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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM IN THE PROVISIONAL
AGENDA OF THE FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

OBSERVER STATUS FOR THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Letter dated 6 July 1989 from the Permanent Representatives
of Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal to the
United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from our Governments and further to a decision by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, we are writing to request, in accordance with rule 13 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion of an item entitled "Observer status for the Council of Europe in the General Assembly" in the provisional agenda of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure, an explanatory memorandum is annexed to this letter.

(Signed) Jean FEYDER
Permanent Representative of
Luxembourg to the United Nations

(Signed) Adriaan JACOBVITS DE SZEGED
Permanent Representative of the Netherlands
to the United Nations

(Signed) Tom VRAALSEN
Permanent Representative of
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(Signed) Fernando José REINO
Permanent Representative of Portugal
to the United Nations

Explanatory memorandum

1. The Council of Europe was set up on 5 May 1949 with the aim of achieving a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realizing the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress (art. 1 of the statute). Every member of the Council of Europe must accept the principles of the rule of law and of the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms (art. 3). The member States are all pluralist parliamentary democracies.
2. The Council of Europe now has 23 member States: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
3. The Council of Europe has two main organs served by a common secretariat: the Committee of Ministers, whose members are the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the member countries, and the Parliamentary Assembly, whose members are parliamentarians appointed by their national parliaments from among their own members.
4. The Council of Europe's scope of activities covers all areas of international co-operation with the exception of national defence. Its work may lead to joint action, to recommendations or to international conventions to be concluded by member States. The current programme of intergovernmental co-operation covers the following fields: human rights and fundamental freedoms; media in a democratic society; social and socio-economic problems; education, culture and sport; youth; health; heritage and environment; local and regional government; and legal co-operation.
5. The conventions concluded within the Council of Europe, which number more than a hundred, include:
 - (a) The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950, which not only lists the rights guaranteed but also provides for a collective judicial control through proceedings before a European Commission and a Court of Human Rights on the basis of inter-State or individual applications, leading to binding decisions;
 - (b) The European Social Charter of 18 October 1961, which lists fundamental social and economic rights and lays down procedures for supervising the Contracting Parties' compliance with its requirements on the basis of periodical government reports subjected to the scrutiny of independent experts, parliamentarians and government experts;
 - (c) The European Cultural Convention of 19 December 1954, which provides the framework for co-operation in the fields of culture, education, sport and youth; it brings together all member States of the Council of Europe and others invited to accede to it, namely the Holy See and Yugoslavia, as well as Hungary and Poland.

6. According to the organization's statute, participation in the Council of Europe shall not affect the collaboration of its members in the work of the United Nations and of other international organizations. Relations between the Council of Europe and the United Nations have developed on the basis of an agreement concluded by the Secretaries-General in 1951 and updated in 1971. The agreement provides for communication and exchanges of information between the two secretariats and for invitations to the organizations' respective meetings. Representatives of the secretariat of the Council of Europe take part as observers in the meetings of the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women, the International Law Commission and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

7. The priority objective of the Council of Europe is to promote co-operation in Europe. However, as the Committee of Ministers asserted on 5 May 1989, the date of the Council's fortieth anniversary, the organization intends to remain open to the world on account both of the growing interdependence of international relations and of the universality of its values and principles. It will consolidate its ties of friendship with the other democracies in the world and pay attention to events in the world where its principles and ideals are being either violated or promoted.

8. The Parliamentary Assembly accordingly maintains close relations with parliamentary democracies throughout the world, particularly through the Strasbourg Conference on Parliamentary Democracy.

9. In 1988, on a proposal by the Parliamentary Assembly and in co-operation with the European Community, the Council of Europe conducted a broad European campaign to promote public awareness of North-South interdependence and solidarity, which led to the adoption, at a conference of parliamentarians and non-governmental organizations on 3 June 1988, of the Madrid Appeal for action on North-South solidarity.

10. More recently, the Council of Europe has also developed contacts and growing co-operation with Eastern European countries, in the spirit of its statutory principles and of the objectives of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), particularly in its human dimension and in the fields of culture and education.
