WEU's role and place in the new European security architecture (Paris, 22 February 1991)

Caption: The Council of Ministers of Western European Union (WEU), meeting in extraordinary session in Paris on 22 February 1991, used the reflection note proposed by the organisation’s Secretary-General, Willem van Eekelen, to debate the role and place of WEU in the new European security architecture.

Source: WEU's role and place in the new European security architecture, Extraordinary meeting of the WEU Council of Ministers. Presidency's conclusions. Paris: 22.02.1991.

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The Foreign and Defence Ministers of Western European Union met in Paris on 22 February 1991 in Extraordinary Session to discuss WEU's role and place in the new European security architecture.

The main basis for their discussions was a report on this question, which is annexed hereto and which it was decided to publish.

• This document was originally prepared by the Secretary-General of WEU;

• The text was discussed by the Organisation's Special Working Group, chaired by the Secretary-General, and resulted in a version on which all member States reached near consensus;

• Given the nature of the subject, the report at this stage has not been formally agreed since a number of aspects have still to be discussed in greater depth within WEU and also in other forums (Intergovernmental Conference, North Atlantic Council);

• Ministers confirmed that this report in general reflected their views and they decided that discussions should be pursued on this basis, particularly as regards the method of implementing the practical measures concerning the relationship between WEU and Political Union on the one hand, and between WEU and the Atlantic Alliance on the other.

The future of European security and defence cooperation

Security Architecture in the 1990's

1. The revolutionary changes which have taken place in Europe over the past year have made it possible to distinguish the three complementary levels around which Europe's security will be organised in the years to come:

• a European level currently based on the Western European Union and the Twelve of the European Community;

• an Atlantic level based on the Atlantic Alliance - the only organisation binding North America to the defence of Europe;

• a pan-European level based on the CSCE bringing together all European countries as well as the United States and Canada.

In addition there are other levels which are becoming increasingly relevant to European security, namely the Mediterranean and the Middle East, in which the human dimension and economic and security interests of the parties concerned should be taken into account to enhance stability in those regions in an appropriate manner, drawing on the experience of the CSCE process.

2. At the pan-European level, the CSCE is becoming markedly more important since it is the only forum where each country's security interests and particularly those of the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe as well as the Soviet Union, can be taken into account. As the decisions taken at the Paris Summit

demonstrate, the CSCE will have a crucial part to play in enhancing stability in Europe through its role as a forum for consultation and cooperation, conflict prevention, settlement of disputes and future arms control negotiations. On the other hand, its purpose is not to provide for all CSCE states the kind of firm defence guarantees which the Washington and Brussels Treaties provide for the member States of the Atlantic Alliance and Western European Union.

3. At the Atlantic and European levels, two processes are taking place which will have profound consequences for the future organisation of European security and defence cooperation:

• the decision taken by the European Council in Dublin on 25-26 June 1990 to convene an intergovernmental conference on political union and the conclusions of the European Council in Rome on 14-15 December 1990 regarding the common foreign and security policy and role the Political Union might play with regard to defence questions;

• the review of the tasks of the Alliance and the adaptation of NATO strategy and structures which is taking place in the light of the changes in Central and Eastern Europe and the conclusion of the CFE Treaty and which will also take into account developments in the West, notably the process of European integration.

4. One of the central objectives of both these exercises is how the identity of Europe in the field of security and defence can be developed. Indeed, European governments have been presented with a historic opportunity in which it is possible to take an overall look at the three institutions directly affected - NATO, European Community, European Political Cooperation and Western European Union - and at the relationships between them in order to define their security requirements for the 1990's.

The Atlantic Dimension

5. It is widely recognised that the Atlantic Alliance between North America and Western Europe with its arrangements for military cooperation has formed the indispensable backbone to defence - both European and Western - over the past 40 years. It has also been an important stabilising factor during the past year of change in Central and Eastern Europe. This Alliance, with effective defence arrangements, linking North America and Europe will remain imperative in the years to come:

a. as the framework for the collective defence of all allies in the case of an attack on the territory of one or more of them,

b. as a framework for broad political cooperation among the Allies and as a forum where North America and Western Europe can discuss common security concerns,

c. as a stabilising factor on the continent of Europe where the Soviet Union retains the largest military capabilities including a major nuclear arsenal.

6. However, this role for the Alliance in the future in no way lessens the urgency for a reappraisal of its organisation and structures. This reappraisal must take into account the withdrawal by 1994 of all Soviet forces to within their own territory and the significantly more important part that European forces will play in the Alliance's collective defence due to the reductions in North American forces in Europe. The outcome of this reappraisal must ensure that there is no weakening of the Alliance commitments on the part of either North America or Europe which could lead to a narrower national view of defence. This would involve, in particular, reaffirming the importance of retaining North American forces in Europe and ensuring that all allies refrain from taking unilateral, uncoordinated decisions to reduce their defence effort.

7. With regard to the NATO review, European countries must define how they intend to strengthen and make more coherent the European pillar within the Alliance. In particular, it will be important to ensure the complementarity between two requirements:

• for Europe to take on a greater degree of responsibility for its own defence will require an identifiable European component which will only be achieved if it is linked to the broader process of achieving a European union;

• the need for effective arrangements for military cooperation which reflect the security interests of all members of the Alliance.

Political Union and a European security and defence dimension

8. The developments in Europe, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, the impetus given towards Economic and Monetary Union and more recently the Gulf conflict have all contributed to highlighting the desirability for the Community and its member States to improve their capacity for action internationally and to match the developments in the economic field with progress in the political field. The question of a common foreign and security policy is therefore now high on the agenda of the Intergovernmental Conference on Political Union.

9. In this context, the European Council in Rome on 14-15 December 1990 has identified the issues in the security and defence field to which the IGC should give particular attention. The Rome conclusions indicate that, whilst the first steps in a common security policy are taking shape, there is as yet no unanimity within the Twelve on the role the Political Union might, in the short term, play in defence matters. A gradual approach therefore suggests itself which would take account of the position of certain member States of the Twelve, of the evolution of the Atlantic Alliance and would keep in mind the security interests of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It is nevertheless clear that no hard and fast distinction can be made between broader security characteristics which may require specific arrangements. Due to its stated objective in the Hague Platform and due to its existing structures, WEU can therefore play an important part in this gradual approach to develop a European security and defence identity.

Role of WEU

10. In this context, WEU possesses a number of institutional advantages which would allow it to act as a bridge between the process of European integration and the Atlantic Alliance:

a. It is an organisation based on a Treaty which affirms the member countries' intention progressively to achieve European integration. This objective was developed in the Platform on European Security Interests of 27 October 1987 and subsequently confirmed in the Protocol of Accession of Portugal and Spain signed on 14 November 1988 which has been accepted, approved or ratified by all the Parliaments of the Nine. These two documents moreover explicitly state that "the construction of an integrated Europe will remain incomplete as long as it does not include security and defence".

b. It is the only European organisation based on a mutual defence commitment (Article V of the WEU Treaty).

c. It brings together both Foreign and Defence Ministers.

d. Its Treaty (Article VIII.3) places no geographical restrictions on its competences (which has enabled it to

play a role coordinating military activities in the Gulf).

e. Its Treaty contains a clause which, whilst requiring redefinition, commits the member countries to work in close cooperation with NATO.

f. It is backed by a permanent, international Secretariat.

g. It is an organisation with a parliamentary dimension in the form of the WEU Assembly whose competence is Treaty-based.

11. The task is therefore to identify practical ways in which WEU can play in the present circumstances and without precluding future developments a more effective role in the context of both Political Union and the Atlantic Alliance. The objective vis-à-vis Political Union should be to demonstrate more visibly that WEU is an integral part of the European integration process. The objective vis-à-vis the Alliance should be to achieve a strong, new transatlantic partnership by strengthening the European component, contributing to the Alliance's evolution and enhancing transatlantic cohesion in a reinvigorated Alliance. This approach should include the definition and introduction of WEU contributions or positions into Alliance debates. It will remain essential to ensure that all allies are willing to take account of each other's points of view before final positions are reached in Alliance consultations.

12. Moreover, the more WEU can successfully take on operational responsibilities, the more its credibility will be raised and the more effectively it will become the channel of cooperation between Political Union and NATO. Proposals should therefore now be developed to make cooperation within WEU more operational both in the politico-military field as well as in the military field proper taking account of what is stated in paragraphs 5 and 10 above.

13. **Practical steps to be taken vis-à-vis Political Union**

In order to develop an organic relationship between WEU and Political Union, make more visible the long-term commitment to a European Union including a defence dimension and without prejudicing either the WEU structures or the structures of the Twelve, increased cooperation and coordination between the Common Foreign and Security Policy and WEU shall be sought by the following measures:

a. As part of Political Union, Heads of State and Government meeting in the European Council would be able to discuss all aspects of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, without there being any "taboo" subjects. The conclusions of the European Council on the principles and orientation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy would serve as a guideline where coordination in the defence field is necessary, this would be taken forward within WEU.

b. The dates and place of meetings of the WEU Council of Ministers should, when necessary, be synchronised with those Ministerial-level meetings of the Council of the Political Union dealing with the Common Foreign and Security Policy. When necessary, meetings at official level of the Twelve and of the Nine should also be synchronised.

c. Close contacts should be maintained between the Presidencies of the Twelve and WEU. Harmonization of the sequence and duration of the Presidencies of the Twelve and of WEU should be considered.

d. The EPC/Council Secretariats and the WEU Secretariat should maintain working contact and ensure a regular exchange of information on security matters.

e. Possible links between the European Parliament and the WEU Assembly should be examined.

14. **Practical steps to be taken vis-à-vis the Atlantic Alliance**

In order to develop an organic relationship between WEU and the Alliance and to enable WEU to play a more effective role in strengthening the European pillar within the Alliance, the following steps shall be taken:

a. The country holding the WEU Presidency or, when appropriate, another WEU member country, should:

• introduce joint WEU positions or contributions into the process of Alliance consultation;

• regularly brief the North Atlantic Council and other Alliance bodies on WEU activities.

b. WEU concertation should when necessary take place at various levels including at Ministerial level and at the level of member States' Permanent Representatives to NATO, on those items on the Alliance agenda which are of particular interest to WEU; this concertation should take place with the appropriate degree of transparency with regard to other allies, taking each others' views into consideration.

c. Contacts should be maintained between NATO and the WEU Secretariat and their respective Secretaries-General, and a regular exchange of information ensured.

Questions raised by the proposals above

15. The first question concerns the relationship of the WEU with the European member countries of the EC/EPC and Atlantic Alliance which are not members of WEU. Close cooperation between WEU member countries and all European Partners and Allies will remain essential. In the future, the modalities of the relationships between WEU and these countries should reflect the nature of the relationship which WEU itself will have with Political union and the Atlantic Alliance. In this context, an enlargement of certain ministerial meetings to include other or all European Partners and Allies as observers could be considered.

16. The second question concerns the location of WEU. The preceding paragraphs have begun to define the NATO-WEU-PU inter-relationship. In order to contribute to the effective functioning of WEU on the basis of the practical steps set out in paragraphs 13 and 14, the question of transferring the Organisation to Brussels should be considered. A move to Brussels must ensure that WEU retains its own clear identity as outlined in the paragraphs above. This implies that, in order to ensure that the Council is able to exercise its functions continuously, some form of permanent representation and a permanent WEU Secretariat should be retained. It would be for each Government to decide on the most appropriate arrangement for representation and liaison, drawing as necessary on member countries' delegations to NATO and the institutions of Political Union. Nevertheless, in terms of increasing the efficiency of WEU's work, it would be desirable for member countries to appoint comparable officials to the Permanent Council of WEU.