



Assembly of Western European Union  
The Interparliamentary European Security and Defence Assembly

23 June 2005

# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the WEU Assembly

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## Special Sitting Strasbourg



Presidents of the WEU Assembly

## *50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WEU Assembly* *Strasbourg, 23 June 2005*

Strasbourg was an obvious choice for the Assembly to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary given that its first plenary session was held in that city on 5 July 1955. Opening the ceremony in the Hemicycle of the Palais de l'Europe, I recalled that the WEU Assembly had two parents: the first was Paul-Henri Spaak, a former Foreign Affairs Minister of Belgium, who, during the process of modifying the Brussels Treaty in 1954, had persuaded his colleagues to include the new Article IX that was to become the legal basis for the Assembly. The other parent was the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on whose premises the WEU Assembly held its meetings before moving to Paris in 1959.

The link between the WEU Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is still strong. To this day the ten founding members of WEU send identical parliamentary delegations to both Assemblies.

Over the years, on the basis of Article IX of the modified Brussels Treaty, a unique process of interparliamentary exchange, debate and consensus building on security and defence questions has been established. It culminates in parliamentary members voting to adopt a dozen or so reports at the Assembly's half yearly plenary sessions. These reports contain recommendations that are addressed to the governments. Since the inception of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), the WEU Assembly has also been serving as the interparliamentary platform for ESDP issues on the basis of the parliamentary instruments developed for WEU. Members of the national parliaments of 37 European countries participate in the Assembly's work.

The two guest speakers at the anniversary ceremony are former members of our Assembly who have now taken on executive duties, but both continue to maintain their links with national parliamentarians. Terry Davis, who is now Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, was a member of the Assembly from 1992 to 2004 and held the office of Vice-President from 2001 to 2004. In 1999, he presented a report on the move towards professional armed forces in Europe. The present Secretary-General of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who was a member of the WEU Assembly from 1987 to 1994, was the author of a number of its reports and recommendations (notably on the Gulf and Yugoslav crises). At the anniversary celebrations he said that "security policy must, first and foremost, be a policy of fostering democracy", his reasoning being that "democracies do not fight each other". But he also made the point that democracy is a constant challenge, at least when it comes to security policy, because most people are only mildly interested in security issues. He stressed that "keeping our publics informed and engaged on security matters is a very difficult job" and that it was the task of the WEU parliamentarians to help to explain how countries must respond to security challenges and why.

The following record of the anniversary celebrations provides interesting reading not least because of the addresses that were given by no fewer than nine former Assembly Presidents, who ably combine memories of their period in office with personal reflections on the role of national parliamentarians in scrutinising intergovernmental cooperation on European security and defence.

The Assembly has also published a book describing its work over the past 50 years, together with a DVD containing all its reports and recommendations. Copies are available from the Assembly's Secretariat ([info@assembly.weu.int](mailto:info@assembly.weu.int)).

*President Stef Goris*



*WEU Assembly President Stef **Goris** presenting the Assembly's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book. On his left: Armand **De Decker** (Belgian Minister for Development Cooperation and past WEU Assembly President), Terry **Davis** (Council of Europe Secretary General) and Jan Dirk **Blaauw** (past WEU Assembly President). On his right: Jaap **De Hoop Scheffer** (NATO Secretary General) and Colin **Cameron** (Secretary General of the WEU Assembly).*

*Celebration to mark the 50th anniversary of the first sitting of the  
Assembly of the Western European Union*

*Strasbourg, Thursday 23 June*

*(The special sitting was opened at 17.15 with Mr Stef Goris, President of the  
Assembly of Western European Union, in the Chair).*

The PRESIDENT (Translation) – The ceremony will begin with a performance by singers from the Strasbourg School of Music, so please be so kind as to be silent for a few moments.

*(Performance by the Strasbourg School of Music)*

The PRESIDENT (Translation) – Mr President, Mr President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Secretary-Generals, Minister, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen. It gives me great pleasure and satisfaction to open the 50th anniversary celebration of our Assembly's first session, for which we have returned to our earliest home here in the European city of Strasbourg.

Under such exceptional circumstances, I should like to thank most warmly the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and above all its President, René van der Linden, for the hospitality extended to us and the help given to us by all the authorities concerned, without which this celebration could not have taken place during the plenary session of its Parliamentary Assembly.

I should also like to thank the singers from the Strasbourg School of Music for the wonderful performance to start our ceremony today. We are looking forward to enjoying more at the end of the ceremony when they will invite you to sing along with them.

To celebrate our anniversary, I should just like to share with you one or two recollections of the early days of our Assembly. However, it is my intention, at the end of the ceremony to make one or two further remarks about what the prospects might be for the future, for the European project as a whole, and also about the part our Assembly might play in it in the coming years.

*(The speaker continued in English.)*

A closer look at the precise circumstances 50 years ago of the Western European Union Assembly's coming into being reveals that, true to life, this particular "baby" had two parents, a mother and a father. The father was indisputably my fellow countryman, Paul Henri Spaak, then Foreign Minister of Belgium, who suggested to his colleagues in the process of modifying the Brussels Treaty including in it a new article that became the legal basis for our Assembly. The mother was, of course, none other than the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Clearly, a child needs to be nurtured during its formative years, and the WEU Assembly held its meetings at the seat of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of

Europe in Strasbourg until we moved to Paris in 1959. Since then, both our Assemblies have worked together in exemplary fashion, in a spirit of complementarity and cooperation, and continue to do so today. I am convinced that both are also destined in the coming years to play a vital part – each in its own area of responsibility – in building and consolidating democracy in Europe, and that they will discharge their respective responsibilities in that connection.

I shall leave you with those few introductory thoughts as I now hand over to our host, René van der Linden, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.



**President Goris with NATO Secretary-General and former member and Rapporteur of the WEU Assembly, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer**

Mr René VAN DER LINDEN (*President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*) – Mr President, former Presidents, Excellencies, colleagues. Children learn much more from mothers than from fathers. We are therefore proud that we have a daughter here who is 50 years old.

I extend to all of you my warmest welcome and congratulations on the 50th anniversary of the Assembly of the Western European Union. It is fitting that the ceremony takes place in this Chamber, as the modified Brussels Treaty setting up the

Western European Union and the Council of Europe's statute are clearly based on the same values.

While the Council of Europe's statute excludes matters of national defence, many, indeed most, of our activities also contribute to conflict prevention. We have, therefore, a particular responsibility and competence to search in both Assemblies – from different angles – for political solutions to existing conflicts and to find ways to prevent future ones. The upcoming 10th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacres should incite us to be relentless in our efforts.

I thank you very much for using this Assembly for your 50th anniversary. I wish you a wonderful evening and a good reception from the Mayor of Strasbourg, and I will see you again this evening for dinner.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, dear colleague. We are now honoured to hear a speech from our guest, the Secretary-General of NATO, Mr Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. He is a former member of our Assembly, and I must already excuse him as, unfortunately, he must leave for Moscow later, as he has urgent and important meetings with the President of the Russian Federation and other personalities. I hope that you will all understand that he will not be with us for the whole evening.

Mr Jaap DE HOOP SCHEFFER (*Secretary-General of NATO*) – Thank you Mr President.

*(The speaker continued in English)*

I am pleased to have this opportunity to address this distinguished Assembly, even more so as this year marks WEU's 50th anniversary. I had the privilege of being a member of the Dutch delegation to the WEU Assembly from 1987 to 1994 and always very much enjoyed the work. Some of my colleagues from those days are still here today, and I am glad to see so many familiar faces. For most of the time, I was of the Dudley generation, and I see Sir Dudley Smith sitting here. We did a great deal of travelling under the able leadership of Sir Dudley Smith, with Armand De Decker. It is good to remember those days.

I should also mention "Mr WEU Assembly", Colin Cameron, with whom I have worked closely and travelled as Rapporteur of several reports for the Assembly, and I am pleased to see, after all these years, that we both made it to Secretary-General.

Earlier today, in my speech to the Council of Europe, I said that security policy must, first and foremost, be a policy of fostering democracy. Why? The reason is that democracies do not fight each other. As a member of parliament, a Minister, and now Secretary-General of NATO, I have always been keenly aware that democracy is also a constant challenge, at least when it comes to security policy. Even 9/11 has not changed the fact that most people are only mildly interested in security issues, let alone military issues. Keeping our publics informed and engaged on security matters is a very difficult job. We cannot shed that task, however.



**Jaap de Hoop Scheffer  
addressing members of the  
Assembly during the Special  
Sitting**

If the recent "noes" to the European Constitutional Treaty teach us anything, it is that we must never underestimate the need to generate sufficient public awareness of the issues at stake. Parliamentarians can and must play a crucial role as the linchpin between policy and publics in that effort.

Basically, I see two major security policy challenges on which we must engage our publics. The first and most fundamental challenge is to understand the nature of our military operations in the new strategic environment. It is easy to claim that after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and after 9/11, we are living in a radically different security environment. In fact, we live in an era of globalisation not only of the economy but of security policy. It is my impression, however, that some are still only in the process of gradually absorbing the implications of those changes.

Recently, I looked at some WEU reports from the early 1990s – some were on the Gulf crisis and some were on the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia.

In both cases, some segments of our publics needed time to understand the implications for their own safety. Conditioned by the cold war, they adhered to a largely territorial view of safety, in which faraway developments appeared to have little reference to their own personal safety.

Today, as I hope you will agree, this has changed. The implications of the globalisation of security policy are slowly sinking in – but I still encounter many people who fail to see a connection between, say, NATO's presence in the Hindu Kush in Afghanistan and their own personal safety. But still, that link is there.

Attention, Sir Dudley, I am about to speak French.

*(The speaker continued in French)*

(Translation) – All these factors make me feel that we should do a great deal more to attract public support by explaining clearly the reasons why we act as we do, without claiming that there are easy solutions. We should show rationally and with conviction that our new tasks are also essential to our citizens' security as the deterrent role our forces had during the cold war. Our peoples are quite able to distinguish between a well-founded argument and a superficial one. What they need and deserve is to hear the truth about the difficulty of these new operational commitments.

As parliamentarians and as members of this Assembly you have a special responsibility in this respect. This is why your voice is so important and I would strongly encourage you to make it heard and to explain to our citizens why the projection of stability has become a pre-condition for our security, why we must tackle the new security challenges at the source, why cooperation between Europe and North America is essential if we want to meet those challenges successfully and why that task requires means that are quite different to those we employed in the past.

I now come to the second major challenge to which I want to draw your attention: this consists of getting the message across as to why new military capabilities are necessary. The new tasks entrusted to our forces require modern military capabilities. Today, those forces that are left which were basically designed for territorial defence are inappropriate and a waste of already limited resources. Our forces must now be capable of a rapid response and of being deployed over long distances and for long periods. We need a combination of forces able both to carry out high-intensity combat missions and to undertake post-conflict reconstruction, at times simultaneously.

Once again my friends let us be honest with ourselves: such forces are expensive and require investment. We all know that it is much easier to argue publicly for investment in schools and hospitals. My good friend the Minister, Armand De Decker here, knows that and I know it too having served in government. Ladies and

gentlemen, to advocate increased defence spending does not make one very popular. However, I feel it has to be done.

*(The speaker continued in English)*

You can do much to help. You can help to ensure that defence and security are allocated the right amount of spending, and you can urge that that money be spent in the right way – on capabilities that we actually need and use, rather than on cold war-type forces – and you can convince governments of the need to make critical assets for specific missions available.

Governments must do their fair share in shaping security and defence policy, but so must parliamentarians. You remind our publics and our governments of the security issues that we face. You help to explain how we must respond to challenges, and why. At budget time, you are important advocates who can ensure that the interests of defence are not drowned out amid the clamour of so many other pressing needs.

The complexity of the risks and threats that we face is increasing all the time, and the pressure on government budgets is not diminishing. For all those reasons, you and your parliaments, and we in NATO, have an important job to do. That goes for the Parliamentary Assemblies as well.

Let me finish by stressing again what I tried to stress when I had the privilege of addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. This is not about my generation, and it is not about the generation that is most strongly represented here today; it is about the younger generation. Can we make sure that the younger generation will pick up the same values that we have all defended over many decades, both during the cold war and afterwards? Can we convince a generation who have grown up, both in Europe and in the United States, as if those values came automatically and were normal, and as if there were no war and conflict? I consider that one of my greatest challenges as Secretary-General of NATO. You in the Parliamentary Assembly, you in the framework of your work, Mr President – that goes for both Presidents, Stef Goris and President van der Linden – and me in my job, together with the 26 NATO allies, we all have to make that happen. It is a daunting and challenging task.

I pay tribute to all those who made that happen – I can look around me to my left and to my right and see them. I pay tribute to you all, as you sit here. I apologise for the fact that I have to go to the airport and fly to Moscow now. None the less, I say, “Happy birthday”. Fifty years! There are more challenges to come, but thank you, *anciens Présidents*, for all the work that you have done, and I wish you, Mr President and Mr Secretary-General, all the very best in fostering the values that we all defend and stand for. Thank you very much for your attention.

The PRESIDENT – (Translation) Thank you once again Mr NATO Secretary-General, both for your wise and warm words of encouragement to our Assembly to



continue its work and most of all for finding the time, as a former member of our Assembly, to come and join us here, in spite of a very full work schedule. We wish you a pleasant and successful journey to Moscow.

*(The speaker continued in English)*

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, I now call the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Terry Davis, a former member of the Western European Union Assembly, to take the floor.

Mr Terry DAVIS (*Secretary-General of the Council of Europe*) – Mr President, Mr President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Secretary-Generals, former Presidents, ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be given this opportunity to congratulate you on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the first plenary meeting of the WEU parliamentary Assembly.



**The Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Terry Davis, addressing the WEU Assembly**

As a former member of the WEU Assembly, I am well aware of the value of your activities as the European parliamentary forum for security and defence issues. This Assembly has on many occasions made significant contributions to progress on European security and defence issues thanks to the initiatives and leadership provided by your reports and recommendations. Your Assembly has also played an extremely important role in promoting transparent and open public debate on security and

defence policy questions, first within the framework of the WEU, and now within the European Union.

Although I was a member of the WEU Assembly for 12 years and I am proud to be one of your honorary members, I am today addressing you as Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, an organisation that has a long history of close relations with the WEU, and especially its parliamentary Assembly. In fact, as you have said, Mr President, the WEU parliamentary Assembly originally met on the premises of the Council of Europe. The relationship between the parliamentary Assemblies of the two organisations is particularly close because the delegations of member states belonging to both organisations are identical.

Our two organisations are very different, however, in terms of substance. The Council of Europe's statute explicitly excludes defence issues from our mandate. These organisations also have quite different roles in Europe's political architecture,

but we should never forget that we share the same European values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

As the preamble of the Brussels Treaty establishing Western European Union states, “[The High Contracting Parties] are resolved: to reaffirm their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person (...); to fortify and preserve the principles of democracy, personal freedom and political liberty, the constitutional traditions and the rule of law, which are their common heritage; to strengthen, with these aims in view, the economic, social and cultural ties by which they are already united; (...) to promote the unity and to encourage the progressive integration of Europe”. The wording of the statute of the Council of Europe is almost identical. That coincidence is not surprising, because the five founding members of the WEU were also among the 10 signatories of the Treaty of London establishing the Council of Europe.

But our two organisations have a clear division of labour. While the WEU has developed its expertise in security and defence policy issues, the Council of Europe has played the leading role in protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms through the establishment of the European Convention on Human Rights, which is enforced by the European Court of Human Rights. At the same time, the Council of Europe has also done tremendous work in extending and developing democracy and promoting the rule of law. Now, following the summit in Warsaw, we are going to give even more attention to democracy.

That is the important point, because although we can be proud of our achievements, there is still a lot of work to be done by all of us to make Europe a safe, secure and better place for future generations. For that, we need not only the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, but an organisation such as the WEU Parliamentary Assembly. Let me once again congratulate you on your anniversary and wish you much successful work in the years to come.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Secretary-General, for those very warm words to our Assembly. Having listened to the Secretary-Generals both of NATO and the Council of Europe, I propose now that we listen to some leaders of the Political Groups. We will hear first from Mr Marcel Glesener, on behalf of the Federated Group of Christian Democrats and European Democrats. We will then hear from Mr Hancock and Mr Masseret.

Mr Marcel GLESENER (*Chairman of the Federated Group of Christian Democrats and European Democrats*) (Translation) – Mr President, Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, allow me first to tell you how very happy I am to be attending our Assembly’s 50th anniversary celebration today. I should like to say just a few words on behalf of my Group.

I have had the honour and the pleasure of serving as acting President on two occasions: for the first time in the second half of 2003 and again in the second half of 2004. Both were difficult periods in terms of the Assembly’s work and future.

However, over all that time the profound conviction of our Group that this Assembly does vital work for democracy in Europe has continued to grow.

I should like to explain to you the reasons why my conviction has deepened by recalling the difficult times our Assembly has been through, particularly in 2003 and 2004. Think back to our Conference in Baveno. It took place at the time when the Convention on the Future of Europe had completed its work but before the Intergovernmental Conference on the Constitutional Treaty had got under way.



**Former WEU Assembly President and current leader of the Federated Group of Christian Democrats and European Democrats, Marcel Glesener, during his speech**

I said at the opening of the Baveno Conference, that Europe could not enter into the new commitments envisaged in the draft Constitutional Treaty without the support of its citizens and their elected representatives in the member parliaments. In October of the same year, we presented to the then Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, representing the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, one of the Assembly's last contributions to the Intergovernmental Conference.

In this, the Assembly once again urged the IGC to incorporate in the Constitutional Treaty machinery for institutional dialogue, information and consultation, between the EU Council and an interparliamentary body composed of members of national parliaments, in those areas governed by the intergovernmental procedure, and particularly in security and defence matters. I attached the greatest importance to that interview, so convinced was I that all of us, as elected members of our national parliaments, had a prime responsibility for representing and defending the interests of our electors and for ensuring that European policy remained attentive to the concerns of the peoples and the citizens to which we, as parliamentarians, are continually answerable.

At the end of our colloquy in Enschede, a year later, in September 2004, I approached the Presidency, to urge the Council to reconsider its plan to have the modified Brussels Treaty signatory states adopt a declaration stating their intention to denounce that Treaty as soon as the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe entered into force.

Even though the governments eventually allowed that initiative to die a death, the upshot has been that our Assembly is still side-lined from the process of dialogue, information and consultation with the European Union executive in the areas the latter inherited from WEU.

I remain convinced that its exclusion in this way is a serious mistake on the part of governments. For, as I made clear to the WEU Permanent Council Ambassadors at the end of October 2004, all the projects that the member governments want to have agreed at the European level require public support. To obtain that support they need the help of the parliamentary representatives. This became evident in particular at a time when our governments were trying to convince parliaments and electorates of the need to ratify the Constitutional Treaty.

This is why I am convinced that it is a mistake, politically, to claim that the Assembly has no part to play because it does not lie within the institutional framework of the European Union. The second mistake, which to an extent is consequent on the first, was that neither the Convention nor the Constitutional Treaty envisaged giving the national parliaments an appropriate forum within the European Union, where they could voice their concerns as their nations' representatives and hold an institutional dialogue with the European executive.

Before concluding with a few thoughts about the future, I want to say I have some very fine memories of the 50th anniversary celebration of the signing of the Paris Agreements and the modified Brussels Treaty, marked by the Assembly at the end of October 2004 in Brussels and Paris. All the arguments rehearsed at the conferences held at that time to demonstrate that the modified Brussels Treaty remained fully relevant then are more valid than ever now.

For, following the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by the French and Dutch peoples, the European Council resolved, last week, on 16-17 June, to allow a "period of reflection" of about a year. Let us take advantage of the time this affords to move forward on two fronts: firstly, to show that the present crisis does not mean we are giving up hope but rather prompts us to work together for a truly democratic Europe and one that is close to its national elected representatives and those who elect them. Secondly, we should use the time to prove we are determined to pursue the grand design – European Defence – that has been the goal of our endeavour for the last 50 years.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am convinced that we are now entering upon a new era, one that will perhaps last for another 50 years!

I shall close by thanking the staff of the office of the Clerk, on this day of celebration, for their loyal and committed service. A big thank you to you all on behalf of our Group!

Thank you for your attention.

The PRESIDENT (Translation) – Thank you very much, Marcel. In this public sitting, let me repeat my thanks to you for the way in which you looked after the *de facto* presidency in circumstances that were far from easy. You did a magnificent job and that should be recorded.

I call Mr Hancock, the leader of the Liberal Group.

Mr Mike HANCOCK (*Chairman of the Liberal Group*) – I am a little nervous following Marcel, because he is like a boomerang. He has been in the President’s chair on two occasions, through no fault of his own, and I have a feeling that he might be back here this afternoon. He always likes to have two bites of the cherry.

As the representative of Liberal members, past and present, it would be wrong if I did not thank those who have filled the role of President in the past, some of them for all too short a time in recent times. I think particularly of Jan Dirk, Armand De Decker and you, Stef. You all three had a very short time and, through no fault of your own, you were not permitted to complete your time in office. We are especially grateful to Marcel for the courteous way in which he fulfilled his role as Vice-President and took on the role of acting President. He was a credit to himself and his country for doing that with such good grace and I am sure that the Assembly welcomed the opportunity to see him in that office.



**Mike Hancock, leader of the Liberal Group, addressing members of the WEU Assembly**

It is opportune that we have a chance today to say, “Goodness me! We’ve made it. We’ve got to 50.” I am sure that there was a doubt in most people’s minds – at least those who are not in the room today – and many hoped that we would not make it to 50. Credit is due to those who stayed the course, to the staff of the WEU who have put in the effort over the years, and to all the former Presidents, who have all played a part in linking their Assembly with our Assembly and carrying the message

of the importance of parliamentary accountability on defence.

It is no good the Secretary-General of NATO suggesting that we have to re-engage with the public at a time when it suits us. We must ensure that parliamentary scrutiny of defence goes on all the time and is done in a way in which the people of Europe can have confidence and not think that their politicians are using them because it is the right time to do so. If we are going to have accountability, and dialogue with the people of Europe, Assemblies such as ours are the very vehicle through which that can happen. To take that away would be a grave error of judgment on the part of those politicians, many of whom would not otherwise have had the opportunity of serving in elected parliaments or Assemblies such as ours.

It would be a great disservice to the people of Europe if our Assemblies were denied the on-going opportunity to take on these issues and to take back the message to the people of Europe that they can engage with these critical issues not only when certain people want them to, but all the time. It is simply no good going into denial about whether the public are interested and suddenly realising that they do matter

when they react to something that you have done. The people of Europe are owed more than that. I hope that the Secretary-General will follow through his commitment to engage with the public of Europe. If he fails to do so, the recent crisis will not be unique to this month or year, but will be an on-going phenomenon from which politics will not recover easily.

I hope that a positive message will go out from our Assembly. We have made the case, not once but time and again, for our continued existence. That case is clear now. The constitution will undoubtedly be put on hold, as in Mr Blair's scenario, but most reasonable people would suggest that if it is put on hold, it will be for a considerable time. Assemblies like ours must revitalise themselves. I hope that our parliaments will take us seriously again.

After all, look at our achievements. I read with great interest the book produced by the WEU Assembly to mark its 50th year – I am grateful for my advance copy. It shows a record of distinction in service, commitment, doing things, getting things done and taking the message to people. Those things are not easily cast aside. We are the ones who bridge the gap between the non-EU members of NATO, and the non-EU, non-NATO members of the European family. It was us who first opened the door with a bridge to Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. It was the Assembly of WEU that spread the message of cooperation and working together at parliamentary level, of trying to use the influence of parliamentarians, many of whom are here today, of working out ways of bringing parliaments together, and of the importance of dialogue and democracy.

I thank Terry Davis for the part he played during the time he was in WEU, and the fight that he put up in the early days especially to ensure that the Secretary-General's post was properly managed and the staff were given security. We should not fail to thank him for that.

My message is a very positive one. If we are seriously going to engage, we have to use assemblies like ours. My message to the politicians who are not here is to read that book and tell me if they have something instantly available that could replicate that record for the next 50 years.

It is not often that Liberals are in a majority, but I think that we have a small majority among the past Presidents who are here today, if we include you, Stef. From the Liberal Group, I thank you all for coming and I thank the WEU Assembly, past and present, for what it has done in bringing peace to our continent.

THE PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mike, That is indeed a positive message. I now call the third of the group leaders, Mr Jean-Pierre Masseret of the Socialist Group.

Mr Jean-Pierre MASSERET (*Chairman of the Socialist Group*) (Translation) – Mr Secretary-General, Minister, eminent colleagues, ladies and gentlemen. Fifty, the point when one attains middle age, is said to be the prime of life. The parliamentary

Assembly of WEU has made an honourable and useful contribution to forming and nurturing the European spirit. Our Assembly has ever worked for peace and security – what could be more important than these? For without them – peace and security – economic, social and cultural progress are not attainable. Barbarity reigns supreme bringing destruction of all kind in its wake. Thus defence underpins the democratic values and shared political goals by which we live together as a community.

To aspire to peace and security means thinking collectively about the threats and risks we face and also about the political conditions that need to be present in order to deal with them. It means being clear about the military instruments we need. As peace and security are the foundation of any democratic endeavour, the involvement of national parliaments is a prime requirement.



**Jean-Pierre Masseret, leader of the Socialist Group, addressing the WEU Assembly during the Special Sitting**

Europe has emerged from the cold war and is now organising to ensure its own security. At the same time it is gradually becoming more united. Our job is therefore to turn our continent into a major player on the international stage.

To be that major player, there must be both a project and the will, plus the wherewithal to defend one's vital interests.

As far as these are concerned, none of our countries can go it alone because no one of them alone has the human, financial or technological resources needed to respond to such challenges

Just at present, the WEU interparliamentary Assembly is the most inclusive organisation for European defence that there is. Those who would seek to bring about its demise should be wary of committing an error of political judgement and should acknowledge that in such weighty matters it is impossible and downright wrong to ignore the national parliaments. This is why my birthday wish for the WEU Assembly would be to see it assert itself more strongly still as the interparliamentary security and defence Assembly.

Thus the Assembly should continue to work with the same determination for the development of European defence, taking a more political approach without becoming locked in a straight-jacket, and keeping in view the fact that transatlantic cooperation is a key tenet of the modified Brussels Treaty. It will then show, on the basis of carefully drawn up reports, that the uncertainty surrounding the fate of the

Constitutional Treaty does not in any way affect the common will of the representatives of European citizens to pursue the goal of European defence.

The political mandarins would therefore be well advised to take on board the democratic message emanating from Europe's grass roots. Europe in general and European defence in particular cannot be built by ignoring or disregarding the elected representatives of national parliaments.

Therefore, I say long life to the interparliamentary security and defence Assembly!

THE PRESIDENT (Translation) – Mr Masseret we have taken note of your resolve and the importance you attach to the national parliaments and their members.

Ladies and gentlemen, we thought it would be fitting and most interesting to have contributions from the honorary Presidents of the Assembly. Let us therefore extend a warm welcome to them and ask them to give a short account of the political climate that surrounded their presidencies, and the often turbulent times they had to contend with in the course of the development of European security and defence policy.

I shall ask them to speak in chronological order starting with Mr Jean-Marie Caro, President of our Assembly from 1984 to 1987.



**Former WEU Assembly  
President Jean-Marie Caro  
making his contribution to the  
debate**

Mr Jean-Marie CARO (*President of the Assembly from 1984 to 1987*) (Translation) – Mr President, I am extremely touched to be addressing the WEU family of nations. The period of my involvement in the Organisation has been one of the busiest and most enjoyable of my political existence. You ask me to sum up the last 50 years. That is quite a tall order! WEU has acquitted itself brilliantly in the fine work it has achieved. The speeches we have heard evoke for us so many memories of the long stretch of years between the foundation of the Organisation and this, its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

As a loyal Frenchman – a fact that in no way detracts from my unswerving commitment to Europe – the message I

bring to you here in the Assembly and to the people we represent is tinged with sadness.

The sadness comes from comparing two dates: 30 August 1954 and 29 May 2005, Frenchman as I am, I regard as recurrent stumbling blocks, to put it mildly, to



the attempt to make the progress towards which we have all worked with such a will. It is not that we – or I personally – believe that we cannot move forward, for the means are there. I am distressed at the thought of our young people being deprived by my countrymen of their right to hope and believe in their future.

We are experiencing a period of disenchantment and seeking somewhere to pin the blame. This is a common response and one I do not intend to indulge in. My hope is that our young people, cast adrift, as possibly we are ourselves, will throw themselves heart and soul behind a new project of the kind that fired Europeans' enthusiasm in the early days 50 years ago.

Let us try with our young people to find a new project – not simply attempt to stick the pieces back together but to come up with something new and fresh, with all our countries' futures in view.

The PRESIDENT (Translation) – Mr Caro, thank you for sharing your thoughts with us, and also your feelings, which once again mark you out as one of Europe's true elder statesmen.

I now call Mr Charles Goerens, President of the Assembly from 1987 to 1990.



**Former WEU Assembly President Charles Goerens addressing members during the debate**

Mr Charles GOERENS (*President of the Assembly from 1987 to 1990*) (Translation) – Mr President, friends, I should like first to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe. I should have liked to have done the same for the NATO Secretary-General, but he has already left, and for the WEU Secretary-General, but he hasn't yet arrived.

You asked me to speak about our past work and our memories. I had the privilege of presiding over this Assembly from 1987 to 1990. I can safely say that it was a fascinating time, coinciding as it did with *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*. We had the privilege, as the Assembly of WEU, to make the initial contact with the Supreme Soviet and the relationship quickly developed from there. As the WEU Assembly we worked for disarmament and for opening up towards the East.

At an extraordinary session of the Assembly held in Luxembourg, we welcomed Hans-Dietrich Genscher and former Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski. We talked at that time of a heritage – of new opportunities. This

materialised in so far as many countries have joined the European Union and our transatlantic structures.

I do not know if we have managed to convince the public at large about the worth of that heritage. They tend to feel it was too much, too soon, too fast. The message we gave then is still relevant. Something we should remember about the countries that have just joined us is that they were robbed of half a generation by Hitler and by Stalin, in some cases, of a generation and a half, two even! They did not have the benefits of the Marshall Plan. It has taken them 15 years – 15 years mark you – to harvest their first post-cold war dividends.

I ask all you former “cold war warriors” gathered together here today, to exhort our children, who understand us so badly, to set aside their indifference and grasp the opportunity before us. We do have another chance. But I think I am right in saying also that the worst is yet to come.

In that connection, I should like to refer to Jean Monnet’s remark to the effect that in the end what counts is not last-ditch resistance but those who keep faith in the darkest hour. Let us make sure we keep faith.

I don’t want to end on a despairing note with this talk of darkest hours. I did indeed look on the black side in what I just said, but we are the faithful and have the wherewithal to convince others.

My career has mirrored, almost exactly, that of Armand De Decker: I was this Assembly’s President, I was a member of the Liberal Group and I had the privilege of being Minister for Cooperation and Development. My advice to those who want that job would be “first become President of the WEU Assembly, then join the Liberal Group if you want”.

Both of us, and we are not alone in this, see how others envy us what we have. Africans in particular, who are in the process of organising security on their continent, want to adopt the recipes that have been successful here in Europe. We therefore have something to teach, to hand down to the next generation, here in Europe, and to new generations in neighbouring regions. It is in our own interest for our Assembly give a lead here. I congratulate it most heartily on its 50th anniversary – the progeny of Paul-Henri Spaak and the Council of Europe – a very young mother indeed as she was only six years old at the time of the birth of the Assembly of Western European Union, the only European Assembly empowered to deal with security and defence matters.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation) – Mr Goerens, thank you for your remarks. I now call Mr Hartmut Soell, President of the Assembly in 1992 and 1993.

Mr Hartmut SOELL (*President of the Assembly from 1992 to 1993*) (Translation) – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, my presidency took place in as eventful a period as that of my predecessors, Jean-Marie Caro and Charles Goerens.

But since you have seen from the invitation that two years of the presidency - between 1990 and 1992 - are not represented here, I would like first to pay a tribute to the memory of my predecessor Robert Pontillon, a highly esteemed member of this Assembly and a much appreciated President.



**Former WEU Assembly President  
Hartmut Soell giving his address**

His time in office was marked by many events, such as the opening of the Assembly's doors to the new associate member and associate partner states. I had many friendly ties with Robert Pontillon and his family.

When I took up office in July 1992, war was raging in former Yugoslavia. The conflict, which had spread to Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 1992, claimed well over 10 000 lives.

I cannot go into the reasons for that war here and now. Clearly they were largely to do with national origin, in problems which had for a long time been repressed under Tito. But it was also becoming clear that Western Europe was confronting other problems, which was understandable following the opening up of Eastern Europe and German reunification. There was uncertainty, as well as concern that we might revert to the old enmities of the first half of the century.

French President François Mitterrand summed it up correctly when he said "the road back to the Sarajevo of 1914 is shorter than the one leading to Yalta". On top of this a number of strategic errors were made, such as the German Government's premature recognition of Croatia.

How did the WEU Assembly react to that conflict? To put it in a nutshell: the majority of its members did not let themselves be swayed by these old fears on the part of their governments. One respected member, Jacques Baumel, when reporting to this Assembly in early 1992 on a visit he had made to Dubrovnik at the end of 1991 together with fellow members of the French National Assembly, told us about a conversation with a Serb officer, who had said to him: "In October 1991, when we began bombarding Dubrovnik, a world cultural heritage site, we expected to hear the roar of aircraft from the United States 6th Fleet flying low above our positions and ships, and above the government buildings in Belgrade. If that had indeed been the case, the Belgrade government would immediately have ordered us to cease fire".

With the benefit of hindsight this view of things might sound somewhat simplistic. Yet we must not forget that all this was happening just six months after the Gulf war, when a coalition of western and a few Arab states had driven Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. From that standpoint the Serb officer was right in his assessment.

Hence I was speaking for the vast majority of Assembly members when I called in my inaugural speech on 1 July 1992 for the creation of properly defended safe areas, above all in Bosnia, and for the elimination of the heavy weapons which for months on end had terrorised the urban population from the air.

Although it took a number of years for the western states to intervene militarily, the pressure of events helped persuade the Ministers meeting in Petersberg near Bonn on 19 July 1992 to at last take a series of decisions. These were approved by the Presidential Committee, which was also meeting there at the time. I do not need to describe the Petersberg tasks which have since become the core activity of WEU.

We can see from the reports and decisions adopted by the Assembly, including in the period after my own term of office, the determined and far-sighted way in which the WEU Assembly supported and encouraged that process, while the governments in most cases dragged their feet.

Given that experience, and the fact that many politicians at European level seem to have forgotten Jacques Delors' reminder that the EU is a federation of European nation states, encompassing, in other words, the national parliaments, the pause for thought in the process of ratifying the Constitutional Treaty should be used to give the national parliaments a permanent institutional role in the emerging Common Foreign and Security Policy.

It is a credit to our Assembly that its work over many years has created the conditions which make this possible. As long as the national parliaments do not have an institutional role in these areas WEU and its Assembly remain indispensable.

May you have many more productive years ahead of you! Thank you.

The PRESIDENT – Many thanks for your contribution, President Soell. Thank you too for your tribute to your predecessor Robert Pontillon, whom we have not forgotten. Indeed on page 4 of our book there is a photo of him together with Armand De Decker.

The next speaker is Sir Dudley Smith, who chaired our Assembly from 1993 to 1996.

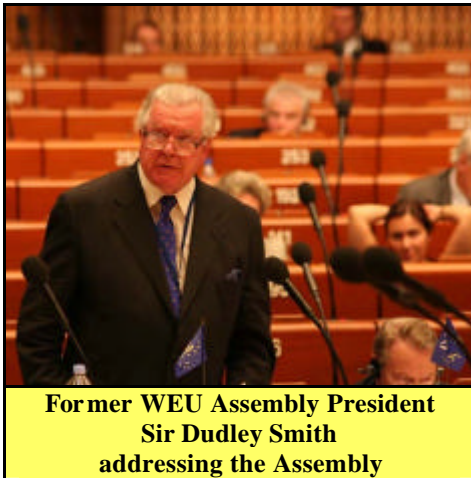
Sir Dudley SMITH (*President of the Assembly from 1993 to 1996*) – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, President Pontillon, who has just been mentioned, was a very good friend of mine, although of an entirely different political party. He taught me a great deal about being President of the Assembly and I tried where I could to replicate his virtues.

I had an exceptionally long four years as the Chairman of the WEU Defence Committee, and I slipped into the post of President of the Assembly for three and a half years. As many of my colleagues have said, it was a most interesting, fascinating and enjoyable experience – probably the biggest of my political life. I think that most

people who tried to do the job to the best of their ability have shared in that experience.

From the outset, I was determined to extend our important contacts and to get better recognition for our name as an institution, as well as for our aims. In attempting to widen our sphere of understanding, I tried to add an ambassadorial tinge to my efforts, particularly in encouraging associate member countries.

As Chairman of the Defence Committee in the Berlin Wall Hammer and Chisel exercise in late 1989 and in the Gulf and Red Sea problems of the late 1990s, I recall a special urgency, particularly on a personal visit to Washington in June 1991 with my good friend and then colleague, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, whom we were all delighted to see here with us today. I congratulate him on becoming Secretary-General of NATO. All institutions like to see their old boys do well, and didn't he do well? We are very pleased indeed that he still remembers us so well and is keen to try to assist us where he can.



Then, we, as an Assembly, were greatly involved in the Danube and Adriatic operations, in establishing an operational organisation for European security, and in flying and helicoptering around with great intensity. Those duties flowed easily into my term as President, and I was soon caught up in the *rapprochement* of Europe, and in spearheading the welcoming of new colleagues from central Europe. And how they cooperated! We were delighted to see them, and many of us, not only those holding office, went out of their way to try to assist.

Dialogue and confidence building was the order of the day, with the assistance of several European political stars such as Bertie Ahern, soon to become Irish Prime Minister, Martti Ahtisaari, President of Finland, who later found a prominent international role, and the exceptional President Havel of the Czech Republic.

The Assembly worked with a will to get formidable speakers for our twice-yearly plenary assemblies. Of course, there were foreign and defence ministers in abundance – there were always plenty of them around. In addition, a skim through the list of those whom we had in my period as President identifies a number worth remembering. There was the remarkable and glamorous Tansu Ciller, the first woman Prime Minister of Turkey, who created something of a sensation. There was Edouard Balladur, Prime Minister of France, and Andrei Kozyrev, Foreign Affairs Minister of

Russia, who incidentally was the first Russian minister to address our Assembly in those 50 years. Then there was José Manuel Barroso, Foreign Minister of Portugal and WEU Council Chairman, whom we got to know well and who went on to much higher things – even today, I am sure that he is deeply involved. Then there was Gyula Horn, Hungarian Prime Minister, a Soviet-style politician, but, I discovered, a man with a wicked sense of humour. I warned to Mr Horn.

We also had John Major, British Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway, whom we also visited in her country and who became an important figure in the World Health Organisation, and Leonid Kuchma, a controversial President of Ukraine – we had better not say too much more about him.

Then there was Aleksander Kwasniewski, President of Poland, who is still so to this day. It was a moment of great pride for me when I spoke to a political associate back in my constituency who was an ex-Polish fighter pilot and who, by chance, was in Poland when I was there. I was interviewed with the President on Polish television and this person said to me, “I nearly dropped dead when I switched on the television and there you were with my President.” That was quite extraordinary. We were almost awash with presidents of countries. On one occasion, at an official lunch at the Crillon in Place de la Concorde, the Presidents of Romania and Slovenia were our guests. When we came out, they were faced by a battery of some 16 photographers taking their pictures as if they were film stars.

Towards the end of my Presidency, we had a hectic seven weeks of diplomatic visits to places as diverse as New York, Moscow, Tokyo and Rome, and President Chirac did us the honour of visiting the Assembly and giving an excellent speech. I also had a most interesting personal meeting with him. Colin Cameron – incidentally, he was first class in all his planning, guidance and support, and an inspirational leader of an excellent staff – and I were invited to participate in an Italian military seminar in Rome to which we went with alacrity, as I was a former Army Minister in Britain and always paid particular attention to military matters. In a totally unexpected move, I was asked by the seminar to make a presentation to Pope John-Paul II at Castelgandolfo the next day, and to speak on behalf of the conference. Later, Mr Cameron and I stood on either side of the Holy Father, who received each of the seminar’s participants – at least a hundred in all – individually. That was heady stuff, and I was vain enough to tell my local newspaper about it and my consultations with President Chirac. Alas, however, retribution was close at hand. A political opponent wrote to my local newspaper the following week saying that the Pope and President Chirac had obviously seen more of Dudley Smith in the past few weeks than the voters of his constituency.

We all look forward to continued peace and stability. As has been underlined today by nearly all speakers, however, that has to be earned, and we must watch the whole time. The Assembly is always regarded as the keynote of operations. We do not necessarily feel that we need the European Union, but I am certain that Europe needs

our Organisation, or an organisation like ours that has been updated in form. The performance of the last 50 years is testimony to that.

WEU is too good to be thrown away. I am sure that it will not be, but if we read the book and hear the message, we realise that something significant has been achieved. Many people among the great publics of our countries are not aware of it, but we, as politicians, tried to do what we could on their behalf. That has brought benefits and has worked in many instances, as we can see from the volume produced, and some of the work has been truly heroic. We must do everything that we can to ensure that that work is not thrown away and that we can make progress again in the interests of common humanity.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Sir Dudley, for an interesting and comprehensive contribution.

*(The speaker continued in French)*

(Translation) – I invite Mr de Puig, President of the Assembly from 1997 to 1999 to speak.

Mr Lluís Maria DE PUIG (*President of the Assembly from 1997 to 1999*)  
(Translation) – Mr President, I had the honour of being President of the WEU Assembly from 1997 up to 2000. And it was a great honour indeed! However, I won't say that it was the apogee of my political career as that isn't over yet. I'm still on the look out for opportunities, even though I have no intention of joining the Liberal Group – although the temptation is obvious, and looking at you, my resolve as well.

Friends and colleagues, when I was President two major events took place. The first was a follow-on, in a sense, from something that started during Sir Dudley Smith's Presidency, in other words drawing in the countries of Eastern Europe once the door was ajar. The European governments and the WEU executive asked the Assembly to bring in those nations because there was no defence dialogue at the time. The WEU Assembly rose to the historic opportunity that presented itself and served WEU and Europe well. It took in all the nations and the "WEU family" expanded to 28 in all. The elected members from those new democracies, which at that stage were still not true democracies, had to have a means of talking to us, as Western Europeans, of maintaining a dialogue, having contact, exchanging views.

We did what was wanted and things snowballed as every month one country or another made contact. We did a tremendous amount of work and Europe a great service.

The second landmark was the European process. It was moreover during my own Presidency that much of it got under way: in Amsterdam, Saint-Malo, Helsinki. We played a strong European hand as part of that process. Yet again, the WEU Assembly rose to the occasion and served Europe well.

Displaying rare generosity and lack of self interest, we supported the idea of the European Union taking on responsibilities in the defence sphere. Our support for the Union having defence responsibilities, in the Maastricht Treaty and those that followed it, notably the Amsterdam Treaty, is a matter of record. We were well aware that this meant transferring WEU, or a part of it, to the European Union. We threw our weight behind this . I can recall now the various reports adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly. A paper produced, “Time for Defence” argued that WEU as a whole should become part of the European Union. Subsequent developments led in a different direction. I don’t know whether we should call them the technocrats , but let us just say that some Brussels-based politicians and civil servants saw things in a different light.



In any event, we said, during those times when the very existence of WEU and its parliamentary Assembly was in question, that there was a need to keep going forward and that Europe had to have a defence dimension. That was the most important thing. The Assembly took a stance then which it continues to maintain today: so long as the European Parliament is not competent to deal with defence issues WEU will continue to provide democratic scrutiny and work to propel defence forward. Our reasoning was sound, and still is, since governments have not wanted the European Parliament to have that competence.

We now find ourselves in a rather tricky position. There is no will for the European Parliament to be given that responsibility, while our Assembly, I am sure, would agree to take it on– for Europe. Governments do not want that to happen. At the same time, it is an area of responsibility that seemingly is to be circumscribed, contributing yet further to Europe’s lack of answerability. There is talk of the demise of the WEU Assembly, or of setting up “forums” although no one knows what these will cover. In short, we are apprehensive once again about what might transpire.

This is something we have to admit, at these 50th anniversary celebrations. The WEU Assembly’s past history, its expertise, its staff must be given their due, not only as a tribute to them, but also so that democratic scrutiny over defence can continue.

I put a great deal of energy into serving WEU during my Presidencies and have continued to serve it, right up to this very afternoon when, barely an hour ago, the



Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, at my suggestion, adopted two paragraphs drawn from the report on democratic oversight of the security sector in member states, to the effect that, at European level, a degree of accountability in any way inferior to that of the democratic *acquis* of the Assembly Western European Union was to be avoided “at all cost” and that national parliaments should therefore continue to sit in an interparliamentary forum to which the relevant European executive body would report and with which they would hold an institutional dialogue, on a regular basis on all aspects of European security and defence.

Here we are still, today, to serve WEU. This is my own most recent and modest service to our Organisation.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation) – Many thanks indeed.

For the benefit of our colleagues I should explain that the report referred to was adopted unanimously. Luis Maria de Puig undoubtedly serves WEU well and was in fact the first President under whom I served in this Assembly. I remember it as if it were yesterday.

*(The speaker continued in English.)*

The next speaker is Mr Bühler. I am happy to welcome you here and give you the floor.

Mr Klaus BÜHLER (*President of the Assembly from 2000 to 2002*) (Translation) – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I can follow on directly from where the previous speaker left off at the end of his address and that just goes to show how wonderful it is in our Assembly that we have always been able to work across political party lines. Our discussions have never been marked by party political differences but by our desire to achieve the objective of a common Europe security policy. And so my first wish is that I hope this will continue to be the case in the future.

When I was elected to the office of President of the Assembly in December 1999, many colleagues and government representatives said to me, and I quote from memory, “You will be the one who is going to turn off the lights and shut the door”.

That was the situation in which the WEU Assembly found itself after Nice. It is with great satisfaction that I am able to say here today, even though we are not in Paris but in the European birthplace of our Assembly, that the lights are still on and the door is still open. And indeed, in the light of the referendum results, I think many sceptics are relieved that the lights are still on and that the door is still open.

Perhaps they will now even take advantage of this situation, because our doors have in fact been open for the last 50 years. As my colleagues have already indicated, the political landscape of Europe looked more promising in the past than it does today. And yet our Assembly has every reason to be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We represent 50 years of collective commitment to security policy over a period in which neither the European Economic Community nor the European Community could claim to have achieved as much. It was only after the crisis in former Yugoslavia that the EU was forced to become involved in security issues.

It was at last recognised that in addition to the economic dimension of the European Community there was another important priority, namely, a common security policy. That is why much good work has been done in that area. It is a pity that the NATO Secretary-General is no longer with us to hear me say that cooperation between WEU, through the Council and the Assembly, and NATO has always been excellent. It is even an institutional obligation because it features in Article IV of the modified Brussels Treaty.

I hope that the European Union's cooperation with NATO in the future will be as good the cooperation WEU always had with that organisation. In contrast, there has unfortunately been a lack of interest sometimes on the part of governments and public opinion - that has to be admitted even on an occasion such as this. In that connection we have some catching up to do.



**Former WEU Assembly  
President Klaus Bühler  
during his speech**

My colleagues have stressed how important it was and still is that our Assembly is made up of national parliamentarians, given that competence for defence policy lies with the national parliaments and individual governments. This is why it will continue to play a vital role in the future, as was confirmed by the British Ambassador last week to the plenary session of our Assembly at which he delivered an address on behalf of the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw.

The task of integration following the disappearance of the iron curtain was also referred to at the session. Both the Council of Europe and the WEU Assemblies have taken action in this respect, not least as regards the countries for which the doors of the EU and NATO were closed for a long time.

I would also remind you how important it is for us to conduct a permanent dialogue with Russian parliamentary delegates, who have special guest status in our Assembly. This, too, is a valuable feature of European security policy.

During my Presidency I made a point of saying that we needed to make all these efforts in order to build a European security policy together. However, this was

not to say we needed “less America” but rather “more Europe”. It is my view that we should also work together in the future.

One dilemma still facing us following the - temporary - failure of the European Constitution concerns the mutual defence obligation, which is still missing in the EU context. It exists in Article V of the modified Brussels Treaty but not in any other body. Now a European security policy devoid of a specific mutual defence obligation constitutes “à la carte” politics in which everyone can play the game to suit their own interests. So there is work to be done here.

We should also be reflecting on whether the concept of “neutrality”, which had its advantages during the cold war, is still valid today when we are faced with the anonymous threat of terrorism, on which nobody can, in principle, take a neutral stance. The political landscape has changed out of all recognition.

Previous speakers reminded us of our Lisbon Initiative in which we underlined the need for parliamentary scrutiny. People again need to be reminded of this and the WEU Assembly is not only ready to assume its responsibility but is also in a position to do so.

We have achieved a great deal - a common market in Europe and the beginnings of a European currency; we have enjoyed the longest period of peace ever known in Central and Western Europe. What we have not yet fully achieved is a common foreign and security policy. I would hope that more work will be done on this and that contacts with the European Parliament will once again lead to a common objective. There are signs that this could be done.

I have had to be brief in sharing these thoughts with you now, but when it comes to our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I would be pleased to go into more detail provided, of course, that I am invited to the celebrations!

The PRESIDENT (Translation) – Thank you, Mr Bühler. I call Mr Blaauw, President of the Assembly in 2003.

Mr Jan Dirk BLAAUW (*President of the Assembly, 2003*) – I am not going to speak in Dutch, as I know that colleagues will simply hear a garbling in their ears.

When it was said that I was suddenly the daughter of the Council of Europe, I looked around and thought that in that case, my mother had grown very large. When I started here in 1981, it was a far slimmer mother. That shows how much Europe has changed in that period of almost 25 years.

In Europe we see all kinds of crisis. In fact, it is structural that we have a crisis every 20 years or perhaps even more frequently. In 1954, the crisis was that the

*Assemblée Nationale* rejected the European defence community. And, hey hey hey, that was our birth – wonderful! Later, we had other problems, and I remember, as Armand De Decker and Charles Gøerens do, the Genscher-Colombo plan. All of a sudden, the Assembly of WEU was important, and a meeting was established between the Chairman of the Council and the Bureau.



**Former WEU Assembly  
President Jan Dirk  
Blaauw addressing the  
Assembly**

I will never forget the meetings we had with Hans-Dietrich Genscher under the leadership of Jean-Marie Caro – we four are left over from that period. I remember the most wonderful moment in a Gymnich session. There was Genscher, the six Vice-Presidents and the President. During the session, I suddenly said to Mr Genscher, “Minister, can we have a break in the meeting, because the Benelux would like to reflect on our position?” And we started to speak Dutch. It was wonderful. I never saw people looking so confused, and things were very nice afterwards anyhow.

I mention crises because we are again in a crisis. Do not let people say that we are not. Usually, a crisis in Europe gives us air to breathe again, because we can fill the gap, as we are representatives of national parliaments. We need to use this crisis not to reflect for one year, but to act in the direction in which we have already been advocating moving for years. We need a proper interparliamentary European security and defence assembly – a label that we have had since our Lisbon meeting. The word “interim” was squeezed in, but I left it out when I was President. An interparliamentary assembly that consists of real representatives of the national parliaments and a contribution from the European Parliament are what is needed.

The referendums have anyhow pushed the constitution, which never should have been labelled as a constitution, into the future. I have already read, however, that the European Union will continue the process of establishing and building up a European defence and security policy with a whole apparatus around it. Then I see the leader of that process, our Secretary-General, who is travelling, giving a report to the European Parliament.

There is no report to make to the European Parliament, because that appears nowhere in any treaty. We should grasp this moment and start negotiations again with the European Parliament. We need to find the person we need to address there and get them on board. Before the European elections, we were going in the right direction.

WEU was invited by the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee and we were discussing matters together. We need to do that a lot more.

After my period as the President, I got the Balkan bug and spent a lot of my time there. I went to Kosovo, Tirana, Dubrovnik and Pristina to have talks with the parliamentarians there and to share our ideas. I also heard about their wish for Kosovo to become a real member of the European family. That process is continuing, but so is the process in the military field. Kosovo will be taken over, militarily speaking, by the European Union and we will have scrutiny of and make reports on that operation. Who is telling us what is happening in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with that other European operation? Troops are there now and there are two headquarters – which I always think is a bit strange – the NATO and the EU headquarters. We need to be involved and we should not allow the Council of Ministers to give a standard, paraphrasing answer to the recommendations in our report. Somehow, we have to find a way to put our recommendations on the list of what is to be done.

NATO is withdrawing from many activities because it is turning to the big threat in the world. The Secretary-General confirmed that. We need to fill the gap. We need to grow up even more, although we are 50 years old and a grown-up girl now. We need to become a real European defence element in the European Union, over which we have parliamentary scrutiny and control.

As my predecessors remarked, we missed a big chance in Dubrovnik. There was a WEU-NATO force outside Dubrovnik. If it had said to the Yugoslav ships that they were not allowed to pass any further up the coast, there would have been no bombardment. Resolutions were made in our parliaments that the gunnery positions around Sarajevo should be bombed, but our political leaders told us that the information from the air force generals was that that was not possible. I could not verify that at the time, but I checked it a couple of years later and I can tell you that those positions could have been bombed very easily and that would have saved many, many lives.

Yes, we need more defence spending, but I am afraid that that would be asking cows to lay eggs. We have to work hard to get the budget that we have and we must use it better. We need to spend it on more efficient and more high-tech weapons to bring us to the level of the United States so we can join them in partnership. Faraway threats are coming closer and they could be on our doorstep tomorrow rather than the day after tomorrow. We can succeed only if we tell the young what a precious thing we have. Many of us were born during the war and some of us were freed by it. I was in the Far East and enjoyed the hospitality of the Japanese. Others enjoyed the hospitality of other forces. We do not want to enjoy such hospitality again. We want to keep our freedom and prosperity, and that is what we need to tell our youth.

THE PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Blaauw, for that clear message.

*(The speaker continued in French)*

(Translation) – Last but not least on my list we come to Mr De Decker, the final honorary President to speak. Mr De Decker, who is Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium, was President of the WEU Assembly from 2003 to 2004.

Minister, we are most honoured to have you with us and should like to thank you for making the trip to Strasbourg.

Mr Armand DE DECKER *(Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium, President of the WEU Assembly from 2003 to 2004)* (Translation) – Mr President, Mr Secretary-General, Presidents and most of all dear friends, I should just like to say how delighted I am to be with you today. We have lived so much past history together in WEU over the past 25 years: the shared struggles, the happy memories, and quite a few laughs, so I am really very happy to be here again with my old comrades in arms.

Indeed, I have the slightly uncanny feeling, which you may also share, of attending an old soldiers' reunion, although this is in fact not true at all. Still, this political existence of ours is an immensely exiting one, living as we do at the mercy of events while at the same time trying to abide by the values and principles we hold dear, despite the vicissitudes of human nature and life on this earth.

Mr President, I do hold it against you rather for having placed me here in the chamber on the opposite bench to my friends and companions there. For, given that 24 out of the 25 years of my political career have been spent in parliament, and so far barely 10 months in government, I still obviously feel far closer to parliamentarians than to fellow ministers. However, as I look at them, I say to myself that we have just experienced 25 quite exceptional years of European history in which the WEU Assembly has continuously played a very important part. As many people have already pointed out, political commentators have tended very substantially to underrate its importance, because very often their interest lies more in areas subject to



**Armand De Decker, Belgian Minister for Development Cooperation and former WEU Assembly President, during his address**

the full glare of the media than in the places where ideas are thrashed out, sometimes by dint of hard talking, but to real effect. This has invariably been the case with the WEU Assembly.

As I recall, I joined the Assembly in January 1982. At that time, which was after all not so long ago, we were in the middle of the cold war and the Euromissile crisis. SS-20s were trained upon us and Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing took the decision at a G4 or G5 summit that a response from the Alliance was required. So we decided to deploy Cruise and Pershing missiles. This was the period that led to the revitalisation of WEU and its Assembly.

WEU had been completely dormant – a small Secretariat-General in a little house in London and an Assembly snoozing peacefully in Paris – until President Brezhnev got his strategy wrong and rolled out his SS20s. That shook us awake! The Euromissile crisis and Europeans' lack of awareness of defence issues were a stimulus to WEU's revival.

Jean-Marie Caro was President of the Assembly at the time. It was round about then too, in 1982 or 1983 as our friend Jan Dirk Blaauw reminded us, when the Gymnich meetings took place with Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who told us straight out over dinner that he was convinced that the iron curtain was about to lift, that there would be reconciliation and that Germany would reunite. We pinched ourselves to make sure we weren't dreaming and that we had heard and understood properly what he meant – which goes to show that some people were in the dark until then.

And so it all came about in the fullness of time. After the missiles and revitalisation, a powerful US President called Reagan met a powerful Secretary-General of the Communist Party, a certain Gorbachev. The two got on. The Euromissiles over which there had been so much contention were dismantled. Shortly afterwards they decided with the support of the Pope – Jean-Marie Caro was the one who took us all off to the Vatican for an audience with Pope John-Paul II – that there was nothing to fear. They said so loud and clear and the Berlin Wall cracked asunder and came tumbling down.

With Charles Goerens as President we began to welcome aboard the Soviets. I remember a Soviet Minister of Foreign Trade with whom we had lunch in Paris, at the Maison du Commerce Extérieur. We were looking out at the Eiffel Tower. He explained to us that at some stage, they were going to re-establish the link between selling prices and production costs. This was completely surreal. We could hardly believe what we heard. A few days later we left for Moscow to visit the Duma, to explain to the members of the Defence Committee there that as Germany was in the process of reuniting, they must accept the fact and understand that East Germany would be joining NATO, and that they couldn't object as it would make no sense to do so. That was pretty hard for them to swallow. And we were there for it all.

It was then that we began to believe in the birth of a new international order, based on the rule of law. We were possibly going to live in a peaceful world. Unfortunately, we were soon disabused. The Yugoslav crisis and the break up of Yugoslavia occurred and there was violence and atrocity at the very heart of Europe – then, shortly afterwards, came the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein.

It was then no doubt that Europeans understood that they could not count forever on their American allies to settle their problems. We needed military capabilities that would enable us at least to solve our own European differences. We waited for at least two years during the Yugoslav crisis for the Americans to make up their minds to come to our assistance, during which time our UN blue berets were humiliated in various Yugoslav provinces.

We took ourselves in hand, equipped ourselves with a few tools of the trade: a satellite centre, a headquarters, some basic instruments of European military decision-making. At that time too, we missed several opportunities, Jan has just mentioned Dubrovnik.

I want also to mention the Albanian crisis. The opportunity for Europe to make use of WEU to settle the Albanian question under its own banner was presented to it on a plate. It did not occur to our Ministers at the time for one moment that this was possible, while we in the Assembly never doubted it. If things had worked out that way the whole process of building a European defence might have been done at a different rate, had a completely different complexion and been of a different scale of effectiveness.

The years have passed and we now live in a different world marked by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States and 11 March 2003 in Madrid. In this world of terrorism the distinction between our countries' internal and external security has become blurred. Here too we face problems, in particular the major divergences of views not only between Washington and ourselves on how to tackle the crisis, but also unfortunately among European states themselves.

The result, as we know, was the decision to invade Iraq, leading to grave instability, which in my view has only highlighted the major differences between the European and American perceptions of security. Of course we are all firmly pro-Atlanticist and we are all convinced that the Atlantic Alliance is an asset to the process of building Europe. There can be no doubt that we share the same values. Often, however, we differ in our analyses.

The real difference between the United States' current perception of security and that of Europe is that the US continues to see security essentially in terms of a balance of power, whereas we Europeans are perhaps more strongly aware that



security is a matter of conviction on the part of peoples and of resolving the problems at the root of global instability.

Charles Goerens mentioned problems of cooperation and development. Charles, you were fortunate enough to combine the functions of Defence Minister and Minister for Cooperation and Development and therefore particularly well placed to understand this major difference and to put it over to us at the time.

Today the main cause of global insecurity is the extreme poverty of some regions of the world, as compared with our own, as we are regularly reminded by Kofi Annan's reports. Indeed it will be recalled at the forthcoming United Nations Millennium plus Five General Assembly that the main cause of instability in the world today is no longer the risk of inter-state conflict or war; it is primarily the extreme poverty in whole regions of the south and the resulting tensions between north and south. The greatest threat in my view will come from the pressure of migration, which is likely to occur on an unprecedented scale in the coming decades, and where what we see today is but the tip of an iceberg.

These, then, are new challenges facing European security policy which, if it is to succeed, will have to take a much broader view than it did in the past, for instance during the cold war. We will need not only to adopt economic and security measures, but also to engage in far-reaching development policies and extensive dialogue and diplomacy, in particular between north and south.

This is why there was a strong belief these past few years in Europe and in Belgium no doubt in particular, that a federal model was the answer. However, following the recent referendums I have the feeling that this is a utopian dream which it will be very hard to realise. Europe could, perhaps, move forward a bit faster if it were more broadly open to an intergovernmental approach. What counts for making progress is not the institutional form of a project but the result, in other words whether it achieves the aims we set ourselves. If the quickest way to achieve an objective is an intergovernmental approach, then why not? If we can achieve it by means of a federal model, then so much the better, but this is not necessarily the only solution.

Hence, our problem will be precisely to make that choice. This was the question I was faced with during the few months of my short Presidency.

The first point is that once the process of ratifying the Constitutional Treaty had started, some people thought they could denounce the modified Brussels Treaty even before the Constitutional Treaty had been ratified by all the parliaments.

I am very proud and happy to have contributed to preventing some WEU member states from continuing down that road. I did so together with my immediate predecessors who faced the same problem, in particular Marcel Glesener and, of

course, Jan Dirk Blaauw. I am happy, Jan Dirk, that it was possible to dissuade the Dutch authorities from going through with such a policy, which would have been suicidal. I had the privilege of talking directly to Minister Bot, which I think helped avert this disastrous scenario.

Today we could perhaps take the modified Brussels Treaty as the basis for pursuing a European defence policy. We all know that this was not possible under the Nice Treaty, which does not allow any form of enhanced political cooperation in the field of defence. If we wish to make headway in this area, we can only do so on the basis of the modified Brussels Treaty. If the various national authorities could be made to realise this things might perhaps go better and faster.

The second point which many of you have already raised more eloquently than I could concerns the need for an interparliamentary assembly composed of representatives of the national parliaments, in order to deal with these matters.

Together with you and in dialogue with the European Parliament I spent months and years looking for a compromise solution. In my view the best solution would have been to maintain and further develop the WEU Assembly. This is vitally necessary for the future generations for whom we are working now. Europe finds itself in a crisis at the worst possible moment, with China and India beginning to emerge as true world powers in the economic, political and diplomatic spheres. This is unfortunately also the moment that public opinion in many of our countries has chosen to block the process of European integration.

Nevertheless, like Jean-Marie Caro, I am convinced that we need to dig in our heels and continue to fight for this best possible cause. This is what I wish you for the next 50 years.

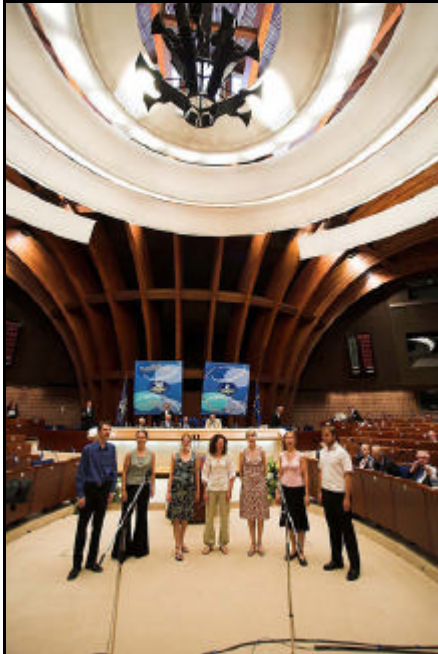
THE PRESIDENT (Translation) – I had intended to close the sitting with a few words but as time is getting on and Mrs Keller, the Mayor of Strasbourg, is expecting us any minute at the Palais de Rohan, I shall not do so. What I intended to say has largely been said by the honorary presidents and Group Chairmen and especially by Mr De Decker whom I thank once again for being with us.

In any event, I find myself entirely in agreement with him. I am convinced we are living through a crucial moment of the Assembly's history. I mean in terms of the future evolution of political scrutiny of the European Security and Defence Policy.

*(The speaker continued in English.)*

Let me conclude by thanking all of you who have been present here until this moment. Let me thank all the staff and personnel of the WEU, headed by our Secretary-General, Mr Colin Cameron. Let us give them all a round of applause – they really deserve it. As a lot of colleagues have said, Colin Cameron handles his staff in

an exemplary fashion, together with Dr Burchard and other senior staff members. I also thank all the interpreters – not only those of the WEU, but those who are behind the scenes. They are doing some overtime. I give you all special thanks for your interpreting.



**Singers from the Strasbourg School of Music singing a multilingual version of “Happy Birthday” to the WEU Assembly**

Last but not least, before I give the floor to the choir from the Strasbourg School of Music. I must hand over the Assembly tie and book to my colleague, Zoltán Szabó from Hungary, who has assisted me with the Presidency here.

So, colleagues, we will now listen to the choir. Afterwards, you are all kindly invited to the Palais de Rohan.

I invite all former Presidents to the rostrum for an official photograph.

*(Applause)*

*(Performance by the Strasbourg School of Music)*

*The special sitting was closed at 19. 15.*

## Presidents of the Assembly

Mr	John MACLAY	United Kingdom	1955-57
Sir	James HUTCHISON	United Kingdom	1957-59
MM	Vittorio BADINI CONFALONIERI	Italy	1959-61 1966-69
	Arthur CONTE	France	1961-62
	Carlo SCHMID	Federal Republic of Germany	1963-66
	Georges HOUSIAUX	Belgium	1969-72
Sir	John PEEL	United Kingdom	1972-74
MM	Edmond NESSLER	France	1974-77
	Kai-Uwe von HASSEL	Federal Republic of Germany	1977-80
	Fred MULLEY	United Kingdom	1980-83
	Alfredo de POI	Italy	1983-84
	Lucien PIGNION	France ( <i>ad interim</i> )	1984
	Jean-Marie CARO	France	1984-87
	Charles GOERENS	Luxembourg	1987-90
	Robert PONTILLON	France	1990-92
	Giuseppe SINESIO	Italy ( <i>ad interim</i> )	1992
	Hartmut SOELL	Germany	1992-93
Sir	Dudley SMITH	United Kingdom	1993-96
MM	Lluís Maria de PUIG	Spain	1997-99
	Klaus BÜHLER	Germany	2000-02
	Jan Dirk BLAAUW	Netherlands	2003
	Marcel GLESENER	Luxembourg ( <i>ad interim</i> )	2003
	Armand De DECKER	Belgium	2003-04
	Marcel GLESENER	Luxembourg ( <i>ad interim</i> )	2004-04
	Stef GORIS	Belgium	2004-

## **CELEBRATION TO MARK THE 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST SITTING OF THE ASSEMBLY**

**Strasbourg, Palais de l'Europe, Thursday 23 June 2005**

14.30            *Presentation of the book written and published by the Assembly  
(first floor landing):*

- "The European Defence Debate 1955-2005"

15.00            *Plenary Session of the Council of Europe Parliamentary  
Assembly*

- Address by Jaap DE HOOP SCHEFFER, Secretary-General of  
NATO and Chairman of the North Atlantic Council (former  
Member of the Assembly)

- Debate on "Democratic oversight of the security sector in  
member states", Rapporteur: Lluís Maria DE PUIG (former  
President of the Assembly)

17.15            *Prélude musicale*

*Formal Ceremony:*

Chaired and introduced by Stef GORIS, President of the  
Assembly of WEU, the Interparliamentary European Security  
and Defence Assembly

Welcome by René VAN DER LINDEN, President of the Council  
of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (Member of the Assembly)

Addresses by:

Jaap DE HOOP SCHEFFER, Secretary-General of NATO  
(former Member of the Assembly)

Terry DAVIS, Secretary-General of the Council of Europe  
(former Member of the Assembly)

Remarks by the Leaders of the Political Groups:

Marcel GLESENER, Federated Group of Christian Democrats  
and European Democrats

Mike HANCOCK, Liberal Group

Jean-Pierre MASSERET, Socialist Group

Contributions from Honorary Presidents of the Assembly:

Jean-Marie CARO (1984-1987)

Charles GOERENS (1987-1990)  
Hartmut SOELL (1992-1993)  
Sir Dudley SMITH (1993-1996)  
Lluís Maria de PUIG (1997-1999)  
Klaus BÜHLER (2000-2002)  
Jan Dirk BLAAUW (2003)  
Armand DE DECKER (2003-2004), Minister for  
Development Cooperation, Belgium

18.15 *Envoi musical*

18.45 Transport from the Palais de l'Europe to the Palais Rohan

19.30 "Birthday Party" hosted by the Mayor of Strasbourg, Senator Fabienne KELLER, Senator Philippe RICHERT, President of the Conseil général of the Bas-Rhin and Mr Robert GROSSMANN, President of the Urban Community of Strasbourg (by invitation)



<http://assembly.weu.int>

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