

Conference on the establishment of a Council of Europe: extract concerning the admission of additional members (London, 3 and 4 May 1949)

Caption: Extract from the minutes of the Conference on the establishment of a Council of Europe, held at St James's Palace in London from 3 to 5 May 1949, concerning the issue of the admission of additional members to the organisation.

Source: Archives historiques du Conseil de l'Europe - Historical Archives of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg. Conference for the establishment of a Council of Europe, 0120.

Copyright: (c) Historical archives of the Council of Europe

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/conference_on_the_establishment_of_a_council_of_europe_extract_concerning_the_admission_of_additional_members_london_3_and_4_may_1949-en-61353a44-2f22-473c-b025-913dad92acb7.html

Publication date: 20/10/2012

Conference on the establishment of a Council of Europe (London, 3–5 May 1949)

Minutes of the Conference held at St. James's Palace, beginning at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, 3rd May

[...]

4. Admission of Additional Members

M. Lange (Norway) suggested that as the Council of Europe was a new venture and as it was important to proceed step by step, it would be best for the time being to limit the members of the Council to those at present represented. He thought that the representatives of Denmark and Sweden would agree with this view. It might even be subsequently decided that Greece and Turkey should be members of a different grouping of States.

M. Schuman (France) emphasised the importance of differentiating between the admission of additional members to the actual signature ceremony and their admission under the normal procedure of Article 4 of the draft Statute. Unless there were complete unanimity in the present Conference it would not be possible to bring in additional members to the signature ceremony. As for Greece and Turkey, the French Government were entirely favourable to the entry of these two countries; it was important not to discriminate between the internal régimes of the various countries.

Vicomte Obert de Thieusies (Belgium) and *M. Stikker (Netherlands)* emphasised that their Governments thought that every facility should be given to Turkey and especially to Greece to join the Council.

Signor Sforza (Italy) agreed that it would only be possible to admit other friendly nations if the Conference was unanimously agreed to do so, but said that it was important not to discourage those nations. A formula might be found to show to Greece and Turkey that their wishes would be brought forward at the earliest possible moment. There should be no discrimination between democratic countries who fulfilled the qualifications in Chapter I of the Statute.

Mr. Bevin (United Kingdom) said that his Government was also in favour of admitting these two countries but he was afraid that prolonged discussion at the present time would hold up the signature of the Statute.

It was agreed to defer further consideration of this matter until a later stage.

[...]

The Conference reassembled at St. James's Palace at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 4th May

[...]

43. Admission of Additional Members (see Item 4 above).

The Conference reverted to the discussion of this question deferred on the previous day.

M. Unden (Sweden) said that his Government had at first thought that the Council of Europe should be composed of the same members as the O.E.E.C., since it was possible that eventually the two bodies might be formed into one organisation. On reconsidering the matter, however, and on seeing the text of the draft Statute and the emphasis which it laid on the qualifications required for membership, they thought it natural to restrict the members to those with similar social problems and political thought. Among the States which had not so far applied for membership was Iceland, who he thought should certainly be amongst the first to be admitted. His preference therefore was to make no change in the present membership for the time being, but he was prepared, if there was a two-thirds majority in favour of such action, to agree to the admission of others.

Mr. Bevin (*United Kingdom*) handed round a draft paragraph which he suggested might be inserted in the communiqué to be issued after the Conference, reading as follows:

"The Conference took note of the requests of the Greek and Turkish Governments to be admitted as members of the Council of Europe. After an exchange of views it was agreed that the accession of these two States would be acceptable and that invitations to this effect under Article 4 of the Statute would be issued by the Committee of Ministers as soon as it came into being. It was generally hoped that this would enable Greek and Turkish representatives to join the deliberations of the Council of Europe shortly after its inauguration."

He emphasised that Greece and Turkey had made a definite application and it was not possible to leave them unanswered. He thought that the suggestion which he had made was the best alternative, since they could not agree to admit them to the signature.

M. Lange (*Norway*) said it was a question of whether Article 3 of the Statute really applied to these two countries. He had no desire to disparage them, but it was a historical fact that they were in a different stage of democratic development. It would be wrong to admit them and to leave out an old-established democracy like Iceland. He thought that no offence would be caused to Greece and Turkey if it could be explained to them that, until the organisation was constituted, it was impossible for them to be admitted.

Mr. MacBride (*Irish Republic*) thought that if the countries were brought in, an opportunity might be presented of influencing them and getting them to change their methods if necessary. He agreed that it would be invidious to take two countries and to disregard those which had not yet applied, as was the case with Iceland. It would be better to give others an opportunity to apply and consider all applications together at a later stage.

Signor Sforza (*Italy*) reminded the Conference that, even if there were any criticisms concerning the internal régimes of Greece and Turkey, these countries were menaced by the very grave danger of the Soviet Union's aims; they should be given all the moral assistance that was possible.

M. Schuman (*France*) said that it would be a grave political error to reject the application of Greece and Turkey without giving them a better explanation. The objection had been raised that Turkey was not a fully European country; he would remind them, however, that she had some European territory and was a member of the O.E.E.C. Objection had been raised, on the other hand, to the internal régimes of these two countries; he thought, however, that these objections could not be to the whole of the régime but rather only to certain aspects of it at the present moment. It was surely dangerous for the Conference to set itself up as a judge, and he agreed with Mr. MacBride that if these countries were admitted it would be possible to influence them for the good. The French Government would have liked to see Greece and Turkey admitted immediately, but since this was impossible, he was prepared to agree to the United Kingdom proposal. As for the other countries, he felt it would be preferable to wait, since there was nothing to show that they in fact were prepared to accept the aims of the Statute.

M. Lange (*Norway*) said he could not accept M. Schuman's suggestion that the Conference should not set itself up as a judge, since they had just adapted Articles 4 and 5 of the Statute. It would have been better to invite Greece and Turkey from the outset, just as Denmark, Sweden, Italy, the Irish Republic and his own country had been invited, by the Brussels Powers. As it was, the Norwegian public and parliament had been prepared for a membership of ten; if, now that two more countries had invited themselves, Iceland was not admitted, the effect would be very bad. Iceland had, he thought, already been painfully surprised that she had not been asked to the present Conference. He could not therefore agree to the United Kingdom proposal as it stood.

Vicomte Obert de Thieusies (*Belgium*) entirely agreed with Mr. Bevin and M. Schuman.

Mr. Bevin (United Kingdom) explained that the five Powers had had to approach this question very carefully; it had been necessary to avoid mentioning some countries at first, not because they were not wanted, but because of the danger of embarrassing them at that time. Conditions had since changed for the better, and the same considerations did not apply. As regards Greece, he pointed out that there had been elections held under international supervision and that it was really not the fault of the Greek people that there was a civil war. The United Kingdom had a very close friendship for Greece, which suffered the German occupation and was now being persecuted by the Soviet Union and her satellites. The present position was critical and it would cause a very bad effect politically if the Conference were to snub her. As regards Turkey, the United Kingdom was her ally; it was painfully obvious that she was in the centre of the war of nerves, and indeed her forces were still mobilised. In this case also a very bad effect would be caused if Turkey were to receive a political snub from the West. As regards Iceland, the United Kingdom had considered, before the invitations to the present Conference had been sent out, whether she should be invited too; but at that time Iceland was herself in a somewhat embarrassing position with regard to the negotiations for the Atlantic Pact and he had not wished to add further to her difficulties.

He therefore suggested that his proposal should be redrafted to make it clear that the Conference had considered the admission of Greece and Turkey immediately, but that that had been impossible; that the general view was that their accession would be acceptable and the question would be dealt with under Article 4 of the Statute as soon as the Committee of Ministers came into being; and that any other applications received in the interval would be similarly dealt with.

M. Lange (Norway) thought that he could accept a formula on those lines.

It was agreed that a Drafting Committee should prepare and circulate a revised formula.

[...]