

Reply by the WEU Council to Assembly Recommendation 160 on the defence of the Mediterranean and the NATO southern flank (London, 15 May 1968)

Caption: On 15 May 1968, the Secretary-General of Western European Union (WEU) circulates the Council's reply to Assembly Recommendation 160 on the defence of the Mediterranean and the NATO southern flank. The Council considers that the establishment by the United Nations of an international body to supervise the implementation of the Convention of Constantinople of 1888 covering the passage of vessels through the Suez Canal would not prevent a return to crisis situations such as that of 1956. The Council would also welcome the establishment of international measures for the effective control of the trade in arms.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Secretary-General's note. Recommendation 160 on the defence of the Mediterranean and the NATO southern flank. London: 15.05.1968. C (68) 82. 4 p. 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: 1967, 01/12/1967-30/09/1968. File 202.413.15 Volume 1/1 .

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http://www.cvce.eu/obj/reply_by_the_weu_council_to_assembly_recommendation_160_on_the_defence_of_the_mediterranean_and_the_nato_southern_flank_london_15_may_1968-en-8f13fee7-2f26-4b12-a65e-c65f4d3dc674.html



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WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

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C (68) 82

15th May 1968

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S NOTE

Recommendation 160 on the defence of
the Mediterranean and the NATO southern flank

(C (67) 180)

The Secretary-General circulates herewith the Council's reply to Assembly Recommendation 160.

The reply, adopted by the Council at their meeting on 15th May 1968, has now been forwarded to the Assembly (CR (68) 10, III, 4).

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Reply to Recommendation 160 on the defence of
the Mediterranean and the NATO southern flank

(C (68) 72)

1. After full consideration, it is not felt in existing circumstances that the establishment of an international body, under the auspices of the United Nations, to supervise the implementation of the Convention of Constantinople of 1888; covering the passage of vessels through the Suez Canal, would of itself prevent a return to situations comparable to those of 1956 and the present day. Practical supervision would only be possible if, among other things, international controls could be accepted, even in times of crisis or war.
2. The revision of the Montreux Convention governing the passage of ships through the Turkish Straits clearly involves a number of signatories to the Convention, who are not members of W.E.U. Any action in this matter would clearly have to take account of the views of all signatory countries.
3. The member Governments of W.E.U. are convinced of the need to foster the restoration of a democratic parliamentary régime in Greece.

From the outset, their attitude in the North Atlantic Council has been guided by this belief. Subject always to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member States, their action within the Alliance is based on the ideals of liberty and democracy referred to in the Preamble to the Treaty signed by all member States, including Greece. It is to be hoped that the attitude of European countries may help to further the desired move towards democracy.

4. The special representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations is at present engaged on the mission he was given under Resolution No. 242 adopted by the Security Council on 22nd November 1967. In this situation, therefore, the member Governments of W.E.U. believe that he should be given the fullest possible help in promoting a settlement in accordance with the principles laid down in the Resolution.

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5. The Council would welcome effective international arrangements leading to the control of the trade in arms. An effective registration scheme, if it could be implemented, might discourage deleterious competition in arms and thus contribute to stability in sensitive areas of the world. However, an international registration scheme would only be likely to contribute to this end, if all the purchasing and selling countries concerned were prepared to provide reliable and adequate data. However, there seems little prospect, in the present world situation, of an agreement of this sort being reached.

6. The establishment of contingency plans by the International Industry Advisory Board to ensure a normal flow of oil supplies in the event of a crisis would run up against serious obstacles in practice. The Board, being an ad hoc group which worked out a special contingency plan at the request of the O.E.C.D. Council, would not appear to be the appropriate organisation to carry out the study referred to in this recommendation. Within the framework of O.E.C.D. the Special Committee for Oil would seem to be a more appropriate body for consultation between governments. However, it will be difficult and sometimes even impractical to work out plans for a contingency of which many factors, such as the area threatened and the possible extent of the damage cannot be known in advance.

It would appear, however, that the problem of supplies in the event of a crisis could more easily be dealt with by adjusting the reserves, diversifying sources of supply, and using transport more flexible. This, in fact, is the direction in which the western European countries have been moving since the first Suez crisis, with the construction of large tankers and pipelines in Europe and exploration for oil and gas in Europe and elsewhere.

7. The Council are aware of the economic situation in Malta and welcome all efforts to alleviate the present difficulties. The Council have noted that the United Kingdom Government, for their part, are already giving financial aid to the Government of Malta, and that the Italian Government have recently offered the Maltese Government a loan on special terms. The Council have also noted that, at the request of the Council of Ministers of the E.E.C., the Commission is at present studying problems concerning economic relations between Malta and the Community.

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8. The suggestion that a regional organisation be set up for Mediterranean development is not solely the concern of the seven member States of W.E.U. The general problem of economic aid to certain countries, or groups of countries, should be studied by all interested States.

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