

Joint meeting of the WEU Council and the General Affairs Committee of the Assembly (London, 13 November 1967)

Caption: At the joint meeting held in London on 13 November 1967, the Council of Western European Union (WEU) replies to the various questions put by the Assembly's General Affairs Committee, in particular on relations between WEU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and expresses the common desire and intention to preserve WEU's institutions and working procedures.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Joint meeting of the Council and the General Affairs Committee of the Assembly, Written questions submitted in advance by the Committee and the Council's replies. London: 13.11.1967. JM/51. pp.1-4, 7-11. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://anlux.lu/>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Organs of the Western European Union. Year: 1967, 01/11/1967-28/02/1968. File 202.32.10. Volume 2/2.

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WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

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Original: English/French

JOINT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL AND
THE GENERAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
OF THE ASSEMBLY

London, 13th November 1967

Written questions submitted in advance
by the Committee and the Council's replies

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Western Co-operation

Question I

Are the Council in a position to inform the General Affairs Committee of the progress achieved on their study of relations between NATO and W.E.U.?

Council reply

1. At the ministerial meeting held in Bonn on 19th December 1966, the Permanent Council of W.E.U. were requested to submit a report on relations between NATO and W.E.U.
2. A detailed survey of the problem was prepared and has been discussed on several occasions by the Council. It was the object of an interim report presented to the Ministerial Council on 4th April 1967. This survey covers most of the commitments and duties devolving at present on the States signatory to the revised Brussels Treaty, with particular reference to the limitation of forces and armaments, the quantitative control of armament levels, the definition of armaments subject to control and the location of the Standing Armaments Committee.
3. However, since there was a wish to clarify further certain aspects of NATO-W.E.U. relations, it was not possible to present a final report at the recent ministerial meeting. This subject is therefore still under consideration.
4. The Council nevertheless wish the General Affairs Committee to know that member States share a common desire and a common intention to preserve the institutions and the working procedures of Western European Union and to safeguard the provisions of the Protocols implementing the modified Brussels Treaty.

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Responsibilities of W.E.U. countries outside Europe

Question II a)

Do the Council consider that one of their main tasks is to harmonise the positions of member countries with regard to political problems arising outside Europe?

Council reply

The Council hold a regular exchange of views and consultations on political questions arising outside Europe.

These discussions provide the Governments of member States with an opportunity to supplement their information and, where possible, to achieve a greater similarity of approach to the problems under consideration or to acquire a better understanding of each other's point of view.

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Question II b)

Have the Council sought to reach agreement among their members on a joint position with regard to the situation in the Middle East during and after the conflict in June 1967? On which aspects was agreement reached?

Council reply

The Council have held detailed exchanges of view on the situation in the Middle East on two occasions this year, at the ministerial meetings in The Hague on 4th and 5th July and in London on 12th and 13th October.

It should first be noted that, during the conflict, all the W.E.U. member States adopted a policy of neutrality.

When hostilities ceased, the Council, as indicated in their reply to Recommendation 157, felt that the most urgent need was to participate actively in all forms of humanitarian action on behalf of the victims of hostilities and especially the refugees.

At the political level, the W.E.U. countries declared in July that they were anxious to help in finding a lasting settlement, in accordance with the principles of international law and equity, for all issues outstanding between Israel and her Arab neighbours.

They were agreed that the United Nations and particularly the Security Council might provide a suitable context for seeking ways and means of achieving such a settlement.

They have since noted the emergence of some signs of moderation in several Arab countries.

The Council therefore consider that efforts should be continued along the lines described above, in the hope that the countries concerned in the region will realise that it is in their interests to accept a realistic settlement.

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The British application for membership of the European Communities

Question III a)

At the ministerial meeting on 4th July 1967, the Council provided the British Government with an opportunity of expressing their views on the negotiations they plan to hold with the European Communities.

What do the Council consider their role to be in the economic field:

1. at present?
2. if negotiations are started between the E.E.C. and the United Kingdom, as the Assembly hopes?

Council reply

1. The Council continue to serve as a useful forum where the seven member Governments, in the course of regular discussions, can take stock of the economic situation in Europe. This being so, the question of Great Britain's application to join the European Communities was the subject of an exchange of views on 4th July. It was also discussed on 13th October.
2. With reference to the second part of the question, this will be a matter for consideration at the time.

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Question III b)

The French Government have referred to certain economic difficulties which they consider would arise from the accession of the United Kingdom to the European Communities. Have these questions been usefully discussed by the Council?

Council reply

On the occasion of the meeting held by the Council at ministerial level in London on 12th and 13th October, the United Kingdom representative stated his Government's views on the present situation of the United Kingdom economy and its future prospects; he also referred to the question of sterling.

Other members of the Council commented upon the information supplied, stressing its usefulness in connection with the forthcoming consultations to be held by the E.E.C. Council of Ministers, who will be called upon to consider the importance of the problems involved and the procedure to be adopted for their discussion.

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East-West relations

Question IV a)

Has there been any harmonisation of views in the Council with regard to relations with the Eastern European countries?

Council reply

The Council already have on previous occasions made known to the Assembly their views on relations with the Eastern countries.

In their discussions on this subject, which is regularly considered by the Council at their meetings at ministerial level, the W.E.U. member countries have stressed the need to pursue with patience the process of relaxing tension by endeavouring to improve further the general political climate in Europe and by continuing to seek concrete means of rapprochement with the Eastern European countries. For this purpose, and on the basis of firm solidarity among allies, the member States consider that the efforts initiated bilaterally should be developed.

In the political field, for instance, where a just and peaceful solution of outstanding European problems encounters persistent and considerable difficulties, all member States hold the view that contacts with the leaders of the Eastern European countries should be multiplied and that the policy of détente adopted by the Federal Republic of Germany calls for their continued full support.

Furthermore, the member States are trying whenever possible to consolidate the progress made in cultural, trade and scientific relations.

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Question IV b)

Do the Council consider that, at the time of the Middle East crisis, the Soviet Government initiated a new form of strategy liable to revive the "cold war"?

Council reply

1. No major shift in Soviet strategy, in either the military or the political sense, appears to have occurred at the time of the Middle East crisis.
2. The Soviet Government seem to have acted essentially in response to events and not to have taken the initiative both at the time of the war and immediately thereafter. This applied, for instance, to the movement of Soviet ships in the Mediterranean.
3. Politically, however, the Soviet Union adopted a tough line towards certain Western countries over the Middle East crisis. Some hardening of their attitude had already been apparent before the crisis. This showed itself in increased propaganda attacks, e.g. on the Federal Republic of Germany and on NATO. That the Soviet Government continue to employ such tactics certainly slows down the process of détente between East and West.
4. In any event the present Soviet leadership appear anxious to avoid any kind of direct confrontation with the West - an impression which was certainly borne out during the Middle East crisis. Moreover, the situation is different now from what it was a few years ago, notably because the policy initiated by the West of developing contacts with the countries of Eastern Europe and with the Soviet Union itself has achievements to its credit which are valued by both sides.

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Question IV c)

Do the Council consider that at the present juncture certain steps can be taken to strengthen the relaxation of tension in Europe?

Council reply

1. The Council consider that the relaxation of tension in Europe can be furthered by a variety of measures. Since the present situation does not offer prospects for an early and satisfactory solution of the outstanding political problems, the Council are of the opinion that these measures should in the first place be directed towards a further improvement of the general climate between Eastern and Western European countries and towards the achievement of a better mutual understanding.
2. The most fruitful results may at present be expected from an extension of bilateral contacts with Eastern European political leaders, and from a further development of bilateral relations in the commercial, cultural and scientific fields as well as of tourism.
3. At the same time, multilateral co-operation should be encouraged and extended. This could take place in Organisations such as the Economic Commission for Europe, and also in such fields as communications, space and nuclear energy.
4. Western countries should continue to show their willingness to seek agreement on arms control measures which, without prejudice to the solution of political problems, could contribute to the improvement of European security and to a further relaxation of tension in Europe.

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