

Address given by Jean Monnet (Luxembourg, inaugural session of the High Authority, 10 August 1952)

Source: Plan Schuman: première séance de la Haute Autorité / Jean Monnet.- Luxembourg: CLT [Prod.], 10.08.1952. CLT-UFA, Luxembourg. - SON (00:15:29, Montage, Son original).
CLT-UFA, 45, Boulevard Pierre Frieden, L-1543 Luxembourg.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU
All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.
Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:
http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address_given_by_jean_monnet_luxembourg_inaugural_session_of_the_high_authority_10_august_1952-en-4f292502-52aa-46c4-9428-ee0aea7e86a8.html

Last updated: 05/07/2016



Address given by Jean Monnet (Luxembourg, inaugural session of the High Authority, 10 August 1952)

I hereby declare the first session of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community open. As we mark the completion of a task on which we have been working steadfastly for more than two years, I must first of all pay tribute to the statesmen of our six countries, whose clear-sightedness and resolve have made it possible. I would also like to give proper thanks to all those who helped to draft the Treaty, and I am happy to see a great many of them among us here today. Now that the establishment of the Community is turning what the world is rightly calling the 'Schuman Plan' into a living reality, allow me to express the gratitude that Europe will always owe to Prime Minister Robert Schuman who, in issuing the appeal of 9 May 1950, took the initiative and the responsibility of committing our continent to the path which would lead it to unity.

Today, as we install the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, we are performing a solemn act. We are taking on the charge our six countries have entrusted to us. Each of us has been appointed not by this or that government, but by common agreement of all six governments. This makes all of us together the joint representatives of our countries, Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, and each of us, I am sure, will understand why I lay particular stress on this as a great sign of hope. Here we are, French and Germans, members of a single community; interests vital to Germany and France are the responsibility of an Authority which is neither German nor French, but European. On behalf of you all, Mr Etzel, Mr Coppé, Mr Daum, Mr Finet, Mr Giacchero, Mr Potthoff, Mr Spierenburg, Mr Wehrer, I hereby publicly renew the undertaking each of us has given in accepting his appointment. We will exercise our functions in complete independence, in the general interest of the Community as a whole. In the fulfilment of our duties, we will neither solicit nor accept instructions from any government or from any organisation. We will abstain from all conduct incompatible with the supranational character of our functions. We take note of the undertaking given by each Member State to respect this supranational character and to make no effort to influence us in the execution of our duties.

For the first time, the traditional relations between States have been transformed. According to past practice, even when European States have been convinced of the need for joint action, even when they have set up an international organisation, they have retained full sovereignty. This means that the international organisation can neither take nor enforce decisions, but only make recommendations to the States. These methods are incapable of eliminating our national antagonisms, which will inevitably become more pronounced as long as the national sovereignty of each State has not been overcome. Now, by contrast, six parliaments, after thorough discussion and by huge majorities, have decided to create the first European community which fuses part of each country's national sovereignty and makes it subordinate to the common interest.

Within the limits of the powers conferred on it by the Treaty, the High Authority has been given a mandate by the six Member States to take, in complete independence, decisions which immediately become enforceable throughout their territories. It has a direct relationship with all undertakings. It obtains its financial resources not from contributions by the Member States, but from direct levies on the forms of production for which it is responsible. It is not accountable to the Member States but to a European assembly. The Assembly has been elected by the national parliaments. There is already provision for it to be directly elected by the citizens. The members of the Assembly are not bound by any national mandate. They vote freely on their own account and not according to the nation to which they belong. Each one represents the entire Community, not his or her country. The Assembly supervises what we do. It has the power to withdraw its confidence from us. It is the first European assembly with sovereign powers. Acts of the High Authority are subject to appeal. Such appeals will not be heard before national courts but before a European court, the Court of Justice. And I am glad to welcome Mr Pilotti, President of our Court of Justice, who is here with us today. All these institutions can be modified and improved in the light of experience. What will not be called into question is that they are supranational and, let us say the word, federal institutions. They are institutions which, within the limits of their powers, are sovereign, in other words they have the right to take decisions and enforce them. Coal and steel, however, are only part of the economy. That is why a permanent link needs to be set up between the High Authority and the governments, which remain responsible for the overall economic policy of their countries. The Council of Ministers has not been set up

to exercise control or carry out supervision, but to establish that link and make sure there is consonance between the actions of the High Authority and the policies of the Member States.

The task the Treaty entrusts to us is a heavy one. We have to establish and maintain a single market in coal and steel throughout the whole of the Community's territory. In a few months' time, all customs barriers, all quantitative restrictions and all forms of discrimination will be eliminated. There will be no frontiers for coal and steel to cross within the Community; they will be available to all purchasers on the same terms. The Treaty, which is Europe's first antitrust law, mandates us to dissolve cartels, prohibit restrictive practices and prevent any over-concentration of economic powers. This means that in a system of healthy competition coal and steel production will truly be at the service of consumers. The Treaty requires us, as and when necessary, to intervene to palliate the effects of economic fluctuations, in order to make it easier for the industries concerned to develop and modernise. As we embark on the strenuous task of economic development which faces us, in the forefront of our minds will be a concern to promote improvements in the living and working conditions of the workforce, such as to bring about a levelling through progress.

What will it mean to us in our day-to-day lives, though, this single market in coal and steel for 155 million European consumers? Coal and steel are used in the manufacture of everything modern man needs: gas, electricity, tools, machinery and motor vehicles. They have a vital part to play in everything from ploughs to tractors, textile mills to sewing machines, reinforced concreting, scaffolding or steel framing, down to our houses, our clothes and the food we eat. More plentiful coal and steel, of higher quality and at a lower price, means opportunities for all of us to buy more and for every family to secure a higher standard of living. The only way of reducing cost prices, finding new outlets and expanding production is through mass production, and it is the scale and freedom of the single market which will make that possible. But the single market means something else, too. Consider how the basin in northern France extends towards Belgium, how the Belgian coalfields link up to those of Aachen and the Ruhr; look at how the Campine straddles Belgium and the Netherlands, how the Saar and Lorraine share the same coal and Lorraine and Luxembourg share the same iron ore! These resources, which Nature has made the vital industrial assets of Europe, have been fought over by States and companies bent on domination. By eliminating arbitrary, man-made divisions, we can now recreate that natural basin whose unity has been fragmented and whose development has been stunted by the actions of man.

The Treaty and the Convention lay down stages for achieving these goals. We are fully aware of the adjustments which need to be made, and we will be resolute and cautious in fulfilling the mandate we have been given. It is not up to us to direct the production of coal and steel; that is the job of businesses. Our task is to set up and maintain conditions in which production can develop most effectively — to the best advantage of all. We intend to establish links immediately with governments, producers, workers, users and traders, and with the associations that they have set up. In this way we will make ongoing consultation the foundation for the workings of the Community from the outset. We will give them all a common view and mutual understanding. This will give them an all-round grasp of the situation in the Community and of the problems it entails, so that the measures which will have to be adopted to deal with them can be put into practical form. We will submit the resulting overview to the Common Assembly at the second meeting that it is due to hold in five months' time. In the next few weeks we will convene the Consultative Committee of heads of undertakings, workers, users and traders. In every instance stipulated by the Treaty, we will put our decisions to the test of discussion and publicly state our reasons for taking them.

The prosperity of our European Community is inescapably linked to the development of international trade. Our Community will help search for solutions to the trade problems throughout the world. We are resolved to seek, without delay, and by direct talks, for ways of giving effect to the British Government's declared intention of establishing the closest possible association with the Community. We are sure that we can look forward to working together closely and fruitfully with the United States, which, since the proposal put forward by Mr Schuman on 9 May 1950, has given us repeated proofs of its active friendship. We will set up all useful links with the United Nations and the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation. We will develop all the forms of collaboration and mutual assistance with the Council of Europe provided for in the Treaty.

We are, though, only at the start of the efforts Europe must put in if it is, at last, to experience unity, prosperity and peace. The obligations placed upon us require us to get to work straight away. We have, at one and the same time, immediate responsibilities and responsibility for preparing the ground for changes which are so sweeping that no time must be lost in putting them into effect, because there can be no more hold-ups in the task of building Europe.