verbally in the course of working sessions of the various groups and sub-groups.

Transmission of this information is governed by the security regulations in force in W.E.U. (and, in practice, based on those of NATO, for the purpose of convenience).

Countries may also - and do in some exceptional cases - restrict circulation. In this manner, certain highly secret information has been supplied verbally to small groups of experts but has not been reproduced - nor even mentioned - in the records of such meetings.

Finally, both for reasons of security and efficiency, certain information has only been given to partners who have demonstrated "a need to know" and "the capability of making use of it". This applies, in particular, to exchanges of information on concrete questions, which bring into play interests of a technical, and sometimes even commercial nature, and which are usually dealt with in bilateral, trilateral or, in any case, limited circles.

Thanks to these arrangements, security questions do not appear to constitute a main obstacle to widening intergovernmental co-operation in research and production of armaments.

II. REPORTS ON BILATERAL OR TRILATERAL DISCUSSIONS (Committee question 8.)

The CHAIRMAN read out the Committee's question as follows:

"Can the Council state that it is now the invariable practice for copies of all documents and minutes relating to bilateral and trilateral discussions on the development or production of weapons to be sent to the Standing Armaments Committee, for the latter to be empowered to appoint observers to all such discussions if it so wishes, and for other interested member countries to have the right to appoint observers once such discussions have reached the stage of the formulation of staff requirements?".

/Lord Lansdowne ...

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Lord Lansdowne stated that the reply to the first question put by the Committee (transmission of copies of all documents relating to bilateral and trilateral discussions) was in the negative.

With regard to the second question (presence of observers), the reply was rather more complex. Representatives of interested countries had been - or were being - invited to certain meetings where the subjects under discussion had, to some extent, been made more widely known. This was the case, for example, for bipartite or tripartite meetings on the medium tank.

### III. INTERCHANGEABILITY OF COMPONENTS, MAINTENANCE AND SUPPLY (Committee question 9.)

The CHAIRMAN read out the Committee's question:

"What progress has been made in Western European Union and NATO in standardising equipment to achieve operational interchangeability and ease of maintenance and supply in the field?

How many different calibres of light and medium field artillery and mortars are in use in the forces of the Central Command?"

He replied, as regards the first paragraph, that it was clearly desirable that components of the largest possible number of equipments should be interchangeable. The quest for a solution should be conducted in the widest possible framework; as a result, NATO had been concerned in this since its formation, and had charged the M.A.S. and the Production and Logistics Division with this task. W.E.U. had thus directed its efforts into another field, which so far has been far less explored, i.e. intergovernmental co-operation in research, development and production of equipment.

As to the second paragraph, Lord Lansdowne said that there were 12 different calibres below 155 mm Howitzers in the light and medium field artillery and 6 different calibres of mortars in the forces of the Central European Command.

/IV. RECONCILIATION ...

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IV. RECONCILIATION OF THE TWO LISTS OF EQUIPMENT -  
British - French/Italian/German (Committee question 10.)

The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Committee's question was as follows:

"What progress has now been made in reconciling the two lists of types of equipment for joint production referred to in the Communication from the Council in addition to the Third Annual Report (Doc. 89)? When will the meeting of Defence Ministers, there referred to, be held, and will it be held within the framework of the Standing Armaments Committee?"

He replied to the first sentence as follows:

Practically speaking, no distinction is any longer drawn between the two lists, since the Standing Armaments Committee meeting of 20th May last. In accordance with the Council's resolution of Rome on 5th March last, and in conformity with the decision of the W.E.U. Ministers of Defence on 16th April, the Standing Armaments Committee held meetings on 17th April and 20th May at which the United Kingdom, on the one hand, and the three signatories of the tripartite agreements on the other, were represented by senior officials or General Officers specially briefed by their Ministers. The Committee discussed the proposals summed up in a note from the United Kingdom on interdependence in research, development and production, as well as a communication from the Defence Ministers of France, the Federal German Republic and Italy.

In the course of these two meetings, the Standing Armaments Committee reached provisional conclusions in regard to certain projects which were suitable for immediate co-operation between the W.E.U. countries and which could be rapidly extended to other NATO countries. To this end, the Committee's conclusions were immediately forwarded to the NATO Secretariat-General, which was thus enabled to make contact with those countries which were interested.

Since that time, the work has been followed up, either within W.E.U. or in NATO.

With regard to the second sentence, Lord Lansdowne said that it was, of course, for the Defence Ministers themselves to answer. Nevertheless, he understood that progress made since the meeting of the Standing Armaments Committee on 20th May, when the representatives of the Defence Ministers set the pattern for future work, had been such that the Ministers, who have all followed progress very closely, have not felt it necessary to stimulate the work.

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/The CHAIRMAN ...

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The CHAIRMAN then called on M. Cristofini to elaborate.

M. CRISTOFINI gave a detailed progress report on joint weapons research, development and production, dealing in turn with equipment for air, naval and land forces.

In closing, M. Cristofini drew attention to four points which seemed to him worth stressing:

1. The essential feature of the work of the S.A.C. covered the development and production of new weapons. He emphasised that by new weapons he referred not only to the guided, homing and heavy ballistic missiles which usually came to mind but also to all new weapons introduced to replace existing equipment as it became obsolete. In this way, for example, the air defence of ground forces involved the development and production, not only of surface-to-air guided weapons systems, linked to radar networks, but also of self-defence weapons for field units to replace AA guns and machine guns.
2. The Committee would have observed that the seven countries were attempting to tackle the problem at base, that is to say by defining the military problem to be resolved through collaboration between representatives of the General Staffs and responsible national authorities. In so doing, they had met in advance the wishes which M. Cristofini understood were to be expressed by the Committee's rapporteur.
3. He emphasised that the time required to develop and produce the sort of weapons he had mentioned was of the order of five to ten years; consequently, spectacular results, suitable for publication, should not be expected in the near future; this, of course, complicated the Committee's task of acquiring information.
4. M. Cristofini wished to point out that the achievement of voluntary co-operation on which the partners had embarked required all round good will and mutual confidence, which must be stimulated and maintained by all responsible national or international authorities, Ministers or Parliamentarians. In this way, mutual concessions, which formed the basis of co-operation, would be facilitated.

The CHAIRMAN thanked M. Cristofini for his statement in which not only had the answers to the Committee's questions been expanded, but a substantial amount of additional information had been provided.

/He invited ...

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He invited the Committee to put supplementary questions, to which he would do his best to reply, with the assistance of M. Cristofini; if, however, he was unable to do so, he asked the Committee not to impute this to any lack of goodwill on the part of the Council, but only to the difficulty of answering questions to which it had not been possible to prepare replies.

Admiral HUGHES-HALLETT wished to put several questions concerning the broad principles of armaments co-operation. First, on the security question: weapon research development and production could proceed, either under the aegis of NATO or of W.E.U or, failing that, on the national basis; while security raised some difficulty within W.E.U., was it not even more difficult within the wider framework of NATO? Secondly, was the weapon which had been recently demonstrated by the United States already in operational use, or was it still in the development stage? Thirdly, was he right in thinking that when the seven countries attempted to reach agreement on military characteristics, this was done on an ad hoc basis, weapon by weapon, and that there was no high-level body within the S.A.C. which could keep the general overall requirements under review? Lastly, when equipment was offered on a large scale to a member State of W.E.U. by the United States, was this done in consultation with the S.A.C. or direct to the nation concerned?

Lord LANSDOWNE wished to dispel any possible misunderstanding on the security question: it was definitely not the case that security considerations were the main obstacle to armaments co-operation.

Referring to the demonstration of the weapon mentioned by Admiral Hughes-Hallett, M. CRISTOFINI explained that this was not an actual demonstration but a presentation to provide general technical information. The weapon shown was still in process of development and had not yet been supplied to the United States army.

Replying to the third question put by Admiral Hughes-Hallett, M. Cristofini said that the study of military characteristics always followed a general pattern; they began with a comparison of general concepts, concerning for example a series of weapons designed for particular operational conditions. Study of the characteristics of individual weapons followed afterwards.

In answer to the fourth question, M. Cristofini said that usually United States offers were made to individual countries.

/Admiral HEYE ...

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Admiral HEYE asked if information below a certain limit could be handled without any restriction. He felt that security classifications should be constantly reviewed and, where possible, reduced, in order to keep to a minimum the interference with the exchange of free information which security rules might otherwise cause.

He asked what was the general policy regarding the exchange of information. He felt that it should take place not only at the top level, but at lower levels also. Thirdly, he asked to what extent member countries relied on the United States for the supply of artillery ammunition; he had heard that it amounted to 85 per cent of the total. He felt that this reliance on United States supplies should be reduced and that common W.E.U. sources of supply should be developed. This would, in addition, help in removing any remaining traces of mutual distrust within the Alliance.

Admiral Heye also asked what progress had been made in the S.A.C. in the field of submarine detection - a question of capital importance to the Western Alliance and to the United States and the Commonwealth in particular. He observed that tanks and submarines of the Alliance should not be as dependent as they were on imported petrol; and that, in any case, vehicles using this fuel were very vulnerable. There should, for both these reasons, be early development of other fuels and of multi-fuel motors.

In answer to Admiral Heye's first question, Lord LANSDOWNE said that security must always have an inhibiting effect on the free exchange of information, but so far practical co-operation had not been hindered by security considerations. It should be recognised that, when a country had obtained information from another, it could only pass it to a third with the permission of the original informant, who might or might not be a member of W.E.U.

Replying to Admiral Heye's further questions, M. CRISTOFINI first stated that exchanges of information were not limited to the top level; technical problems were dealt with by experts who exchanged all the information needed for their work. As regards the third question, M. Cristofini said that a distinction must be drawn between older weapons, and newer ones brought into use since 1950. Like the equipment itself, ammunition for the former in particular was generally of American origin or manufactured in Europe under licence (off-shore). In the case of the latter, the future would show how far the European countries could succeed in replacing American supplies by their own production.

On the subject of submarine detection, M. Cristofini agreed with Admiral Heye that this was one of the capital problems studied by the Naval Steering Group, who were trying to co-ordinate the work so far done separately by national navies and certain international agencies.

Finally, as regards engines for tanks, he felt sure that the matter was under consideration in the bipartite and tripartite groups.

/Mr. STEELE ...

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Mr. STEELE would like to know more about the standardisation of transport aircraft. Was there a working group dealing with this matter and, if so, how far had it got?

M. CRISTOFINI said that this question must be considered against the general background. At the moment, there were many different types of aircraft in use, even within individual countries. Effective standardisation must include action in the civilian sector; and, in this connection, M. Cristofini quoted the case of two American intercontinental aircraft ordered by European firms which, because no agreement had been reached between the firms concerned, had been equipped with different types of jet engines. From the military angle, the most urgent need was a tactical front-line transport aircraft, for which the eventual ideal would be vertical take-off and landing. At the moment, there were two projects based on different requirements and concepts: the heavier long-distance transport, as required by the United States and the United Kingdom, and the rather different needs of the continental countries.

Mr. JACOBS asked whether there was any matter within the field of defence or armaments on which W.E.U. could act independently of NATO.

The CHAIRMAN replied in the negative.

Marchese LUCIFERO wished to put the following questions: a) who determined the "capacity to use" which the Chairman had given as a necessary qualification for access to certain information? Did the country asking for information have the opportunity to show whether it was so qualified? b) in his reply to question 10, the Chairman had stated that it was for the Defence Ministers themselves to answer the second paragraph. Did this not support the Committee's belief that there should be direct relations between Ministers of Defence and the organs of W.E.U. whose official contacts, up to now, had not extended beyond the Council? M. Lucifero was pleased to note that this need, which had been felt for so long by the Committee, was thus also recognised by the Council. He mentioned in this context the fruitful contacts which the Committee had already had with the Defence Ministers of Italy and Germany; c) the Chairman had given a negative reply to Mr. Jacobs' question as to whether there were matters on which W.E.U. could act independently of NATO. He (Marchese Lucifero) felt there were certain sectors in which the United States could be of little or no help to W.E.U. member States - for instance, in that of the newer tactical weapons. Surely, independent action was called for in such cases? d) had the French results in the field of guided anti-tank missiles, which had been most successful, been borne in mind when considering the development of short-range anti-aircraft missiles?

/Finally ...

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Finally, Marchese Lucifero expressed his agreement with the views of Admiral Heye on the types and sources of supply of fuels for member States' military vehicles. This problem should be carefully gone into by all concerned - in particular, the United States.

In reply to Marchese Lucifero, Lord LANSDOWNE said that the "capacity to use" of a country requesting information must be judged by the country which would supply the information.

Regarding his reference to the Defence Ministers in his answer to the Committee's question 10, he had said that they were satisfied with the progress being made by the S.A.C. and saw no need to stimulate it further at present. This did not mean, of course, that the Defence Committee's insistence on increased activity was not most valuable.

In answering Mr. Jacobs' question, Lord Lansdowne continued, he had meant that W.E.U. should not act in any field entirely independently of NATO. However, W.E.U. could quite properly work on its own in cases where co-operation with outside countries could not yield results.

Replying to the Marchese Lucifero's last two points, M. CRISTOFINI said that, for a short-range anti-aircraft missile, a light missile based on the techniques referred to was one possibility; a proposal for such a weapon had been submitted to the working group concerned. As regards fuels, the first problem was to develop a multi-fuel engine. It would then be possible to consider the question of supply on a new basis. Finally, although W.E.U. would be concerned more closely with some new weapons than with others, it should be noted that, even on these, their competence was not exclusive.

Lord LANSDOWNE felt that all who had taken part in the meeting would agreed that it had been a valuable one. While the Committee had asked a number of searching and pertinent questions, the Council had done their best to answer them and give the Committee as much information as possible. He emphasised again the confidential nature of this information.

He said that the Council would always be willing to arrange further joint meetings whenever the Committee felt the need. He hoped that the Committee would continue to use this method of obtaining information on defence questions rather than press for the Committee of Investigation envisaged in the Assembly's Resolution No. 11, which might prove a very cumbersome procedure.

/ Marchese LUCIFERO ...

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Marchese LUCIFERO replied that Resolution No. 11 had been passed by the Assembly in plenary session; consequently, neither he nor his Committee had the power to set it aside. He asked the Council not to reject the Resolution without further consideration. As he saw it, the Resolution's request for a Committee of Investigation was in no way intended as a declaration of war by the Assembly, nor did it reflect dissatisfaction with the present procedure. What was intended was something in the nature of a liaison committee, which could obtain from the Council or its advisers the information they wanted on defence and armaments without invoking a full-scale joint meeting. Such a procedure need not be cumbersome but, rather, could be even easier to work than the existing one. He added that, as Resolution No. 11 resulted from a vote of the Assembly, a negative reply from the Council might have an unfortunate effect. In conclusion, he hoped that the Council would reconsider the question in the light of the remarks he had just made.

Lord LANSDOWNE thanked the Marchese Lucifero for the understanding he had shown, and assured him that the matter would be considered by the Council.

/ B. Afternoon Session ...

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B. Afternoon Session

The Right Honourable Selwyn LLOYD, Chairman in Office of the Council, was in the Chair.

He opened the meeting by expressing his regret that he had not been able to be present at the morning session; he felt sure parliamentarians would understand the pressure of business that had prevented this. He wished first to say how very much he personally appreciated this opportunity of paying tribute to his parliamentary colleagues who had done so much to forward the idea of a community of purpose between the countries of W.E.U. He wished also to stress the value of these joint meetings which provided the opportunity for Ministers to meet their parliamentary colleagues; the way this system was being developed in W.E.U. had shown that it could go forward, if not from success to success, at least from improvement to improvement and could serve to enhance the feeling of comradeship between parliamentarians and Ministers.

Mr. Selwyn Lloyd understood that the morning session had gone successfully and had covered thoroughly the important subject of arms co-operation. He himself had always held the view that W.E.U. had a very important part to play in this field, in association, of course, with NATO and the bilateral and trilateral groups. He thought it would be a very great mistake to underestimate the importance of W.E.U. since it was the only organisation in Europe in which the United Kingdom was associated on a basis of completely equal partnership with the six continental countries. Without wishing in any way to detract from the importance of the wider partnership of NATO, he thought it essential for the future to preserve the particular relationship of the Seven within W.E.U.

Marchese LUCIFERO said that the Chairman's words had given great satisfaction to the members of the Committee. The anxieties they might have felt, even as late as that morning, had been removed by the evidence afforded of effective co-operation with the Council, to which the Committee attached so much importance. All of them fully appreciated that Mr. Selwyn's Lloyd's speech was much more than a mere formal statement. The Chairman had stressed the fact that W.E.U. was the only organisation which included both the United Kingdom and the Six. Speaking for his colleagues and for himself, Marchese Lucifero welcomed this statement and all that it implied. The greater the difficulties to be overcome, the greater the need for co-operation. In thanking Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, he wished to emphasise this point, noting with satisfaction the willingness which each side had shown to understand the other's point of view.

The CHAIRMAN thanked the Marchese for his remarks and suggested that the meeting turn to the questions tabled by the Committee; he proposed to give the Council's replies, and would then invite the parliamentarians to put their supplementary questions.