

CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

SENATE OF THE REPUBLIC

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The drafting of the reports and the publication of the proceedings of the Conference were overseen by a special working group of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, under the direction of the Secretary General, Dr Antonio Maccanico, and the Head of the Department for Research, Legislation and Parliamentary Inquiries, Professor Guglielmo Negri.

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Second Conference of the Presidents of the European Legislative Assemblies

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

G. SPÉNALE, President.

H. R. NORD, Secretary General.

Jean LALEURE, Assistant Chief of Staff to the President.

Klaus PÖHLE, Parliamentary official

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Karl CZERNETZ, President.

Giuseppe VEDOVATO, Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee.

John PRIESTMAN, Secretary General.

Peter LEUPRECHT, Head of Division of the Private Office of the Secretary General.

AUSTRIA

Nationalrat

Alfred MALETA, Second President.

BELGIUM

Senate

Pierre HARMEL, President.

Francis HUMBLET, Secretary General.

Charles PAQUES, Parliamentary Official.

House of Representatives

André DEQUAE, President.

Philippe DENEULIN, Secretary General.

DENMARK

Folketinget

Karl SKYTTE, Speaker.

Helge HJORTDAL, Secretary General.

FRANCE

Senate

Alain POHER, President.

Pierre LIOUS, Secretary General.

Jacques LELIEVRE, Technical Advisor.

Yves MALGRAIN, Director of the European Affairs Service.

National Assembly

Edgar FAURE, President.

Jean LYON, Secretary General.

Francis DORÉ, Staff Member of President's Private Office.

Jean PRIOU, Secretary General of the *Questure*.

Robert MOINET, Director of International Parliamentary Relations.

François GADOT, Chief of Staff of President's Private Office

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IRELAND

Senate

James DOOGE, Speaker.

J. TOBIN, Secretary General.

Dáil Éireann (House of Representatives)

Sean TREACY TD, Speaker.

Michael J. HEALY, Secretary General.

ITALY

Senate of the Republic

Giovanni SPAGNOLLI, President.

Gaetano GIFUNI, Secretary General.

Chamber of Deputies

Sandro PERTINI, President.

Francesco COSENTINO, Secretary General.

LUXEMBOURG

Chamber of Deputies

Antoine WEHENKEL, President.

Guillaume WAGENER, Secretary General.

THE NETHERLANDS

First Chamber of the States General

LM THURLINGS, President.

J. W. RÖELL, General Secretary.

Second Chamber of the States General

A. VONDELING, President.

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J. L. KRANENBURG, Parliamentary Official.

THE UNITED KINGDOM

House of Lords

Earl of LISTOWEL, representing the Lord Chancellor.

Peter G. HENDERSON, Secretary General.

M. A. J. WHEELER-BOOTH, Parliamentary Official

House of Commons

George THOMAS, MP, representing the Speaker.

David LIDDERDALE, Secretary General

W. R. MCKAY, Parliamentary Official

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Bundesrat

H. KUBEL, President.

Albert PFITZER, Secretary General.

Konrad REUTER, Parliamentary Official.

Bundestag

Annemarie RENGGER, President.

Helmut SCHELLKNECHT, Secretary General.

Wolfgang KESSEL, Parliamentary Official.

Friedhelm MAIER, Private Secretary to the President.

SWEDEN

Parliament

Ivar VIRGIN, Speaker.

Sune JOHANSSON, Secretary General.

SWITZERLAND

National Council

S. KOHLER, President.

Alois PFISTER, Secretary General.

PART ONE

SUMMARY REPORT OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Friday, 26 September 1975

MORNING SITTING

THE SITTING BEGAN AT 10:00 A.M.

Mr PERTINI, *President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies*, delivered the following speech: Honourable colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, delegates, on this auspicious occasion that brings us together for today's opening of the second Conference of the Presidents of European Assemblies, I should like to express my enormous gratitude for your honouring us with your presence here at the seat of the Chamber of Deputies in Rome, the city where, in 1957, the founding treaties of the European Economic Community were signed.

I would first like to extend a special greeting to the Honourable Mr Spénale, President of the European Parliament, and to the Honourable Mr Czernetz, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, whose very presence reminds us of the lengthy and arduous path that we have travelled to get to this point, and of the road that still lies ahead as we seek to engender an ever more vital European consciousness and achieve the ambitious political goal of a united and democratic Europe.

To our fellow Presidents and Speakers of the legislative assemblies of those countries that, though not members of 'Europe of the Nine', have graciously accepted our invitation, we extend our warmest welcome, being sure that their participation will make a decisive and vital contribution to the building of greater solidarity among our peoples.

I believe I reflect the sentiments of all those present in extending a cordial greeting to our colleagues, Messrs Faure and Poher, who were the promoters of the first Conference in Paris last year.

We are confident that this meeting in Rome will both consolidate and build upon the clear-eyed visions for the future of Europe as originally laid out in the work generously carried out by President Martino back in 1963, and later revived and elaborated upon by President Faure in his speeches in Bonn in 1973, and in Luxembourg and Strasbourg in 1974.

Two months ago in Helsinki, after two years of arduous negotiations in Geneva conducted by our counterparts from the 35 countries participating in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the final documents of the pan-European summit were signed.

This meeting here in Rome, esteemed colleagues, presents us with the first opportunity to affirm at the highest level of European parliamentary representation that, if we wish to move beyond mere declarations of intent, it must be the legislative assemblies of our respective nations that we can and must make the free choices required for the political and democratic construction of Europe.

Working towards the goal of building European democracy should entail concrete action in support of Europe-wide planning, progressive monetary unification, the modernisation of agriculture, the adoption of a common transport and energy policy, and, above all, the adoption of a social policy. European democracy can be realised by giving effect

to the commitment enshrined in the Treaty of Rome to the direct election of the European Parliament by the peoples of Europe, and by the assignment to the European Parliament of deliberative powers for the election of the executive, as well as of progressive powers of legislation and scrutiny for areas that come within the scope of competence of the European Community.

It was once said that even though 'Europe' has not come into being, a European being has come to exist. Europe, in the sense we intend it today, is a unique place of great cultural, historical and political tradition whose social characteristics make it quite distinct from the two superpowers that dominate the world today.

Europe is more than simply a geographical expression, even if it does not yet exist as an autonomous political entity. Today we can summarise it in three letters: ECM (the European Common Market). The unification of the economy is no small thing, but it is not everything. What is still missing is the power to make political decisions, which is to say, the power to decide on and shape political matters.

Elected by the people and entrusted with the responsibility of presiding over the legislative assemblies of our respective nations, we must show ourselves capable of identifying and championing European interests, in spite of whatever internal tensions and difficulties may arise within our Europe, so that the destiny of our continent is not left entirely to diplomacy alone.

It is up to us to ensure that the genuine and authentic forces of parliamentary democracies promote a united European coalition for the construction of European political and social democracy. Europe will thus be able to become the natural interlocutor and mediator between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, and work effectively for peaceful coexistence.

Honourable colleagues, thirty years after the Hiroshima tragedy, a major conference of general détente has recently taken place in Helsinki. And yet, not one of the speakers who took the floor there touched upon the atomic question, almost as if a tacit agreement had been reached to banish all talk on such an unbearably alarming subject. But not talking about this danger facing all humanity does not mean it will go away. Europe is materially unarmed in the face of this danger, but a Europe that is truly and effectively united will always be able to act as a wise mediator that prevents a nuclear catastrophe.

It makes sense to talk about this, because history teaches us that weapons of war, once manufactured, have always been used. It seems to me, sadly, that one resorts to history not to draw lessons from it, but to justify their mistakes.

Free from the constraints of selfishness and narrow nationalism, a truly united Europe can become a powerful force for consolidating world peace. It can advocate for total, controlled disarmament, foster solidarity among all nations across the world, and lift millions of human beings out of poverty and starvation.

I ask you, honourable colleagues, not to treat these words of mine as mere rhetoric or wishful thinking. For they come from my awareness of the danger looming over all humanity: not talking about this danger does not mean it ceases to exist.

Centuries of civilisation, driven by scientists, thinkers, poets and artists have enabled Europe, even when divided, to offer visions of beauty and progress to the other peoples of the world. A united Europe can once again serve the cause of civilisation and guide all the peoples of the earth, who are now bound to a common destiny, along the path that leads to peace and the survival of the human race.

THE HONOURABLE PERTINI, PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, ASSUMED THE PRESIDENCY OF THE CONFERENCE.

Mr PERTINI, *President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies*, proposed that the Conference send an appeal to the Spanish Government to spare the lives of young people fighting for the freedom of their country. He also proposed that the drafting of the relevant document be entrusted to the President of the French National Assembly, Mr Edgar Faure.

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic delivered the following speech*: Honourable colleagues, the second Conference of the Presidents of the European Legislative Assemblies is taking place at a particularly important and delicate moment for the future of our continent.

Thirty years after the end of the Second World War, the Conference on European Security and Cooperation has concluded in Helsinki, and stands as a solemn manifestation of the will to overcome the conflicts that have so tragically torn our nations apart. Yet, it is precisely at a time like this that Europe must keep its duties and objectives clearly in mind, so as to be capable of managing the future of its peoples in full autonomy.

Détente, which must grow beyond mere continuation of peace into genuine cooperation, offers our nations new and better prospects, but also demands a more meticulous and vigorous defence than we have hitherto mounted of our freedoms and values: a defence that can only be fully realised within a truly united Europe. Indeed, the President of the EEC Commission, Mr François-Xavier Ortoli, in his report to the European Parliament for 1975, courageously and vigorously underscored the indispensability of European unity for the international political weight and autonomy of our continent, both East and West.

The 'energy crisis' has revealed the inadequacy of the progress made to date, and points to the need for true economic and monetary union among the Community countries. Moreover, it also goes to show how the integration of economic policies remains a vague and unachievable goal in the absence of appropriate political instruments.

Ever since the Conference of Heads of State and Government last December in Paris, followed by the proposals for direct elections to the European Parliament and by the assignment to Belgian Prime Minister Mr Leo Tindemans of a mandate to look into ways of furthering European political integration, a greater awareness has arisen of the Community's role, and fresh interest has been awakened in the realisation of Adenauer, De Gasperi, and Schuman's great plan.

A new 'summit' is planned in Rome in the coming months, and my hope, which I trust is shared by you and by the peoples of Europe, is that this long-awaited and important

meeting will enable important strides to be made towards the building of the 'new' Europe, which has by now become a precondition for a more balanced and satisfactory international order.

To secure a more active and effective presence of Europe in international affairs in the future, we need to verify and make use of all the tools now at our disposal, of which our parliaments are unquestionably first and foremost in importance. For not only are they indispensable and fundamental for our political, legal, and social civilisation, but, most importantly, they are also the only means for achieving a democratic, real, and effective connection with the peoples of Europe, and thus form the essential foundation of political union.

My purpose in this brief speech is to greet you rather than make any formal proposals. That said, I hope you'll allow me to speak up in favour of connecting all European Parliaments with faster and more efficient communication links, such as telex. Might we not install in our offices a dedicated green or blue hotline to shorten distances, ease the exchange of perspectives, and aid the development of unified, common decisions?

Before concluding, distinguished colleagues, I should like to associate myself with what President Pertini has just said and make an important appeal to the Conference. As you know, eleven death sentences have recently been handed down in Spain. It is my belief that in your elevated capacity as representatives of the peoples of Europe and as faithful interpreters of the humanitarian feelings and civilisation of those peoples, you cannot do other than to make a heartfelt and urgent appeal to the Government of that country, which, after all, is part of our continent, to grant the act of clemency that so many people have called for and expect.

In extending my warmest welcome, I wish to express my hope that as we meet here to reflect upon and discuss the themes of the Conference, we can constructively contribute to European consciousness and strengthen the process of Community-building.

Mr PERTINI, *President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies*, invites the President of the French National Assembly, Mr Edgar Faure, to address the meeting with a speech linking this Conference of Presidents of Legislative Assemblies in Rome with the first Conference held in Paris.

Mr FAURE, *President of the French National Assembly*, expressed his thanks to Presidents Pertini and Spadolini for their excellent work in organising the Conference, which brought together the Presidents and Speakers of all the nine legislative assemblies of the countries of the European Community, as well as of several other European countries.

He argued for the utility of making the Conference a periodic institution, without, however, needing to set up new structures to this end. The achievement of the most substantive Europeanist goals, he explained, entailed not the creation of bureaucracy in Europe, but its avoidance. The Conference serves as pro-European propaganda, in the best sense of the term, and reaffirms the parliamentary nature of the Community institutions. For this reason, it should meet at least twice a year.

The Conference, he continued, must seek as much unanimity of consensus as possible, and should therefore avoid taking up positions that cause strong dissent among opponents. To achieve this, it needs to set up working groups in which majority and opposition groups are equally represented.

As for the organisation of the Conference, the systems adopted so far have proven effective and should serve as a model for the future.

As to the matter of the relationship of the European Parliament with national parliaments, the debate centres on the question of the election of members of the former by direct universal suffrage. In the opinion of President Faure, however, this is only a secondary issue. More important is the harmonisation of the work of the European Parliament with the work of the national assemblies of European countries.

President Faure also affirmed the ongoing validity of the parliamentary democratic system, which must not only be maintained and improved, but where possible, extended to European countries not currently governed by such a system. The creation of a European parliamentary research institute would also be a useful step to this effect.

Regarding the appeal by Presidents Pertini and Spagnolli on behalf of the young Spaniards sentenced to death, President Faure read out a telegram he had sent to the authorities in Madrid, and suggested that, with appropriate amendments, the text of the same might be adopted by the Conference in the course of its work.

Mr ELIA, *Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Rome*, in his summary report on the contribution made by national legislative assemblies to the inculcation of a European consciousness and the construction of the European Community, made particular mention of what Italy had contributed to studies undertaken with a view to strengthening the democratic role as well as the powers of the European Parliament, studies which flowed into the well-known Vedel Report.

Speaking generally, he lamented that recent years had seen an unfortunate tendency among people to remain lukewarm about the process of developing a European consciousness, an ideal for which, all told, they have only passive sympathy. Yet even such passive sympathy has been accompanied by a widening gap between the positions of different nations within the European context in the face of developments, such as the change in the Community constitutional order. In the meanwhile, the persistent technicality of the Community's administrative activities has had a severely alienating effect on the minds of ordinary Europeans.

On the other hand, there is no shortage of positive signs either, first and foremost among which has been the progressive maturation of a common legal consciousness. In Italy, proof of such maturation is to be found both in the recent changes in our national legislation (for instance, in the field of family law) that have brought Italy closer to common European standards and in specific measures such as Constitutional Court's Judgment No 183 of 1973 recognising the non-domestic, non-foreign, and non-international (and therefore original) character of Community regulations, which has aligned Italy's constitutional jurisprudence

with that already established in other countries of the Community. While European consciousness needs to be developed, it must always be done so as not to export into the broader European sphere tensions that should more properly be resolved within the boundaries of individual nations.

The revitalisation of European consciousness is crucially linked to education and culture, which must increasingly serve to legitimise the European construction on historical and idealistic grounds, rather than on merely legal ones.

From a more strictly technical perspective, the various countries need to bring greater precision and determination to parliamentary business connected with European affairs, especially in the work of parliamentary committees, which seem to be the bodies best suited to dealing with this area. Professor Elia drew attention to the increasingly widespread, albeit not uncontested, tendency of national parliaments to use parliamentary bodies to carry out prior scrutiny of Community decisions.

Moreover, given that European Parliament lacks full direct democratic legitimacy and, consequently, the corresponding powers, the tendency seems unavoidable and the only way to counter it would be to strengthen European representative bodies. It is therefore to be hoped that the current year will not pass without practical follow-up to the draft convention prepared to this end by the European Parliament last January.

In conclusion, leaders who wish to inculcate a European consciousness face historical and institutional challenges to the realisation of their high ideal. Their success will entail transferring into a continental dimension the tradition of parliamentary democracy shared by the countries engaged in building the Community, a shared heritage that has recently been eroded by a sort of 'consumerist' mentality at a national level, which is to say the pursuit of individual advantage by Member States. Only by recovering the true principles of parliamentary democracy, which are, after all, the cornerstones of democracy itself, can Europe become a daily commitment in the minds of its citizens.

(The President adjourned the sitting).

THE SITTING, SUSPENDED AT 11:30 AM, RESUMED AT 12:00 P.M.

Mr FAURE, *President of the French National Assembly*, responding to the proposals previously put forward by Presidents Pertini and Spagnolli, read out the following telegram to be sent to General Franco:

'We the undersigned Presidents of the European Legislative Assemblies, gathered in Rome for the Second Conference, unanimously ask the Spanish Head of State not to allow the carrying out of the death sentences recently passed in Spain. Stop. Our appeal has no political character, nor does it imply interference in the internal affairs of your country. Stop. A moral and spiritual solidarity exists among us European peoples, in the name of which we address this message to you.'

(The Assembly approved the text of the telegram proposed by President Faure).

ANNEMARIE RENGGER, *President of the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany*, welcomed the valuable opening remarks of President Faure, who, she noted, had raised a series of important issues.

Observing that the utmost attention must be paid to relations between the European Parliament and individual national parliaments, she called for the creation of a dedicated body within the European Parliament. She also suggested that the next Conference might be usefully dedicated to discussing the development of parliamentary democracy.

Professor Elia's introductory speech, she recalled, had touched on the delicate issue of developing the European Community, and had highlighted the difficulties that arise from attempting to remove powers from national parliaments and entrust them to a higher Community body.

While the election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage is a prospect to be cherished, it would also mean that specific national interests, even if fully taken into account, should not be allowed to take precedence over the supranational reality represented by the institutions of the European Community.

Mr CZERNETZ, *President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, alluding to Professor Elia's remarks, stressed that the term 'European consciousness' should be taken as referring to an awareness that the peoples of Europe share a historical heritage that is underpinned by the diverse cultural and ideological origins of their individual nations.

The unifying initiatives undertaken since the Second World War -- the establishment of the High Court of Justice, the Convention on Civil Rights, and the customs union -- do not in themselves imply the formation of a European union or consciousness, especially if one also considers the contradictory events that have marked European reality in recent years. We have witnessed a progressive centralisation of power at the national level and a loss of clarity on the part of institutional decision-making bodies and, consequently, a diminished understanding among citizens.

Rivalry between the various European institutions makes no sense. While we must avoid establishing the hegemony of one body over another, we must also seek representative and operational frameworks that are less fragmented and more organically linked.

President Czernetz underlined the importance of a division of labour among the European Assemblies and of the better dissemination of their results at the national level. Likewise, he continued, the flow of information among the various national Parliaments needs to be increased along with the level of their individual input, and new channels opened for the sharing of ideas and cooperation. European unity is certainly unattainable in the short term, and its eventual achievement demands the full commitment of all parties, as well as the courage to rethink institutional structures and models that are no longer fit for purpose.

Mr KUBEL, *President of the Bundesrat of the Federal Republic of Germany*, made the point that the coexistence of European consciousness with the various national patriotisms was a difficult but also necessary act of harmonisation that should take place within the framework of the Community system.

Observing that the quantum of sovereignty that should remain with national Parliaments once the European Parliament became fully operational was a question that had yet to find a practical solution, he warned against inducing unduly optimistic expectations among members of the European public for a system whose practical workings had yet to be configured, for all that its advent was certainly to be wished for.

Mr FAURE, *President of the French National Assembly*, wished to raise a question about the organisation of the proceedings. Noting that the general debate would continue in the afternoon, and that the following day would be occupied by planned statements and presentations (including of two reports by Messrs Vedovato and Spénale), he warned that there would not be enough time left over to prepare the Conference's conclusions. He therefore suggested setting up a working group, made up of representatives of each of the individual parliamentary Presidents and Speakers, to draw up the conclusions.

The conclusions, he argued, should focus mainly on the following points. Since the Conference functions excellently as an 'anti-structure,' which is to say, as an open and evolving framework, some thought might be given to its institutionalisation. Its next session could take place in Bonn.

A study could therefore be undertaken regarding the establishment within each national Parliament of a European committee, or a working group, with the participation of parliamentarians from both the majority and the opposition.

Another question regards the setting up of the European institute for parliamentary research, which could be sponsored by the European Parliament and extended to the other countries within the 'Group of 18' of the Council of Europe.

Other matters that need to be examined are: the relationship between the European Parliament and national parliaments; the relations between the nine Community countries and the Group of 18 of the Council of Europe; and relations with European parliaments that operate according to different parliamentary precepts from those of the countries attending today's Conference.

He concluded by underlining the positive significance from a pro-EC perspective of the document that the Conference had approved in defence of those sentenced to death in Spain.

(The Assembly approved President Faure's proposal to establish a working group to draft the final document of the Conference).

Mr VIRGIN, *Speaker of the Swedish Parliament*, declared that his country, too, was keenly aware of the degree of commitment needed to build a real democracy, which can never be regarded as a given, nor as having been definitively achieved, but rather as something that grows and gathers strength as the communities involved in its building become increasingly engaged.

Yet he also voiced some reservations concerning the proposed institutionalisation of periodic international meetings such as today's, also because the powers of the Speaker of the Swedish parliament are constitutionally limited.

He therefore advised that the hoped-for increase in the frequency of the meetings of the various European parliaments should take place exclusively within the framework of existing European organisations, and notably the Council of Europe. He explained that he was not seeking to criticise the current initiative, but rather to channel future initiatives into their appropriate and therefore presumably more efficacious institutional channels.

Mr TREACY, *Speaker of the Irish House of Representatives*, said he was particularly pleased to participate in this Conference, which had already touched on some interesting points.

Ireland had demonstrated a strong commitment to Community institutions, he declared, as could be seen from the results of a referendum held on this matter and by the space dedicated to their discussion in the press and in public discourse.

He expressed his strong belief that the process of Community integration needs to be pursued with tenacity until the election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage is achieved.

Fresh perspectives are emerging on the road toward Community integration, which, enriched through an exchange of views with other European partners, can provide constructive support for economic and social development.

Naturally, much remains to be resolved such as, for example, the question of parliamentary procedures, which will need to be adapted to the changing European reality. Similarly, contacts between national parliaments will need to be pursued and intensified.

He concluded by expressing his confidence that the Conference would contribute to the development of cooperation in Europe.

Mr POHER, *President of the French Senate*, referring to the proposal put forward by President Faure, and in view of the following day's busy schedule of work, proposed that President Spénale's report, scheduled for the morning of the next day, be brought forward to this evening.

Mr VEDOVATO, *Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, said that, given the general themes of his report, its reading should likewise be brought forward to the afternoon so that the general debate might develop organically on the basis of the two reports, both his and Mr Spénale's.

(The Assembly approved the Poher and Vedovato proposals to bring forward the reading of the Spénale and Vedovato reports to that afternoon's sitting).

Mr PERTINI, *President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies*, adjourned the remainder of the debate until the afternoon sitting.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12.50 P.M.

AFTERNOON SITTING

THE SITTING OPENED AT 3.30 P.M.

Mr VONDELING, *President of the Second Chamber of the States General of the Netherlands*, sought clarification regarding the decisions made by the Assembly in the morning. He concurred entirely with President Faure's proposal to move from a theoretical to a more operational phase, and suggested the way forward would be to draft a meeting agenda incorporating Faure's proposals in preparation for a new session of the Conference, to be held in Bonn or elsewhere in Germany. He wanted to know if the working group that the Assembly had decided to establish that morning would be responsible for preparing such an agenda.

Mr FAURE, *President of the French National Assembly*, was of the opinion that now was the right occasion to focus on aspects that merited further examination and discussion at the next meeting in Bonn, and said he had advanced proposals in the morning to identify these aspects. He saw no incompatibility between his suggested arrangements for the work of the Conference and what President Vondeling had just said.

Mr VONDELING, *President of the Second Chamber of the States General of the Netherlands*, took note of Mr Faure's statement.

Mr SPÉNALE, *President of the European Parliament*, delivered his report on the relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments. He began by welcoming the initiative that had led to the holding of this Conference of the Presidents of the Parliaments of the Community, and recalled its somewhat contentious precedents, namely: the Conference held in Rome on 15 December 1963 on the initiative of the President of the European Parliament, Mr Gaetano Martino; the Conference held in Strasbourg on 15 January 1973 on the initiative of President Walter Behrendt; and the Conference held in Paris on 7 January 1975 in Paris on the initiative of the President of the French National Assembly, Mr Edgar Faure.

He identified the theme of relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments as one of the focal points of the debate. The issue at hand now, he argued, supersedes, but does not negate, the issues typical of traditional interparliamentary relations, such as the pooling of expertise relating to the technical aspects of parliamentary work and regulatory harmonisation in intergovernmental spheres such as taxation and customs.

What has now emerged is the need to identify a goal that can be reached through specific cooperation, and so the time has come to replace outdated working methods. The goal, in his view, consists in the achievement of ever deeper intergovernmental cooperation capable of overcoming the delays and obstacles that have been such a distinguishing feature of the European Parliament's action in past years, partly owing to the inherent limitations of the body itself and partly owing to constraints associated with structural relationships that have since ceased to exist. The achievement of the customs union has, in a certain sense, reduced the scope of action and discussion among the various parliaments of Europe. Yet this has been counterbalanced by the establishment within the Community of features typical of

a proper functioning parliament, such as the increased availability of financial resources and increased power of scrutiny over the administration of the common regional fund. Hence the European Parliament's commitment to safeguarding the principles and forms of representative democracy, even when they are under strain at a national or international level.

He also highlighted the altered relationship between the Council of Ministers of the EEC and the European Parliament, which would be represented the following week in Brussels at a meeting to set the scope of the monetary measures for the 1975 Community budget.

The progressive emancipation of the European Parliament and its reclaiming of its autonomy have imposed new and greater responsibilities on individual members, and led to a situation of clear incompatibility with national parliaments that have been assigned similar responsibilities.

At present, members of the European Parliament are designated by individual national parliaments, whereas it would be desirable to hold elections by direct universal suffrage, as Community institutions would become more representative. It is therefore necessary, he continued, for individual countries to make their positions on this matter known as soon as possible and set out specific procedures for the election of their representatives.

Meanwhile, several proposals have been advanced for the assignment of new powers to the European Parliament with a view to achieving European union by 1980.

Strengthening Community institutions is less a question of stripping powers from Member States than of encouraging the joint exercise of the powers. Of course, ample room must be left to individual parliaments to also debate matters that come under the remit of the Community, without, however, going so far as to allow the decisions of individual States to override those of Community institutions. If individual countries were to be granted a substantial right of veto, the process of Community integration would be seriously undermined.

The issue of democratic oversight of the Community executive could be resolved by strengthening the supervisory powers of the European Parliament, which could indirectly allow individual national parliaments to maintain their legitimate influence over Community decisions.

Were such a situation to come about, then cooperation between the various parliaments would become more vital than ever and would need to be achieved at the level of presidents, secretaries-general, and, where appropriate, specialised working groups.

He expressed the hope that the Conference of Presidents and Speakers could be institutionalised and equipped with a permanent secretariat, whose organisation could be entrusted to the secretaries-general.

He also spoke in favour of setting up European Affairs committees within each national parliament to liaise with Community institutions. He advised that collaboration between like-minded political groups across the various legislative Assemblies also had a role to play and whose importance should not be overlooked.

In conclusion, he reaffirmed the importance of the process of Community integration and of the current meeting which, with reference to the previous meetings mentioned earlier, should really be called the 'Fourth' Conference of the Presidents of European Legislative Assemblies.

Finally, he reassured those countries not currently members of the EEC that the ever-increasing expansion of cooperation across the continent was in no way intended prejudicially against them. Indeed, he took the opportunity afforded by the Conference to express his hope for a reinforcement of democratic institutions throughout Europe.

Mr VEDOVATO, *Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, delivered his report on the relations between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the national parliaments and citizens of Member States. He recalled how the idea for the current Conference arose during a conversation with President Faure on the occasion of the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Assembly of the Council of Europe. The basic idea, he explained, is to overcome the current crisis in the parliamentary experience and ensure better liaison between European parliamentary assemblies, national parliaments and the citizens of the various European states.

Among other things, we must strive for an effective system of democratic oversight of European parliamentary organisations, which will mean moving beyond the quasi-confidential nature of the deliberations they adopt. Meanwhile, the election of members of European Assemblies by direct universal suffrage will need to be accompanied by an effective increase in the powers of these assemblies.

Indeed, for as long as the current limitations on the powers of European Assemblies persist, the dual mandate, both national and European, remains an absolute necessity, which is especially the case for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The proliferation of Community-level institutions poses a danger, he noted, because it could weaken and even jeopardise the achievement of the core objectives of the European institutions. He reminded the meeting that a colloquium on this topic was due to take place in Strasbourg in April 1976, followed by another in Geneva on the evolution of democratic institutions in Europe. He made the case that initiatives of this sort were a step in the wrong direction that would bring about the useless duplication of institutions by way of a reaction to the compounding of the problems of the European Community. The problem with the current direction of travel is that it leads to the formation of a dangerous tendency to draw a distinction between the problems of the 'Europe of the nine' from those of the 'non-nine' (i.e. non-EEC European countries), which are thus exposed to the risk of being treated as second-tier democracies. On this point, Mr Vedovato announced that the Council of Europe, animated by the desire to see a genuine enlargement of the European ideal, would shortly be making a declaration on the future of the union.

He reminded the meeting that since 1956, a specific body of the Council of Europe, namely the Commission for Relations with European Parliaments and the Public, had been

assiduously doing excellent promotional and lobbying work to foster relations between European parliamentary assemblies and national parliaments. Its work had covered a very wide range of matters susceptible to common regulation, many of which had been the subject of specific Council of Europe resolutions. Another initiative that he felt was worthy of mention was the transmission of Council of Europe resolutions with the most relevant social and cultural content to national parliaments, as well as to various social institutions in individual countries.

By extension, mention should also be made of the work of another Council of Europe Committee, responsible for regional planning and local authorities.

Looking ahead, however, the main issue is how the political forces of individual countries could be translated onto a European parliamentary level. The current activity of transnational political groups represented a first step in this direction.

Looking even further into the future, relations with countries outside the European Community and the Council of Europe would need to be progressively expanded. For its part, the Council had already directed successful efforts towards this goal.

Mr PERTINI, *President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies*, advised that the members of the drafting committee should hold their initial meeting immediately, and announced the adjournment of the current sitting. The drafting committee, he said, would hold another meeting the following morning to draw up a basic draft so that it might continue its work in the afternoon.

(The sitting was suspended by the President)

THE SITTING, SUSPENDED AT 5.15 P.M., RESUMED AT 5.50 P.M.

Mr SKYTTE, *Speaker of the Danish Folketinget*, expressed his immediate impressions of the day's debate, and observed that widespread misinformation and misunderstanding continued to characterise current attitudes towards the Community. National debates and interparliamentary meetings undoubtedly contribute significantly to alleviating the information gap, he said, but the best way to secure the attention of the public is by means of European cooperation that yields practical and concrete results.

Regrettably, he continued, Community principles remain subject to threats and challenges. Denmark had spoken up about its grievances on this matter and would continue to do so in future.

The lingering uncertainties about European structures and their priority areas of action, as well as the unresolved issue of how to implement the direct election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage, are the result of insufficient deliberation and superficial political thinking. It would be far more productive to focus national parliamentary debates on Community matters.

Despite its inherent limitations, the Council of Europe is a body whose revitalisation would undoubtedly help establish the idea of Europe as a unified community, whose evolving challenges require the constructive contribution of every nation on the continent.

Mr KOHLER, *President of the National Council of the Swiss Confederation*, declared that his country, with its long democratic tradition, was closely following the experiences of parliamentary democracy currently unfolding in other European nations.

Collaboration between the various European countries was a goal to be tenaciously pursued in the name of overcoming narrow nationalism whatever its form. Switzerland, he announced, was therefore entirely open to dialogue with other European nations, being mindful of the validity and irreplaceable function of parliamentary democracy.

The EARL OF LISTOWEL, *representing the Lord Chancellor of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom*, noted that the recent referendum had placed Great Britain in a different position regarding Community matters. A dedicated Select Committee had been established within the House of Lords to deal with Community affairs, and new impetus had been given to the mechanisms for participating in Community legislation, he explained.

He revealed that the United Kingdom authorities were looking into the possibility of appointing the Chairman of the aforementioned Select Committee as the future UK representative at the Conference, given that parliamentary custom in his country precluded the direct participation of either the Lord Chancellor or the Speaker of the House of Commons.

ANNEMARIE RENGGER, *President of the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany*, speaking also in the name of the other participants at the Conference, conveyed her warmest congratulations to President Pertini on his seventy-ninth birthday, together with expressions of gratitude for the exemplary manner in which he was discharging his high duties as President of the Conference. *(Warm and general applause)*

Mr PERTINI, *President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies*, thanked her and stated that, despite the faint melancholy that inevitably accompanied the passing of the years, he drew comfort from the knowledge that he had always done his duty in the service of the cause of freedom, and that he would continue to do so in the future. *(Warm and general applause)*

(The President adjourned the debate until the following day)

THE SITTING CONCLUDED AT 6:15 P.M.

Saturday, 27 September 1975

MORNING SITTING

THE SITTING OPENED AT 10:30 AM

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic*, informed the participants that the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Mr Pertini, had been called away from Rome the night before on account of urgent political commitments. He reported that President Pertini had asked him to convey his warm greetings to the Assembly, and his hope that the Assembly would succeed in providing fresh impetus to the task of finding more concrete and immediate solutions to the problems facing the peoples of Europe. Senator Spagnolli then announced that he was pleased to take on the responsibility of coordinating the work of the Conference for the day.

SENATOR SPAGNOLLI, PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC, ASSUMED THE PRESIDENCY OF THE CONFERENCE

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic (rising, followed by the entire Assembly)*, invited the Assembly to observe a minute's silence in memory of the Spanish prisoners sentenced to death, for whom the Assembly's appeal for clemency on the previous day had been in vain.

(The Assembly, standing, observed a minute's silence).

Mr CZERNETZ, *President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, professed the belief that the carrying out of the death sentences in Spain could not leave the Conference indifferent. This act by the Franco regime further distances Spain from Europe, he said, adding that, in the name of the Council of Europe and the eighteen member countries representing it, he deplored and firmly condemned what had occurred.

Mr SPÉNALE, *President of the European Parliament*, speaking on behalf of the European Parliament, associated himself with President Czernetz's words and expressed the hope that the European Community would take appropriate institutional-level action to condemn the totalitarian regime governing Spain.

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic*, took note that there were no expressions of dissent from the protest against the carrying out of the death sentences in Spain, and that the statement should therefore be understood as being made on behalf of the entire Assembly. He then invited the participants to resume the debate on the reports presented yesterday.

Mr THURLINGS, *President of the First Chamber of the States General of the Netherlands*, expressed his disappointment with certain aspects of the debate so far,

particularly with what he saw as the conflation of the problems of the European Parliament with those of the Council of Europe.

As for the crisis of parliamentary democracy, since it also affects many non-European countries, it should by no means be treated as if it were an exclusively European problem.

He therefore recommended that in the planning of future Conferences the issues of the European Parliament and those of the Council of Europe be dealt with separately, and perhaps even at different venues. Further, he argued, the Presidents of national Parliaments were the least qualified to advance specific political arguments precisely because of the impartiality associated with their office. A more appropriate course of action, he concluded, would be to permit the participation, with full speaking rights, of the chairpersons of the parliamentary committees institutionally dedicated to European Community affairs and European affairs in general.

Mr HARMEL, *President of the Belgian Senate*, speaking also on behalf of Mr Dequae, President of the Belgian House of Representatives, thanked the rapporteurs for preparing such high quality documents, which would provide the various parliaments of Europe with important source material for discussion. In particular, as Professor Elia was right to underscore, since the EEC Commission and Council of Ministers are empowered to make legislative decisions, consultations between European parliaments and the Council of Ministers must be conducted according to increasingly mandatory procedures. Secondly, he suggested that national parliaments ought to avoid issuing instructions to their governments regarding matters that would be deliberated by the executive of the Community.

Concerning the future prospects of meetings of the Presidents and Speakers of European parliaments, he supported Mr Spénale's proposal to spread future Conferences over two days, the first specifically dedicated to European Community affairs, and the second open to all eighteen countries of the Council of Europe. The Belgian representatives suggested that the second day might be dedicated to looking into how national parliaments might help European governments achieve continuity and stability, these being crucial issues for a pluralistic democracy. The proceedings should be built around topic-specific reports prepared by the designated presidents of European parliaments, and should be published sufficiently in advance to allow for the submission of written observations.

With respect to the structure of future Conferences, he felt that rigid institutionalisation was not yet the appropriate course of action to pursue, and that for the time being it was better to rely on the personal commitment of the various Presidents and Speakers.

Finally, speaking in a personal capacity, he suggested that future sessions of the Conference should also be open to the President of the Assembly of the WEU.

Mr POHER, *President of the French Senate*, remarked that this was the first occasion on which the Presidents of the European legislative assemblies had met since the referendum held in Great Britain on membership of the EEC. He looked forward to closer relations leading

to greater cooperation among European legislative assemblies, and, especially, among their Presidents and Speakers.

It is precisely because of their position above party politics that Presidents and Speakers of Parliaments are the most qualified to deal realistically and without rhetoric with the problems of building European unity, he declared. Countries that are not members of the EEC should also take part in the debate, and should be treated without any prejudice whatsoever. As economic and social problems affect all Europe, it makes no sense to confine the discussions to the EEC Nine only.

The direct election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage is a goal that needs to be reached quickly. He added that national parliaments should establish specific bodies to conduct relations with Community institutions. Most of all, however, a 'European consciousness' first needs to gain currency since, without it, any plan for continental unification is destined to remain a pipe dream.

Mr THOMAS, *representing the Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom*, associated himself with those participants who had expressed their appreciation for the organisation of the Conference. He remarked that this was the first time that Great Britain had had the opportunity to participate in a meeting of this type.

Thanks to the result of the recent referendum, the British Government was fully empowered to make clear commitments and play a more active role in the European Community. The House of Commons itself had recently devoted quite a few debates to discussing the European Community. One outcome of the debates was that all parties represented in Parliament were now imbued with a European consciousness.

He also made reference to the objective limits in the constitutional system of the United Kingdom that constrain the actions of the Speaker, which must always be entirely subject to the will of the House. The British delegation's participation in this Conference follows the communiqué issued after the Paris summit earlier in the year to the effect that no attempt would be made at international meetings to override the powers of individual national parliaments. The Speaker, servant of the House of Commons, cannot bypass at an international level the political will of the majority expressed in Westminster, he explained.

He therefore recommended inviting representatives of the British parliamentary committee responsible for examining European legislation to the next session of the Conference.

Participants at these meetings, he concluded, should include people who, upon returning to their respective parliaments, could advocate for the implementation of the policies agreed at the meetings, which is something that the Speaker would be unable to do.

ANNEMARIE RENGGER, *President of the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany*, noted that whilst the argument could certainly be made that the Conference was superfluous or powerless, it was her conviction that the Presidents and Speakers of the various national parliaments could, without compromising the impartiality of their office, initiate debates on

European matters within their respective assemblies, and that it was primarily from this perspective that their periodic meetings should be assessed.

Conversely, opening the Conference to the institutional participation of experts, even though their input should be sought, risked investing the Conference with a nature inhospitable to their function as parliamentary Presidents and Speakers.

Finally, further consideration should be given to Mr Faure's proposal for the creation of a European institute or documentation centre.

Mr FAURE, *President of the French National Assembly*, expressed concern at certain criticisms that had emerged during discussions, such as those voiced by the Dutch representative. To be sure, he said, parliamentary Presidents and Speakers held an entirely unique office, but it could not be argued that they should therefore hold no opinions or be barred from expressing them. One need only consider the message sent on the previous day to the authorities in Madrid on behalf of the Spanish prisoners sentenced to death, a message to which none of the political groups in the national parliaments could object.

In reality, these Conferences were definitely useful for the purposes of cultivating a European conscience and drawing public attention to certain issues.

As for the problems facing parliamentary democracy, he agreed that they were indeed common to countries on other continents, but argued that they were far more acutely felt in Europe where the parliamentary tradition was longest established, and were further complicated by issues to do with the relationship between European parliamentary institutions and national parliaments.

He proposed that, while the Conference should maintain a flexible character and meet once a year, it must always remain a Conference of Presidents and Speakers, who, as was suggested during the debate, could certainly be joined by the chairpersons of parliamentary committees with responsibility for European affairs.

Above all, the Conference should be the source of recommendations for national political forces regarding vital European issues, such as the election of European Assemblies by direct universal suffrage. This is something the Conference is capable of achieving precisely because of the non-partisan character of the office of a parliamentary Speaker or President, which was a quality shared by all those present.

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic*, associated himself with the hopes expressed by President Faure, to whom he extended special thanks for his contribution to the Conference, mindful that the cultivation of a European consciousness must be regarded as the fundamental objective to be pursued on the path towards building continental unity.

Now that discussions had advanced to this point, he said, it would be helpful to summarise the various themes and proposals.

First of all, there was the Thomas proposal, which had met with some opposition, to invite the chairpersons of the various parliamentary committees in charge of European affairs to participate in the Conference.

Then there was Presidents Czernetz and Spénale's suggestion that future Conferences be spread over two days, with the first day being dedicated to relations with the European Parliament, and the second being reserved for the broader issue of relations with the Council of Europe. This latter proposal, he observed, seemed to enjoy unanimous support.

He recalled that the President of the Belgian Senate, Mr Harmel, had proposed that for future Conferences, one or more Presidents of the European Legislative Assemblies should be tasked with preparing reports on circumscribed topics for presentation ahead of the commencement of the Conference itself, and had also emphasised the importance of endowing European governments with greater stability and continuity. Finally, President Harmel had also proposed inviting the President of the WEU Assembly to the next sessions of the Conference.

He invited the participants to declare their positions on these matters, should they see fit, so that as wide a range of opinions as possible could be made known to the working group tasked with preparing the final document.

Mr CZERNETZ, *President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, returning to the subject of the organisation of proceedings for the next Conference session, argued that whereas the division into two days, one dedicated to the Nine of the EEC and the other to the Eighteen of the Council of Europe, should stand, there must be no discrimination against the latter in the preparation of documents or in the recognition of status. Delegates to the Council of Europe, he insisted, must not be reduced to the status of mere guests of the Conference.

As for the dangers threatening the system of pluralistic democracy mentioned by President Faure, it should be emphasised that they are not confined to the peril of fascism. For example, the difficulty of keeping parliamentarians informed and safeguarding their role with respect to experts and technocrats is another source of jeopardy.

As for the wider political outlook, the Council of Europe is currently looking to expand its relations with non-European countries, such as Canada and the United States, and is also dealing with the diplomatically delicate issue of conducting relations with parliamentary representatives from countries outside the sphere of Western democracies.

The task of ensuring a better exchange of information and ideas among the various European bodies, as well as within the wider European public, remained a matter of pressing urgency.

Mr POHER, *President of the French Senate*, referring to the issues surrounding the organisation of future sessions of the Conference, expressed the view that there should be no difficulty in extending the invitation to representatives of non-EEC countries as long as steps are taken to make sure that one Conference day be devoted to the specific problems of the European Nine, during which the others might participate as observers only.

Mr THOMAS, *representing the Speaker of the United Kingdom House of Commons*, requested clarification regarding a document in his possession containing the text of a

provisional resolution prepared by the drafting committee. In his view, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the document referred to issues whose scope exceeded the proper remit of an Assembly such as the present one.

Mr POHER, *President of the French Senate*, clarified that only a provisional version of the final resolution had so far been drawn up by the drafting committee under a specific mandate from the Assembly. Not being the definitive version, it remained open to amendment and addition by the Conference.

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic*, further clarified that the drafting committee would now proceed to the preparation of a final draft based on the version already approved that would take into account the observations made in the morning session. The new draft resolution would then be debated in the afternoon by the plenary Assembly.

Mr VONDELING, *President of the Second Chamber of the States General of the Netherlands*, echoed the misgivings of the British representative. Specifically, he was of the view that the inclusion in the draft of two points that had not been debated at all was entirely unjustified and incomprehensible. The first point regards the current state of political freedoms and the protection of citizens in European parliamentary democracies; and the second regards relations with countries whose systems of government are not pluralistic parliamentary democracies.

Operating with a spirit of pragmatism should not mean throwing away the caution that needs to be exercised when dealing with certain delicate and complex questions.

Mr DOOGE, *Speaker of the Irish Senate*, said that the difficulties just highlighted by the representative of the United Kingdom also applied to his country. Even so, his position was that the current structure of the Conference of Presidents of European Legislative Assemblies should be preserved as is, without any changes or additions.

As for a potential meeting of the chairpersons of parliamentary committees in charge of European affairs, he saw no impediment to this being done on an entirely autonomous basis, possibly under the auspices of the European Parliament or the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The EARL OF LISTOWEL, *representing the Lord Chancellor of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom*, voiced his support for the objections raised by the representatives of the Netherlands and the House of Commons regarding paragraphs 2 and 3 of the draft resolution on the grounds that they had considerable implications for domestic and foreign policy, and raised difficult questions about both.

Mr POHER, *President of the Senate of the French Republic*, explained that the sections of the provisional draft document to which the previous speakers had objected had been taken under consideration by the drafting committee on the basis of a specific mandate issued by the Assembly, which retained its freedom to agree to them in whole or part or not at all.

Mr FAURE, *President of the French National Assembly*, reiterated that the drafting committee had included points to be debated by the Assembly that would be included in the final text only if accepted unanimously by the participants.

Mr KUBEL, *President of the Bundesrat of the Federal Republic of Germany*, said he shared the misgivings of the previous speakers regarding the vague wording and unilateral interpretation of the points in the draft document.

He nonetheless believed that the drafting committee could come up with a solution before the Assembly began its afternoon sitting.

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic*, thanking the speakers for their productive and practical observations, appointed the members of the drafting committee to the task of preparing a final outline of the proposed resolution, which would be the subject of debate by the Assembly upon the resumption of proceedings in the afternoon. (*The President adjourned the debate until the afternoon sitting*).

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12:00 P.M.

AFTERNOON SITTING

THE SITTING OPENED AT 5:20 P.M.

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic*, reported that the members of the drafting committee had encountered greater difficulties than expected in drafting the final resolution. He therefore proposed suspending the sitting pending the completion of the work of the drafting committee, whereupon the Assembly, as planned, would be able to express its views.

He advised that unless there were any objections, it would be so decided.

(*It was so decided*).

THE SITTING, SUSPENDED AT 5:25 P.M., RESUMED AT 6:20 P.M.

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic*, announced that the drafting committee had concluded its work and drawn up the definitive text of the draft final communiqué in English and French. He submitted the text to the Assembly. The text of the draft final communiqué, in translation, reads as follows:

“1) The Presidents and Speakers of the parliaments of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of Belgium, the Kingdom of Denmark, the French Republic, the United Kingdom (represented), the Republic of Ireland, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, along with the President of the European Parliament, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the President of the National Council of Austria, the Speaker of the Swedish Riksdag, and the President of the

National Council of the Swiss Confederation, convened in Rome on 26 and 27 September 1975 at the invitation of Mr Pertini, President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, and Senator Spagnolli, President of the Italian Senate, who chaired the proceedings.

The representatives of Austria, Sweden, and Switzerland participated in the Conference as invited members. The Swedish representative did not take part in the drafting of the communiqué.

2) In accordance with the decision taken at the Conference held in Paris on 7 January 1975, Professor Leopoldo Elia presented a general report on the contribution of national parliaments to the cultivation of a European consciousness and the construction of the European Community. The report was a synopsis of the reports submitted by the Presidents and Speakers of the national parliamentary assemblies.

3) The President of the European Parliament, Mr. Spénale, presented a report on relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments; the Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Senator Vedovato, presented, on behalf of that Assembly, a report on relations between the Assembly, national parliaments, and the peoples of member countries.

4) The participants in the Conference, while recognising the limitations to which they might be subject owing to the nature of their office, emphasised the importance of holding these meetings on a regular basis. The importance of these Conferences derives essentially from two sets of considerations. The first relates to the specific problems of the Member States of the European Community and the relations of their parliaments with the Parliament of the European Community. The second concerns the general problems of parliamentary democracy in the contemporary era. The participants believe that this important task will be most effectively accomplished if future meetings are organised as specified in the following points:

- a) the meetings should, in principle, be held once a year;
- b) the items on the agenda for each meeting should be decided upon as precisely as possible at the preceding meeting, and subsequently configured under the direction of the parliamentary President/Speaker of the country hosting the following meeting.

5) With regard to Community issues, the plan to elect members of the European Parliament by means of direct universal suffrage has the potential to add a new dimension to relations between the European Parliament itself and the national parliaments. The prospective development of the Community across numerous sectors where national parliaments exercise a significant role will necessitate increasingly close coordination between these parliaments and the European Parliament. In view of the foregoing, provisions should be made to:

a) establish a committee of the European Parliament responsible for relations with national parliaments, and, within each national parliament, form committees or working groups responsible for the coordination of European affairs;

b) give national parliaments access to the automated documentation sources operating in the institutions of the European Community.

6) With regard to the general present-day problems of parliamentary democracy, work to gather information, documentation, research, and proposals should proceed on a continuous, coordinated, and comprehensive basis.

In this regard, the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have agreed to use the instruments at their disposal to facilitate the continuation of this work with a view to the establishment, in liaison with national parliaments, of a European parliamentary research institute.

It was agreed that the Presidents and Speakers of the Parliaments of all Council of Europe Member States and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe would be invited to participate in future Conferences.

The participants accepted with pleasure the invitation to meet in Bonn on 11, 12 and 13 June 1976.

The following provisional agenda has been set for the Bonn meeting:

1-a) the development of relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments in light of the evolution of the Community since the last Conference;

1-b) the project for European union to the extent that it touches upon the concerns of the European Parliament and national parliaments;

2) the current problems facing parliamentary democracy;

3) the role of national parliaments in fostering continuity of government action.

The participants granted a joint mandate to the presiding officers of the Italian and German assemblies to arrange the modalities of the next meeting, and in particular to determine the invitations beyond those provided for in paragraph 6, and to ensure the preparation of the debate in the best possible manner.

Mr VEDOVATO, *Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, referring to paragraph 1 of the document, asked the representative of the Swedish Parliament to consider removing the mention of his failure to participate in the drafting of the final document.

Mr SPÉNALE, *President of the European Parliament*, suggested that the Swedish reservation could be included in another document and deleted from the final communique of the Conference. The representative of the Swedish Parliament could thus avoid being answerable for an act in which he did not participate, while at the same time a substantial element of disharmony could be eliminated from the Conference's final document.

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic*, pointed out that a request such as the above could not be acceded to because the Assembly of the Conference

was debating a unitary document that could not be divided into different parts. He asked the representative of the Swedish Parliament whether he would be agreeable to the removal of the reservation expressed in paragraph 1 of the document.

Mr VIRGIN, *Speaker of the Swedish Parliament*, said he could not comply with this request because he was answerable to the Swedish Parliament for his actions. Since he had not participated in the drafting of the document, he could not assume the responsibility for signing it.

He added, however, that his stance should not be interpreted as an attempt to distance his country from the European reality. On the contrary: Sweden was fully prepared to assume an active role in the process of European construction, and would be happy to be invited to the next sessions of the Conference.

Mr POHER, *President of the French Senate*, was of the opinion that the importance of the issue should not be overstated. The mention of the Swedish representative's failure to participate in the drafting of the document is merely a statement of fact that does not invalidate the final document of the Conference, he said.

Mr VEDOVATO, *Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, pointed out that paragraph 1 of the document further specified that the representatives of the Austrian, Swedish and Swiss Parliaments had participated in the Conference 'as invited members'. The representative of the Austrian Parliament would therefore also be fully entitled to request the insertion in the document of a reservation similar to that concerning the Swedish representative. Since no such request was forthcoming, the absence of a signature from the Swedish representative amounts to an expression of dissent from the content of the document that it would be preferable to avoid, or at least to express differently by, for example, abstaining in the final vote.

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic*, noted that the Assembly would not be called upon to vote on the document, which would be considered approved only if there was general consensus (without prejudice, of course, to the right to submit amendments).

Mr MALETA, *Second President of the Austrian Nationalrat*, proposed an alternative: either Sweden withdraws its request, or the mention of non-participation in the drafting committee should apply also to Austria and Switzerland.

ANNEMARIE RENGGER, *President of the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany*, said the Swedish delegation's wish to have the clarification under discussion included in the document could not be disregarded. After all, it is just a working document of limited scope.

Mr CZERNETZ, *President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, noted that in the written correspondence that was exchanged as part of the preparations for the

Conference, it had been established that the 'non-nine' were invited members with full equality of rights, and he could therefore only express perplexity at Sweden's request.

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic*, took the view that Sweden's request had to be taken into account, and asked the Austrian representative whether he too insisted on stipulating his non-participation in the drafting of the communiqué.

Mr MALETA, *Second President of the Austrian Nationalrat*, waived making such a stipulation.

Mr CZERNETZ, *President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, tabled an amendment to add to paragraph 1, after the words: 'invited members', the words: 'in their own right'.

Mr SPÉNALE, *President of the European Parliament*, declared that this wording made no sense, but that it was up to the Assembly to decide the question.

Mr POHER, *President of the French Senate*, declared that he also felt it was superfluous to specify the existence of equal rights among the participants in the Conference since it was a self-evident truth deducible from, among other things, the fact that the problems of the 'Nine' were discussed in the presence of the 'non-Nine'.

Mr VEDOVATO, *Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, tabled an amendment for the deletion from paragraph 1 of the words: 'Representatives of Austria, Sweden and Switzerland participated in the Conference as invited members'.

Mr CZERNETZ, *President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, agreed with Mr Vedovato's proposal on the grounds that the sentence amounted to a superfluous clarification.

The Assembly approved paragraph 1, with the deletion of the words: 'The representatives of Austria, Sweden and Switzerland participated in the Conference as invited members. It then approved paragraph 2, with an amendment replacing the words: 'Professor Leopoldo Elia', with the words: 'Leopoldo Elia, Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Rome'.

Mr VEDOVATO, *Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, clarified that, contrary to the wording of paragraph 3 of the draft final communique, his report dealt with relations between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the 'citizens' rather than the 'peoples' of the Member States. The difference, he said, is not one of form, but does carry clear political weight.

The Assembly took note of this clarification and approved paragraph 3 with the text thus amended.

Mr VEDOVATO, *Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, noted that the current wording of paragraph 4 seemed to place great emphasis on the importance of the regularity of meetings.

Mr FAURE, *President of the French National Assembly*, spoke in favour of adhering to the principle of “regularity”, and argued that the original text should therefore be left as is.

Mr VEDOVATO, *Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, did not press the point further.

The Assembly approved the preamble to paragraph 4, with an amendment that replaced the last sentence with the following: ‘The participants believe that their work would be much more effective if future meetings were organised pursuant to the specifications set out below:’. The Assembly then approved without amendments point a) of paragraph 4.

Mr VEDOVATO, *Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, observed that point b) of paragraph 4 appeared to contradict the concluding section of the final communique, which states that the agenda for the next session would be drawn up ‘for indicative purposes only’. Yet the same point b) also speaks of each meeting needing to set the agenda of the subsequent session ‘with the greatest possible precision.’ He therefore proposed that the words ‘for indicative purposes’ only be added to point b.

Mr THOMAS, *representing the Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom*, proposed adding to the phrase: ‘as precisely as possible’, the words: ‘at the time’.

Mr FAURE, *President of the French National Assembly*, opined that the concept of ‘at the time’ was already implicit and that the addition was therefore superfluous.

Messrs VEDOVATO and THOMAS withdrew their proposed amendments.

The Assembly approved point b) of paragraph 4 without amendment.

Mr SPÉNALE, *President of the European Parliament*, proposed that the following point c) be inserted at the end of paragraph 4: ‘c) the first day of each meeting shall be dedicated to questions of cooperation among the parliaments of the European Community.’

Mr FAURE, *President of the French National Assembly*, remarked that specifying that the first day of each session would be dedicated to the issues indicated was unnecessary.

Mr SPÉNALE, *President of the European Parliament*, insisted upon keeping this stipulation.

Mr FAURE, *President of the French National Assembly*, did not shift his opinion, but did not press the point further.

The Assembly approved the insertion of point c) in paragraph 4 of the Spénale text. The Assembly then approved paragraph 5 of the document, to which no amendments were tabled. The Assembly approved the first subparagraph of paragraph 6, and approved an amended

version of the second subparagraph of the same in which the words from 'this work' until the end of the paragraph were replaced with the following text: 'this work. The European Parliament, in liaison with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and national parliaments, shall take the necessary steps for the creation of a European parliamentary research institute.' It then approved the third subparagraph of paragraph 6, with the deletion of the opening phrase: 'It was agreed that'; and with the substitution of the words: 'will be invited to participate' with the words: 'shall participate'. The three subsequent subparagraphs were transformed into paragraph 7.

Mr SPÉNALE, *President of the European Parliament*, announced that he could not at this moment guarantee his presence at the next Conference as he was bound by the calendar of business of the European Parliament, which was established on an entirely autonomous basis.

The Assembly approved the first subparagraph and points 1-a, 1-b and 2 of paragraph 7, to which no amendments were tabled.

Mr THOMAS, *representative of the Speaker of the House of Commons*, tabled an amendment to point 3 of paragraph 7, seeking to delete the words: 'to ensure the continuity of government action.'

Mr FAURE, *President of the French National Assembly*, proposed deleting point 3 in its entirety because point 2 already implicitly encompassed its content.

The Assembly approved the deletion of point 3 of paragraph 7. It then approved the final subparagraph of paragraph 7, after which it proceeded to approve the final communiqué as a whole. With the foregoing amendments having been made, the definitive text reads as follows:

"Final Communiqué of the Rome Conference of the Presidents of the European Legislative Assemblies.

The Presidents and Speakers of the legislative assemblies of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of Belgium, the Kingdom of Denmark, the French Republic, the United Kingdom (represented), Ireland, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, along with the President of the European Parliament, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the President of the National Council of Austria, the Speaker of the Swedish Parliament, and the President of the Swiss National Council, convened in Rome on 26 and 27 September 1975 at the invitation of Mr Pertini, President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, and Senator Spagnolli, President of the Italian Senate, who chaired the proceedings.

1. The Swedish representative did not take part in the drafting of the communiqué.

2. In accordance with the decision taken at the Conference held in Paris on 7 January 1975, Mr Leopoldo Elia, Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Rome, presented

a general report on the contribution of national legislative assemblies to the cultivation of a European consciousness and the construction of the European Community. The report was a synopsis of the reports submitted by the Presidents and Speakers of the national legislative assemblies.

3. The President of the European Parliament, Mr Spenale, presented a report on relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments; the Chairman of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Senator Vedovato, presented, on behalf of that Assembly, a report on relations between the Assembly, national parliaments, and the citizens of Member States.

4. The participants in the Conference, while recognising the limitations to which they might be subject owing to the nature of their office, emphasised the importance of holding these meetings on a regular basis. The importance of these Conferences derives essentially from two sets of considerations. The first relates to the specific problems of the Member States of the European Community and the relations of their parliaments with the Parliament of the European Community. The second concerns the general problems of parliamentary democracy in the contemporary era. The participants believe that this important task will be most effectively accomplished if future meetings are organised as specified in the following points:

- a) the meetings should, in principle, be held once a year;
- b) the items on the agenda for each meeting should be determined as precisely as possible at the preceding meeting, and subsequently configured under the direction of the parliamentary President/Speaker of the country hosting the following meeting;
- c) the first day of each meeting shall be dedicated to questions of cooperation among the parliaments of the European Community.

5. With regard to Community issues, the plan to elect members of the European Parliament by means of direct universal suffrage has the potential to add a new dimension to relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments. The prospective development of the Community across numerous sectors where national parliaments exercise a significant role will necessitate increasingly close coordination in the relations between these parliaments and the European Parliament. In view of the foregoing, provisions should be made to:

- a) establish a committee of the European Parliament responsible for relations with national parliaments, and, within each national legislative assembly, form committees or working groups responsible for the coordination of European affairs;
- b) give national parliaments access to the automated documentation sources operating in the institutions of the European Community.

6. With regard to the general present-day problems of parliamentary democracy, the work required to gather information, documentation, research, and proposals should proceed on a continuous, coordinated, and comprehensive basis.

In this regard, the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have agreed to use the instruments at their disposal to facilitate the continuation of this work. The European Parliament, in liaison with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and national parliaments, shall take the necessary steps for the creation of a European parliamentary research institute.

The Presidents and Speakers of the legislative assemblies of all Council of Europe Member States and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will participate in future Conferences.

7. The participants have accepted with pleasure the invitation to meet in Bonn on 11, 12 and 13 June 1976.

The following provisional agenda has been set for the Bonn meeting:

1-a) the development of relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments in light of the evolution of the Community since the last Conference;

1-b) the project for a European union to the extent that it touches upon the concerns of the European Parliament and the national parliaments;

2) the current problems facing parliamentary democracy.

The participants have granted a joint mandate to the presiding officers of the Italian and German assemblies to arrange the modalities of the next meeting, and in particular to determine the invitations beyond those provided for in paragraph 6, and to ensure the preparation of the debate in the best possible manner."

Mr SPAGNOLLI, *President of the Senate of the Italian Republic delivered the following speech:* Honourable Presidents, Speakers, ladies and gentlemen, as we conclude our proceedings, allow me, a Chairman who has chosen to remain an impartial moderator without intervening, to draw some fundamental conclusions from our debate that go beyond the document we have unanimously approved. These conclusions are shared by all of us, and I feel I can express them on your behalf, in the same way that any Speaker represents their Assembly when voicing shared convictions.

I want to extend our sincere thanks to our eminent colleague Edgar Faure, President of the French National Assembly. His dedicated work to promote this 'Parliamentary Speakers' Club' in the interests of the ideals of European unity, substantive democracy, and the role of parliaments makes him a worthy modern successor to men such as Schuman, Adenauer, Spaak, and De Gasperi who, twenty years ago, worked on the frontier that we have now crossed. Yet we still find ourselves on the front line of the battle to expand these borders and build the United States of Europe.

I am also particularly grateful to President Faure for repeatedly raising the central theme of our Conference, namely the fascinating role played by the idea of a European

'consciousness,' which serves both as our personal and our collective beacon guiding us from start to finish past the obstacles impeding the construction of Europe.

As the chosen representatives of the elected bodies of our nations, our consciousness reflects the collective view of our parliaments and, indirectly, of our electorates. We must remain sensitive to civic issues and alive to general and fundamental interests that go beyond partisan political divisions, for our only concern must be human dignity and the aspiration for a prosperous and peaceful life.

More than others, we are called upon to raise awareness across all levels, both inside our parliaments and in the outside world about what Europe means. For Europe must be more than simply a working blueprint for discussion at government summits and among bureaucrats, but must become a living reality driven by its peoples and the deep convictions of its citizens.

So, I agree that we should follow with deep interest and draw inspiration from the work of experts at all levels with the aim of removing all the legal and psychological obstacles to European integration.

But I am also of the firm belief that, as the general rapporteur Professor Elia and our gracious colleague Annemarie Renger rightly pointed out last night, that there will be no such Europe in the future if we fail to implant a vision of what it could be in the consciousness of its future citizens, especially young people, who will eventually take a leading role.

So, all of us here must do all in our power to encourage our parliaments and any other national institutions to spread the idea of Europe through schools and households, to cultivate it in the minds of young people, and thus engage their youthful energy and generosity to give fresh momentum to our ideal. Whereas Europe is already a reality by dint of the will of governments, it still needs to evolve into a reality that is experienced and felt at every level, regardless of the political differences that currently exist within our countries and will certainly continue to exist even in a united Europe.

I am pleased to report that Italy has already taken practical action to this end by promoting European parliamentary studies and research among young people. For a decade, our assemblies have sponsored the Florence Seminar, which currently hosts young scholarship holders from all nine Member States (some of whom have been following our discussions from the gallery today). Similar initiatives launched in every country and coordinated with the European University Institute, which is now also based in Florence, and the planned European research centre, which we agree should be connected with the European Parliament, would foster European consciousness among young people. Extending these awareness-raising efforts to secondary and primary schools would provide an invaluable and decisive contribution to the realisation of our ideal.

Yet theoretical studies are not the only way to nurture knowledge and awareness among young people and enable them to embrace the vast opportunities that a continental scale offers for demanding, socially useful, and productive work. For there is also the whole and largely unaddressed area of environmental protection. Here, overcoming narrow

economic self-interest will require the generous energy of the young generations, who are ready to sacrifice the present for the future and individual interests for society.

In this vast sector that is hugely important for the future of humanity, the promotion of practical activities through national bodies linked to existing or future European institutions would undoubtedly involve European youth in a cause that will leave a far deeper and more lasting mark than any of our speeches.

Esteemed colleagues, as I close this Rome session of the Conference of Presidents and Speakers - in the hope that this standard parliamentary compromise will settle any debate over the numbering of our Club's meetings - I feel that, having long remained silent along with my colleague President Pertini who has done likewise, I now need to step down momentarily from my role as Chairman to speak as a politician who cares deeply about general policy.

President Pertini, who I know shares my views on this matter, and I myself are firmly of the opinion that the reason we need a politically united Europe operating as a sovereign entity under international law is not simply so that it may serve a balancing function as a third centre of global power. To see it thus would be to reduce its significance to considerations of general, economic, and military strategy, which would not be enough to justify the efforts at European integration being taken by our national parliaments, which are not just the guardians of our nations' interests, but also and above all, are the repositories of the moral precepts that underpin the ideas that inspire our peoples to action.

So, allow me to express an optimistic hope that goes beyond the 'pessimism of reason'. In the historical cycles of rise and fall described by Vico, European unity offers an essential presence. It aims to strike a vital balance between maximum individual liberty and maximum social justice, which is perhaps the greatest challenge of the modern world.

If such a Europe, morally united and economically strong, should prove capable of answering the demands of its own citizens and of peoples across the world, it will enable us to effect a radical cultural change that will bring us beyond ideological and military confrontations. The old continent can then resume its historic role as the matrix of the vital ideas that have driven incredible human progress across all fields and as centre of a tradition that links the centuries of the Renaissance to Athens and Rome through our shared Christian conception of life.

We must direct all our initiatives and efforts into affirming this ideal of a third moral force because, and in so doing, we shall be fulfilling our duty not only to the peoples whom it is our honour to represent here, but to human civilisation itself. See you in Bonn!

(Loud, general applause).

THE SITTING ENDED AT 7:30 P.M.