

Letter from Albert Wehrer to Joseph Bech (12 July 1950)

Caption: On 12 July 1950, in connection with the negotiations on the Schuman Plan, the Head of the Luxembourg delegation, Albert Wehrer, sends a letter to Joseph Bech, Luxembourg Foreign Minister, in which he stresses that it is important for Luxembourg to be a candidate for the seat of the institutions of the future European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

Source: Archives Nationales du Luxembourg, Luxembourg. Ministère des Affaires étrangères. Traités. Traités - Economiques et Financiers. Plan Schuman - Négociations - Secrétariat de la délégation luxembourgeoise 1950-1951, AE 11345.

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Last updated: 06/07/2016

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Paris, 12 July 1950

Chairman of the Luxembourg Delegation
to the Schuman Plan
to
His Excellency Mr Joseph Bech,
Minister for Foreign Affairs, Luxembourg.
Confidential

Re: Seat of the Schuman Plan organisation

The Schuman Plan negotiations are increasingly taking shape and making real progress, especially in the technical committees.

The Institutional Affairs Committee, whose task is to finalise the details of the creation of the 'High Authority', will be resuming its activities, now that the private conversation between Mr Monnet and Mr Spierenburg has resulted in a degree of rapprochement between the French and Dutch points of view.

Over the next week, we shall, therefore, have to take a stance on all the details of the draft Treaty that the French have submitted to the Conference.

As it stands, Article 16 of the draft Treaty reads as follows:

'The seat of the High Authority shall be ...'

Our delegation should, therefore, be given precise instructions as to the attitude that it is to take when the subject is debated in the Institutional Affairs Committee.

As of now, we must clearly define the ways and means of achieving our desired aim.

Since the outcome of our activity may have such major implications for our country, any negligence on our part, at the present stage of the negotiations, would lay us open at some future date to very serious criticism and reproach from our parliamentarians and the general public.

During a conversation that I held yesterday with the chief Belgian delegate, Mr Suetens, the question of the seat of the High Authority suddenly came up. Mr Suetens asked me whether we were proposing Luxembourg as the seat. I replied that I had not yet received any instructions from my government to propose this officially but that we in the Luxembourg delegation believed that it would be only natural to propose Luxembourg, given its geographical location at the absolute centre of the Union that is to be created. Luxembourg is, indeed, three hours away from Brussels and Bonn and five hours from The Hague and Paris, while Italy will always be rather a long way from wherever the Union's headquarters are situated. Mr Suetens replied that he found these arguments very convincing and that he was entirely willing to support them. He advised me, however, to approach the French, who might be intending to propose Paris or a French city as the seat.

This conversation with Mr Suetens has answered one question at least, i.e. that Belgium has not proposed that the seat be located in Belgium.

Since this is becoming a matter of great urgency, our delegation now takes the view that preparatory work should begin without delay at government level.

It would be extremely advisable to secure the prior agreement of the governments in Paris and Brussels.

In our opinion, it would, therefore, be useful for you to go to see Mr Schuman and Mr van Zeeland

immediately and in person. If we secured these two agreements, we could then consider how to approach the Germans, the Italians and the Dutch early next week.

This is, I repeat, an extremely urgent and important matter, which therefore requires and justifies personal visits on your part.

Chairman of the Luxembourg Delegation.