Mr HADJIDEMETRIOU (Cyprus).— Unquestionably the report by Mr Woltjer is an interesting and a comprehensive one. At the same time it obviously has a vision about the European future in general.

The main issue before us today is the European achievements for a new Europe, a Europe that is seeking greater unity in social and economic spheres, but at the same time in areas of culture, in politics in foreign policy and security.

The role of the Council of Europe in these spheres of interest has been proved to be enormous. We have to go back to the period immediately after the second world war and recall that the organisation which was to establish and promote European unity was the Council of Europe. The Council has a clear political character and has therefore considered that it should become a political authority for all the western European countries. Democracy, human rights, social rights, culture, education, science, legal affairs were the main fields of activities of the Council of Europe. What was happening in the Council of Europe at that time was greatly influenced by the deep division existing in the heart of Europe and the confrontation between the two political systems existing at that time. The political unification which the Council of Europe was promoting had not succeeded at that time.

The ambitions for political unification failed mainly because of the differences existing among the European governments. The European leaders had at that time other priorities. They were promoting a new approach — that of co-operation on vital economic issues. The first achievement of these efforts was the coal and steel agreement, which eventually, through a method of small steps, brought the first six European states to sign the Treaty of Rome. The last stage of this procedure and of this evolution is the economic and monetary union of the fifteen member states of the European Union, which finally led to the Amsterdam Summit. We reach now a new crucial point. The promotion of economic unification has proved to be inadequate to give an answer to the needs and the problems of the people of Cyprus. The economic expansion and the common market did not help Europe to face political problems such as that of Yugoslavia or further such contemporary international problems as that of globalisation. The need for political approaches re-emerged in the European arena. And the Council of Europe went towards a new dimension, first from its ability to accept the new democracies that emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union, and secondly from what was achieved in the political field throughout the fifty years of its existence.

The Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly produced a huge amount of work in areas that the European Union was not in a position to deal with for the time being. If, finally, the EU decides to join the Council of Europe this will prove very important for the whole of Europe. The EU will not be obliged to look into various issues from the very beginning, especially those on which the Council of Europe succeeded in gaining an expertise through many years of experience. Furthermore, what has been achieved here in the Council of Europe has the approval of all European governments and national parliaments. This is very important for Europe, but especially for the EU. The people of Europe, through their national parliaments, will have the opportunity to experience a deeper involvement in European developments. Undeniably the Council of Europe can contribute greatly to the democratisation of the EU. Common foreign and security policy has to be based on
principles respected by the Council of Europe and upon the respect of human rights and
democratic values that abide by the international law, and solidarity between member
countries, protection of the national and European orders and peaceful settlement of various
problems.

Coming from a small island in the eastern Mediterranean, I can say that we are in a
position to contribute to the enlargement of the Union within the framework of the
Amsterdam Agreement and the London European Conference. Cyprus, being a country with
a long history and close connection with Europe and the Middle East will be able to
contribute to historical, cultural, political and economic aspects, leading to a closer
relationship between Europe and the Middle East.

At the same time, being at the eastern frontier of Europe, Cyprus can play an
important role for European security, so as to block drug trafficking and illegal immigration
while offering protection from other vital issues. Cyprus a member state of the Council of
Europe since 1961, has a strong belief in the European institutions such as the Council of
Europe and the EU in the spirit of law, order, peace and stability that they represent.