

Address given by Peter Schieder (Strasbourg, 2 June 2003)

Caption: On 2 June 2003, at the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg, Peter Schieder, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, gives a welcome address to the Members of the Assembly of Western European Union (WEU) in which he emphasises the links between the two institutions.

Source: Welcoming words by Peter Schieder, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe at the opening of the 49th plenary session of the WEU Assembly (Strasbourg, 2 June 2003). [EN LIGNE]. [Strasbourg]: Council of Europe, [13.11.2003]. Disponible sur http://www.coe.int/T/E/Communication_and_Research/Press/News/2003/20030602_speech_schieder_uae.asp.

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URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address_given_by_peter_schieder_strasbourg_2_june_2003-en-c7a5547f-178b-4c76-8c20-a95f6263f3af.html

Publication date: 22/10/2012

Welcoming words by Peter Schieder, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, at the opening of the 49th plenary session of the WEU Assembly (Strasbourg, 2 June 2003)

Dear colleagues,

I welcome you all to the Palais de l'Europe, the home of the Council of Europe. It is a pleasant experience to see so many familiar faces, and some new ones, on the occasion of your 49th plenary session. We are pleased that you have chosen to come here, to this hemicycle, which has become a symbol of inter-parliamentary democracy in Europe.

The Assembly of the Western European Union and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe are fulfilling a similar role - of a parliamentary body scrutinising intergovernmental activities - in two different areas. While the Council of Europe Assembly, and the Council of Europe as a whole, are bodies with a general political mandate, the activities of the WEU are devoted to security and defence.

Yet throughout the years, we have created close links and there is an evident synergy in our activities.

These links are, first and foremost, personal. All your members are also members of the Parliamentary Assembly.

The second reason for synergy is the fact that the traditional separation between our respective mandates is becoming blurred. There is an urgent need for coherence and common action between European institutions when it comes to security and democratic stability in Europe. Some of the most challenging tasks in which our two assemblies, and the organisations of which we are a part, have been involved in recent years - such as the restoration of democratic order in Albania - are a good example of such a joint effort.

The transfer of WEU's operational activities to the European Union in 2000 and the enlargement of the European Union next year open new possibilities for closer co-operation in the future.

Your agenda for the plenary session this week also shows that we are concerned with same issues, even if we still look at them from different angles. Several of the reports to be debated this week deal with transatlantic relations and their impact on European security.

Europe's relations with our allies overseas - and their implications for human rights and international law - are also very much in the forefront of the Parliamentary Assembly's recent debates.

I wish you all a very successful session and a pleasant stay at the Palais de l'Europe.