

The Nordic Council

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In March 1952, the Union of Parliamentary Groups of the Northern Countries, a regional body belonging to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, took the initiative by submitting to the five Foreign Ministers plans to create a consultative body drawn from the Scandinavian parliaments and governments. Following approval by the national parliaments, the Nordic Council held its first session on 13 February 1953 in Copenhagen. However, it was not until 27 January 1956 that Finland, fearful of upsetting its Soviet neighbour, officially joined the Nordic Council, which had, in practice, been involving Finland in its activities for some time. Traditionally hostile to all supranational organisations, the Nordic governments decided not to cast the statutes of the Nordic Council in the form of an international convention and not to make them binding.

As a body devoted to interparliamentary and intergovernmental cooperation, the Nordic Council involves members of all the political parties on the basis of proportional representation. There are 69 delegates from the five national parliaments, together with Ministers appointed by the governments according to the subject under discussion. Convened annually for an ordinary session lasting several days, the Nordic Council is able to meet in each of the capitals of the Member States in turn. Five national secretariats handle the administration of the institution. The Nordic Council is empowered to deal with all matters of interest to Member States, even though, in practice, it does not discuss military or foreign policy questions. The non-binding resolutions that it adopts are then argued by the national delegations within their respective parliaments and proposed to the five governments. The statutes of the Nordic Council also provide for the participation of only certain national delegations if the questions being discussed concern only certain states. As a forum for Nordic cooperation, the Nordic Council is a test-bed for international politics at Scandinavian and regional level.