



NATO Parliamentary Assembly  
Assemblée parlementaire de l'OTAN

Ref:

18 November 2005

**TO SECRETARIES OF DELEGATION FOR CIRCULATION TO  
HEADS OF MEMBER DELEGATIONS, TO MEMBERS OF THE BUREAU AND  
TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN**

Dear Member,

During the Session in Copenhagen, the Standing Committee agreed to establish a small, but representative Working Group on Assembly Reform.

The members of this group are: M. Daniel Bacquelaine (Belgium), Senator Pierre Claude Nolin (Canada), Mr Vahit Erdem (Turkey), and Senator Giovanni Lorenzo Forcieri (Italy) (who Mr Koenders has asked to replace him as the representative of the Assembly's Socialist Group).

I have attached document 232 SC 05 E on this Working Group which was presented to the Standing Committee on Monday 14 November. As you can see, the intention is to examine all aspects of the Assembly's internal workings ranging from improving overall co-ordination, mandates, and session structure, to external issues such as heightening the Assembly's profile and strengthening ties with the North Atlantic Council.

We would like to begin this review by asking the heads of delegation and Committee Chairmen to let us know of their ideas and thoughts on these or indeed any other aspect of the Assembly's work. The goal is to reappraise all aspects of the Assembly to ensure that it continues to fulfil its goals, meet its members' requirements, and maintains maximum relevance and profile.

I would therefore be grateful if you could provide us with your views and proposals on any aspect of the Assembly work before the end of the year and certainly no later than Monday 9 January 2006. This will provide some time for the Working Group to collate and evaluate all the proposals before it meets during the context of the February meetings in Brussels. The Working Group will present its findings and recommendations at the Standing Committee at in Gdynia on 25 March 2006.

If you have any queries on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes,

Simon Lunn

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The Secretary General – Le Secrétaire général

232 SC 05 E  
Original: English

**STANDING  
COMMITTEE**



**NATO Parliamentary Assembly**

**DRAFT ON THE WORKING GROUP ON  
ASSEMBLY REFORM**

1. During a meeting of the Bureau on 12 November, the Assembly's President expressed his concern about the future of the Assembly. In brief, he was concerned that the high level of activities generated little impact; Assembly reports, though of high quality, had a low profile and negligible influence; and although the Assembly was the foremost of the inter-parliamentary assemblies, the overall effect of its work was insufficient in terms of both public opinion and governmental awareness.
2. He also felt that the Assembly could play a more significant role in redressing dwindling public support for the Alliance, and in helping to arrest declining spending on defence. At the same time, the Assembly could play a key role in remedying NATO's "democratic deficit".
3. Furthermore, while NATO had over the last few years embarked on a programme of transformation in response to the new strategic environment, it was doubly appropriate as the Assembly reached its 50th year, that it too reappraised its role and structures in order to retain its relevance, improve its impact and avoid the slow decline suffered by certain other inter-parliamentary assemblies.
4. The President then outlined several proposals relating to both the internal working of the Assembly and its outreach. The Bureau spent some time "brainstorming" and refining the President's proposals and then agreed that the appropriate way to proceed would be to create a small Working Group within the Bureau to refine and elaborate them further. The Working Group's conclusions and recommendations could then be put forward at the earliest opportunity for consideration by the Standing Committee. (Poland in March).
5. The proposals put forward were:

#### **A INTERNAL WORKING OF THE ASSEMBLY**

1. **To investigate how to achieve a better focus and prioritization in Committee reports and activities.**

Better co-ordination of the Assembly's work has already been set in motion at the President's initiative with a meeting of the Bureau and the Committee Chairmen which took place on Friday 11 November in order to review plans for reports and meetings in 2006. This meeting – the first of its kind for the Assembly – was along the lines of a "Conference of Chairmen" used by some parliaments to harmonize the work of national parliamentary committees. The meeting's intention was to identify and avoid any possible clashes, duplication, and gaps in coverage. Following the Committee meetings, an up-dated list of subjects and planned activities will be presented to the Standing Committee for its consideration.

Participants were agreed on the utility of the meeting, and consideration should be given to how this mechanism could be institutionalized including possible changes to the Rules of Procedure to permit joint means of selecting priorities and screening proposals for subjects to be addressed.

2. **Review the duration of mandates of the Assembly President and Vice-Presidents [209 SC 05 E]**

Following the proposal of Senator Forcieri, the duration of mandates is already under consideration by the Standing Committee. Some members of the Bureau felt that longer mandates – perhaps three years - for the President and the Vice-Presidents could provide more continuity of direction. (It was stressed that any changes would not affect current incumbents and would only be made effective after the existing mandates had expired. It was also agreed that the Treasurer's mandate was necessarily longer than that of the other members of the Bureau.)

**3. Review of the structure of the plenary sessions**

The structure of Assembly sessions has changed over the years but not profoundly, in large part due to their logistic complexity. However, suggestions in the Bureau included "splitting" the annual session plenary so that the opening ceremony took place on the first working day with the key guest speakers, and votes on amendments etc on the last day. Another idea was to conclude with the excursion so that participants were not compelled to devote so much time to sessions.

Any change in session structure must take account of certain practical considerations, but it was agreed to look at all the possibilities and their implications in detail.

**B OUTREACH**

**1. Consider conducting a bipartisan, transatlantic "wise-men's" study of the future of NATO (role, relevance, structure, funding, organization etc.)**

The President - with the support of several delegation heads and the unanimous agreement of the Conservative, Christian Democratic and Associates Group - suggested that a "high-level" study conducted under the auspices of several Bureau members and Committee officers would be a significant and timely contribution to debate about NATO's future roles and organization. This could also contribute to increasing the Assembly's profile.

**2. Strengthened contacts with the North Atlantic Council**

Following the very successful meeting between the permanent representatives to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and the Assembly during the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Session, Assembly members and several NAC representatives have proposed holding such meetings on a more regular basis. One option put forward, for instance, was that permanent representatives could be invited to the Annual Sessions, and Foreign Ministers to the spring sessions (prior to the NAC Ministerials).

The President has already issued an invitation to the NAC to participate in a joint meeting at the 2006 Paris spring session, and the Working Group will examine the implications of inviting the NAC to sessions on a more frequent basis.

**3. Additional Ideas and Proposals**

Another suggestion was to examine whether there was a need to create a charter for the Assembly to establish its role *vis-à-vis* NATO and as a *de jure* international organization, and if so, how might this be achieved.

A further idea was to study the Assembly's role *vis-à-vis* national parliaments and whether there was scope for more interaction, including for instance a regular conference of the Speakers of parliaments.

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