5. STATEMENT BY MR GYULA HORN

The PRESIDENT.- We now have the pleasure of hearing a statement by Mr Gyula Horn, Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary. After his statement, the Prime Minister has kindly agreed to take questions from the floor.

Mr Prime Minister, very dear friend, it is a great honour for me and for our Assembly to welcome you in our midst, representing as you do the first country among the new democracies in central and eastern Europe to have joined our Council in 1990.

From that moment, Hungary has made regular and irreversible progress, thus consolidating a democratic society where the values which the Council of Europe stands for are an unquestionable reality. That is why, when I happened to visit you in Budapest a few months ago I could sincerely state that I had not come to discuss or investigate Hungarian problems but rather to see how we could together with our Hungarian brothers, solve the problems of Europe and build together our common European future.

Your country started to embrace economic and political reform long before most other countries in the region, and it is with great pleasure that I want to recognise in you, Mr Prime Minister, one of the key master architects of Hungary’s contemporary history. We acknowledge the changes which brought your people from totalitarian rule into pluralism, freedom and democracy.

Certainly this does not mean that Hungary’s domestic problems are settled - far from it. But many of them are much more similar to the ones which we face in any other European state. It will be easier to tackle them within a joint strategy decided and conducted together by all of us.

Mr Prime Minister, we follow with great interest the new risks and challenges which you are facing. Indeed, we are very deeply impressed with the bold economic stabilisation programme on which your country embarked last month with determination and courage. The path is far from easy, and Hungary will no doubt go through a painful period of sacrifices.

We are confident, however, that your people under your leadership will tackle these problems successfully and come out victorious in the end.

Mr Horn, as I welcome you to our Assembly I want to stress the role that you have played in what Europe has become in recent years. You are not only a good democrat and a great Hungarian, you are also a very prominent European. It is my pleasure to repeat in front of our colleagues what I said in Budapest at a time when some were treating you in an unfair and unjustified way. Let me say formally that your contribution to a free and democratic Hungary has been outstanding but your role in the changes undergone by Europe at large has not been less important, and certainly not easier. The picture of yourself standing close to Mr Mock, cutting the barbed wire of the Iron Curtain between east and west will always remain in our minds and in our gratitude, as will remain the symbol of your courage which gained you the "Prix Charlemagne" and general recognition all over Europe.
It is thus to that friend to whom I want to appeal on an issue which we consider both with concern and with hope. I mean the treaty to be signed between Hungary and Romania, following what you already did with another neighbour of yours, Slovakia. These bilateral agreements are essential for the consolidation of stability in a part of our continent - in a part of our project - where stability is to be regarded as a very high priority.

The treaty between Hungary and Romania cannot be only a matter of "national minorities", but it is to be regarded also as an instrument to make progress on that controversial issue. Both Romania and Hungary have signed at the very first moment our Council of Europe Framework Convention and both have expressed support for our Assembly doctrine on such a delicate issue. I want to add in this respect my confidence in you and in your Romanian partners to find means and ways, satisfactory to us, but even more satisfactory to the men and women of both countries and, above all, positive for the national minorities which we endeavour to protect.

Let me take this opportunity to inform our Assembly that, just a few days ago, the Hungarian parliament authorised the ratification of our charter for minority and regional languages. Let me congratulate you as Hungary becomes thus one of the pioneer Council of Europe member states to have ratified such an essential instrument for the defence of the rights of minorities.

Dear Prime Minister, we much admire your country's exemplary achievement in establishing a stable democratic society in spite of the social and economic difficulties entailed by the transition process.

In the face of all the challenges still facing Hungary there can be no other way but forward, and no approach other than that of strong perseverance until we reach our goal. It must be our common mission and vision to see the transition through to its successful conclusion and to make this entire continent of ours safe for democracy and human rights, prospering from trade and co-operation. Your country is in the forefront of those efforts.

Mr Prime Minister, Hungarian involvement in the Council of Europe has been growing and consolidating, and even more as regards your work in our Parliamentary Assembly. One more concrete initiative is the Conference of Speakers of our member states' parliaments which we are preparing together and which will take place in Budapest from 27 to 29 May 1996.

The Council of Europe and our Assembly stand fully and firmly behind you and will give you our firm support also in your efforts to join all other institutions of the European project where your presence and full participation is both a right which you have and an urgent necessity for all of us and for European construction at large.

Mr Horn, you are welcome; the floor is yours.
Nations entitled "Our common future". The way in which we handle these problems will have great impact on today's and tomorrow's society.

Welfare state measures have been threatened during the last 10-15 years. Some of the reasons are the fiscal crisis and new directions of public policies, which seem to create more difficult relations between "givers and receivers" of these systems. But within the frame of youth policy, another important dimension of the crisis is that it has become evident that the welfare state measures were developed by male trade unions just before and after World War II. Their frames of reference did not cover modern realities of age and gender structures. The choice of European countries will be to develop further the lack of confidence in welfare among young boys and girls and then to cover the costs, or to find reasonable ways to solve some crucial problems. Towards the year 2000 the very urgent agenda consists of an unemployment problem and a housing problem among young adults. As a welfare state problem, the question is how to give social rights to somebody who has not got a welfare ticket in the labour market.

In the years to come, most European countries will be multicultural in the sense that they will have immigrants and refugees staying permanently in their country. It is important to recognise the multicultural concept, especially in relation to immigrant children and youth. We have to promote intercultural learning in schools and to encourage youth organisations and youth services to be engaged in integrating youth immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities in their work to promote mutual understanding.

Together with the basic needs such as education and work, cultural activities and leisure time facilities are important conditions in keeping young people interested in society. One of our main objectives in a future youth policy is participation in society. Commercial leisure time activities do not promote this - on the contrary. They prefer their customers to be passive consumers. Participation is a crucial concept in our youth policy. Participation is quite simply the future of democracy.

We have during these days here in Oslo the opportunity to discuss a common European build-up of a society for young people, focused on their equality, solidarity, participation and responsibility.

It requires certain qualifications which I do hope those of us who are politicians will be able to prove that we have:

The will to cooperate
Creativity
Courage
Imagination

Thank you for your attention.