

Report by the Foreign Ministers of the Member States on the problems of political unification

Part One

1. The Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the European Communities were instructed by the Heads of State or Government meeting at The Hague on 1 and 2 December 1969 "to study the best way of achieving progress in the matter of political unification, within the context of enlargement" of the European Communities.

2. In carrying out these instructions, the Ministers have been anxious to remain faithful to the spirit in which the Hague communiqué was written. The Heads of State or Government said in particular in the communiqué that the construction of Europe had reached "a turning point in its history" with entry upon the final stage of the Common Market. They stated that "the European Communities remain the original nucleus from which European unity has been developed and intensified". And they expressed their determination to pave "the way for a united Europe capable of assuming its responsibilities in the world of tomorrow and of making a contribution commensurate with its traditions and its mission".

3. The Heads of State or Government affirmed their "common conviction that a Europe composed of States which, in spite of their different national characteristics, are united in their essential interests, assured of its internal cohesion, true to its friendly relations with outside countries, conscious of the role it has to play in promoting the relaxation of international tension and the rapprochement among all peoples, and first and foremost among those of the entire European continent, is indispensable if a mainspring of development, progress and culture, world equilibrium and peace is to be preserved".

4. United Europe, conscious of the responsibilities incumbent on it by reason of its economic development, industrial power and standard of living, intends to step up its endeavours on behalf of the developing countries with a view to setting international relations on a basis of trust.

5. A united Europe should be based on a common heritage of respect for the liberty and rights of man and bring together democratic States with freely elected parliaments. This united Europe remains the fundamental aim, to be attained as soon as possible, thanks to the political will of the peoples and the decisions of their Governments.

6. The Ministers therefore considered that their proposals should be based on three facts, in order to ensure consistency with the continuity and political purpose of the European design which were emphasized so forcefully by the Hague Conference.

7. The first fact is that, in line with the spirit of the Preambles to the Treaties of Paris and Rome, tangible form should be given to the will for a political union which has always been a force for the progress of the European Communities.

8. The second fact is that implementation of the common policies being introduced or already in force requires corresponding developments in the specifically political sphere, so as to bring nearer the day when Europe can speak with one voice. Hence the importance of Europe

being built by successive stages and the gradual development of the method and instruments best calculated to allow a common political course of action.

9. The third and final fact is that Europe must prepare itself to discharge the imperative world duties entailed by its greater cohesion and increasing role.

10. Current developments in the European Communities make it necessary for the Member States to step up their political cooperation and, in the initial stage, to provide themselves with ways and means of harmonizing their views in the field of international politics.

The Ministers therefore felt that foreign policy concertation should be the object of the first practical endeavours to demonstrate to all that Europe has a political vocation. The Ministers are, in fact, convinced that progress here would be calculated to promote the development of the Communities and give Europeans a keener awareness of their common responsibility.

Part Two

The Ministers propose that:

Being concerned to achieve progress towards political unification, the Governments should decide to cooperate in the field of foreign policy.

I. Objectives

This cooperation has two objectives:

(a) To ensure greater mutual understanding with respect to the major issues of international politics, by exchanging information and consulting regularly;

(b) To increase their solidarity by working for a harmonization of views, concertation of attitudes and joint action when it appears feasible and desirable.

II. Ministerial meetings

1. (a) The Foreign Ministers will meet at least once every six months, at the initiative of the President-in-office.

(b) A conference of Heads of State or Government may be held instead if the Foreign Ministers consider that the situation is serious enough or the subjects to be discussed are sufficiently important to warrant this.

(c) In the event of a serious crisis or special urgency, an extraordinary consultation will be arranged between the Governments of the Member States. The President-in-office will get in touch with his colleagues to determine how such consultation can best be arranged.

2. The meetings shall be chaired by the Foreign Minister of the country providing the President of the Council of the European Communities.

3. The ministerial meetings shall be prepared by a committee of the heads of political departments.

III. Political Committee

1. This Committee, comprising the heads of the political departments, will meet at least four times a year to do the groundwork for the ministerial meetings and to carry out any tasks entrusted to it by the Ministers.

In exceptional circumstances the President-in-office may, after consulting his colleagues, convene this Committee at his own initiative or at the request of one of the members.

2. The chairmanship of the Committee will be governed by the rules laid down for the ministerial meetings.

3. The Committee may set up working parties for special tasks.

It may instruct a panel of experts to assemble data relating to a specific problem and to submit the possible solutions.

4. Any other form of consultation may be envisaged if the need arises.

IV. Matters within the scope of the consultations

The Governments will consult each other on all major questions of foreign policy.

The Member States will be free to propose any subjects they wish for political consultation.

V. Commission of the European Communities

The Commission will be consulted if the activities of the European Communities are affected by the work of the Ministers.

VI. European Parliament

Public opinion and its spokesmen must be associated with the construction of the political union, so as to ensure that it is a democratic process.

The Ministers and the members of the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament will hold six-monthly meetings to discuss questions which are the subject of consultations in the framework of foreign policy cooperation. These meetings will be informal, to ensure that the parliamentarians and Ministers can express their views freely.

VII. General

1. The meetings will normally be held in the country of their chairman.

2. The host State will take all due steps to provide a secretarial service and for the practical organization of the meetings.

3 Each State will appoint one of its foreign affairs officials as the correspondent of his counterparts in the other countries.

Part Three

1. To ensure continuity in the task embarked on, the Ministers propose to pursue their work on the best way to achieve progress towards political unification and intend to submit a second report.
2. The work in question will also cover improvement of foreign policy cooperation and search for new fields in which progress can be made. It will have to allow for any studies undertaken in the context of European Communities, more particularly with a view to strengthening structures so as to ensure that they can, if necessary, cope satisfactorily with the extension and growth of their tasks.
3. To this end, the Ministers shall instruct the Political Committee to arrange its work in such a way that it can discharge this task and to report back at each of their half-yearly meetings.
4. Once a year, the President-in-office of the Council will provide the European Parliament with a progress report on the work in question.
5. Without prejudice to any interim report they may deem it opportune to submit, if the studies have progressed far enough, the Foreign Ministers will submit their second general report two years at the latest after the introduction of consultation on foreign policy. This report is to include an assessment of the results of the consultation in question.

Part Four

Proposals on associating the applicant countries with the work specified in Parts II and III of this report.

1. The Ministers stress the correlation between membership of the European Communities and participation in activities making for progress towards political unification.
2. The applicant States must be kept informed of the progress of the work of the Six, since they will have to be consulted on the objectives and machinery described in the present report and will have to adhere to them when they join the Communities.
3. Bearing in mind the various objectives, the following procedures are proposed for keeping the applicant States informed.

(a) Ministerial meetings

At each of their half-yearly meetings, the Ministers will fix the date of their next meeting.

Concurrently, they will decide on a date to be proposed for a ministerial meeting of the Ten, which should be held as near as possible to and normally after the meeting of the Six, with

due allowance for the opportunities which some or all of the ten Ministers have already had to meet each other.

After the ministerial meeting of the Six, the President-in-office will inform the applicant countries of the items which the Ministers propose to put on the agenda of the ministerial meeting of the Ten and provide any other information calculated to make the discussion of the Ten as fruitful as possible.

As there will have to be some flexibility in this provision of information and these discussions, it is understood that they will become more detailed when the agreements by which the applicant countries accede to the European Communities have been signed.

(b) Meetings of the Political Committee

This Committee will provide the applicant countries with information which may be of interest to them. The information in question will be transmitted by the President-in-office, who will ascertain the reactions if any of the applicant countries, and notify them to the Political Committee.