

## Secretariat memorandum on the name of the Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 26 February 1975)

**Caption:** Memorandum from the Secretariat of the Assembly of the Council of Europe setting out the background to the proposal to change the name of the Consultative Assembly and the practical consequences of its decision to adopt the name 'Parliamentary Assembly'.

**Source:** Practical consequences of the decision of the Assembly to adopt the name "Parliamentary Assembly". Secretariat memorandum, Restricted AS/Parl (26) 18. Strasbourg: Council of Europe - Parliamentary Assembly, 26.02.1975. 3 p.

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## Practical consequences of the decision of the Assembly to adopt the name "Parliamentary Assembly". Secretariat memorandum (Strasbourg, 26 February 1975)

### I. The proposal to change the Assembly's name and its background

1. The proposal that the Assembly should, on the occasion of its 25th anniversary, adopt the name "Parliamentary Assembly" was made in the course of the general policy debate on 8 May 1974 by Mr Holtz of the Federal Republic of Germany. In the view of the speaker the name "Consultative Assembly" was "inappropriate, drab and meaningless". He argued an increase in the Assembly's powers since 1949 resulting notably from the important amendments to the original Statute giving the Assembly freedom to draw up its own agenda (1), and ensuring the parliamentary character of the Assembly by specifying that it "shall consist of representatives of each member state elected by its parliament from among the members thereof" (2).

2. In fact it may be observed that the epithet "Consultative" has been out of date, and virtually meaningless, since 22 May 1951 (the date of the original amendments to Articles 23 and 25 of the Statute). The original choice of the term "Consultative", was instigated by the parliamentary participants in the preparatory work which preceded the creation of the Council of Europe, who hoped thus to encourage governments to refer matters to it, through the Committee of Ministers. After 1951, the Assembly was able to study questions on its own initiative, and such initiatives have accounted for more than 90 % of the Assembly's work.

### II. The decision itself

3. On 24 September 1974 the plenary Assembly duly took note of the decision of the Standing Committee of 3 July 1974, following the presentation by Mr Edward Collins of the Progress Report of the Bureau, the Standing Committee and the Committee on Parliamentary and Public Relations (Doc. 3486), whose section XIII briefly stated that :

"The Bureau and the Standing Committee gave careful consideration to the proposal to change the name of the Consultative Assembly into 'Parliamentary Assembly'. They considered that this name reflected more accurately the present role and composition of the Assembly and decided to use it henceforth, without proposing for the time being any modification of the statutory texts".

4. Mr Collins particularly stressed this decision in his presentation, saying "First of all, I should like to recall the decision ... to change the name of the Consultative Assembly to 'Parliamentary Assembly'. No doubt this is a decision which goes beyond a mere linguistic improvement : this reflects more accurately the role and membership of the Assembly and, as Mr Holtz, who is the originator of this idea, once said : 'This change is needed now that our democracies are in the midst of a crisis'".

### III. Consequences of the decision

5. Members of the committee have a special responsibility, with Chairmen of national delegations, for ensuring that this decision should be publicised and put into operation, both inside and outside national parliaments. It is necessary to combat any tendency for the habit of 25 years, which long since ceased to reflect the Assembly's true parliamentary vocation, to linger on. In consequence the term "Parliamentary Assembly" should systematically be used in all contacts with parliamentary colleagues, the press and the public. The new name will be all the more readily acceptable to the press, which has already frequently used it in the past in preference to the statutory name.

6. Secretaries of national delegations for their part, should use the new name in all official correspondence and, where possible, arrange for the headings of delegation notepaper to be changed.

7. The only limitation on use of the new name (resulting from the decision not to request a modification of the Statute for the time being) applies to contacts with the Committee of Ministers in matters having statutory implications. However, this legalistic question does not arise in the field of parliamentary and

public relations, where the situation is clear-cut following the Assembly's decision.

8. Should the committee consider that any additional clarification is needed, it could instruct its chairman to propose to President Vedovato that he bring the considerations contained in this document to the attention of Presidents of national parliaments before the end of his term of office in whatever manner he sees fit.

(1) The original Article 23, amended on 22 May 1951, assigned this function to the Committee of Ministers.

(2) The original Article 25 amended on 22 May 1951, 4 May 1953 and 14 October 1970, gave governments the right to nominate Representatives, opening the way for the appointment of non-parliamentary or ex-parliamentary representatives.