

Statement by Robert Schuman (London, 5 May 1949)

Caption: On 5 May 1949, at the signing of the Statute of the Council of Europe in London, the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman calls for a revival of the European spirit and hails the dawn of new political cooperation in Europe.

Source: Archives historiques du Conseil de l'Europe - Historical Archives of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg. Conference for the establishment of a Council of Europe, 0120.

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URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement_by_robert_schuman_london_5_may_1949-en-97217713-8cb6-4679-a6ce-8bd77660bd17.html

Publication date: 14/05/2013

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There have been - and still are - learned disputes as to the geographical bounds of Europe. But Europe cannot possibly wait for definition, for the end of that controversy; she does, in fact, define her own bounds by the will of her peoples.

At grips with the needs of her material and moral recovery, yearning for peace and security, Europe is being built on reality, on a foundation of cultural affinities and by the placing in common of her resources.

Marshall Aid has had a decisive effect in stimulating the economic organisation of the European countries. And their common defence has been the subject of recent treaties, a safeguard of the freedom and the independence of the participating nations.

Today we are laying the foundations of a spiritual and political co-operation from which there will arise the European spirit, the promise of a broad and lasting supranational union.

It is not the aim of this union to weaken national ties, nor will that be its consequence. The distinctive and original contribution which the several member countries will make to their common purpose will, on the contrary, furnish the essential material of the discussions of our European association and will make it possible to reconcile those dynamic qualities that are necessary with the requirements of a prudent realism.

We have no intention of belying our own past nor of impairing the strength of our individual aspirations; what we will do is to co-ordinate them with the scope of a momentous common task.

There is no better way of serving one's country than to secure, in peace and understanding, the friendly aid of other countries, uniting for the common weal; the benefits derived will endure by virtue of the very fact that they are common to all. Countries, like individuals, are created to understand and help one another. The gracious welcome which we have received from their Majesties the King and Queen, and which we shall always gratefully remember, is a testimony that these sentiments are shared by the whole British Commonwealth as well as the United Kingdom Government.

The seat of our organisation is going to be on French soil. France is grateful for this, your choice, and deems it a mark of honour and esteem. She has always been proud of her pioneer tradition. Our exponents of revolution conveyed beyond our frontiers the new message of freedom, which became the common property of mankind today. In their zeal they did not always contrive to keep within the bounds of pacific methods. We will not be subject to any such temptation. Example and persuasion will be the only means that we shall employ in an undertaking which will be wholly pacific and constructive. We shall be a threat to no one by associating for mutual assistance, but we are at the same time serving Europe as a whole by creating the nucleus of a new Europe, regenerated by common trials and conscious of its permanent civilising mission.