



European Security and Defence Assembly Assembly of Western European Union

The President

Paris, 26 September 2008

Dear Chairmen,

My parliamentary colleagues and I were delighted to hear that the COSAC, under your Chairmanship, intends to examine the possibility of increased cooperation with the European Security and Defence Assembly (ESDA) (the WEU Assembly) at your next meeting in Paris on 3 and 4 November and that you have circulated a questionnaire to national parliaments to seek opinions on such cooperation.

The following comments are forwarded to provide some background for your consideration.

The European Security and Defence Assembly (ESDA) monitors EU action in the fields of foreign and security policy on a permanent basis. All 27 EU member states enjoy the same rights in the Assembly, which works unrelentingly to provide them with detailed information and a forum for political consultation, resulting in detailed practical recommendations that are voted by the national parliamentarians during plenary sessions. These recommendations are then transmitted to the WEU Permanent Council, whose members are also their governments' representatives on the EU's Political and Security Committee (PSC). Through those bodies the Assembly addresses the EU's highest authorities for foreign, security and defence policy. The members of the Assembly also have the possibility of putting written questions to the WEU Permanent Council/PSC which is bound to reply.

The members of the Assembly are divided into three "transnational" political groups (the Federated Group of Christian Democrats and European Democrats, the Socialist Group and the Liberal Group). Hence they work together as "political families", rather than as representatives of the different nations. The Assembly's four specialised Committees (Political, Defence, Technological and Aerospace, Parliamentary and Public Relations) meet frequently and between them cover the essential security and defence issues. The Committees appoint Rapporteurs and carry out fact-finding missions on the ground.

The reports produced by our Assembly are the result of the rigorous work done in stages by the Committees. The quality and topicality of those reports are undisputed. The Assembly has a highly professional permanent Secretariat which supports the intensive parliamentary activities of its members. The list of this year's reports is enclosed and complete texts will soon be available on the Assembly's website: www.assembly-weu.eu.

.../...

Copy: COSAC Permanent Secretariat

Mr Hubert HAENEL
Senator
President of the delegation for
European Union
Senate
Palais du Luxembourg
75291 Paris

Mr Pierre LEQUILLER
Deputy
President of the delegation for
European Union
Assemblée Nationale
Palais Bourbon
75355 Paris

A number of Chairmen of national defence committees are members of delegations to the ESDA and all others, together with key members of the European Parliament, are invited to our meetings on a regular basis. Well over 200 members of national defence, foreign affairs and European affairs committees are members of the ESDA.

In addition to two plenary sessions each year (in June and December) our Assembly, in cooperation with each Presidency and under the auspices of the Parliament of the country concerned, organises political conferences, as well as more technical seminars on specific security and defence topics. It also holds half-yearly meetings with the PSC and top EU military officials. The members of the Assembly are thus more informed about ESDP issues and hence better able to scrutinise the security and defence policy of their respective governments and promote a European vision of security and defence issues. Through their work as members of the Assembly, they are able to provide their colleagues in the national parliaments with a broader perspective on European security and defence issues.

Ratification of the Lisbon Treaty remains uncertain for the moment. If it is not ratified, the ESDA/WEU Assembly will continue to be the only permanent European forum for reinforced and structured cooperation among national parliamentarians on European defence issues.

If the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, the provisions on the CFSP will not give new powers of initiative to the European Commission in regard to decisions; neither will the role of the European Parliament be strengthened (see Declaration No. 14 on the CFSP). As long as the CFSP and ESDP remain intergovernmental, their “interparliamentary” scrutiny by our Assembly will continue to be indispensable. The Protocol (No. 11) on Article 42 of the new Treaty on European Union stipulates that “The European Union shall draw up, together with the Western European Union, arrangements for enhanced cooperation between them”. The only WEU body in a position to cooperate with the EU is our Assembly.

We therefore strongly support your initiative and think that it would be most useful, as of now, to explore the possibilities for practical cooperation between COSAC and our Assembly in the interests of informing the national parliaments and enabling them to act with optimum effect.

Please do not hesitate to ask if you and your colleagues have any immediate questions. We very much hope that you will wish to pursue this excellent idea and we would be willing to join you should you decide to set up a working group to examine the way forward.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Jean-Pierre MASSERET