

*20.

PROTECTION OF CONSUMERS' ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTERESTS
Assembly Recommendation 947
(CM(83)83)

The Representative of the United Kingdom referring to the draft reply to Assembly Recommendation 947 set out in CM(83)83, said that the last part of the first sentence in paragraph 5 could be rearranged to give more emphasis to the participation of representatives of consumer associations. She suggested the following wording:

"... The Committee of Ministers is of the opinion that such a meeting could be useful for the purpose of defining the objectives of consumer organisations only if the participation of the representatives of consumer associations from all member States were assured and if it were to be thoroughly prepared."

Decisions

The Deputies adopted the following reply to Assembly Recommendation 947:

"1. The Committee of Ministers has examined Assembly Recommendation 947 on the protection of consumers' economic and social interests and wishes to formulate the following observations:

2. Being aware of the fact that the Council of Europe was the first international intergovernmental organisation in Europe to have initiated action at intergovernmental level with a view to protecting the socio-economic interests of consumers, the Committee of Ministers agrees with the view expressed by the Assembly in Recommendation 947 that the Council of Europe has a specific part to play in the defining of means to further the protection of consumers' economic and social interests by virtue of its avowed mission to defend and protect the individual.

3. The Committee of Ministers is also aware of the fact that the means at the disposal of the Council of Europe to implement effectively intergovernmental work covering all aspects of consumer protection are limited. With this in mind and in order to avoid duplication of work with that of other international organisations and institutions (notably the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Community) the Committee of Ministers believes that a careful selection should be made from among the proposals set out in paragraph 12(a) of Recommendation 947.

4. The Committee of Ministers is of the opinion that the intergovernmental work to be carried out by the Council of Europe in the coming years could usefully be concentrated on the following proposals made by the Assembly:

- a. vulnerable social groups (activity for which a select committee of experts has already been set up);
- b. public services; and,
- c. redress of damage suffered.

As regards (b) above, a proposal has been made by the CAHCO to the Committee of Ministers to include an activity in the Programme of Intergovernmental Activities for 1984 entitled 'information and protection of consumers as users of public transport'. This proposal will be examined by the Ministers' Deputies within the framework of their discussions on the Budget and Programme of Intergovernmental Activities for 1984 towards the end of 1983.

5. As regards the proposal made by the Assembly in paragraph 12(b) of Recommendation 947 concerning the organisation of a meeting of representatives of consumer organisations in order to compare their strategies and to seek ways of making it easier for such organisations to reach all consumers, particularly those hardest hit by the economic crisis, the Committee of Ministers is of the opinion that such a meeting could be useful for the purpose of defining the objectives of consumer organisations only if the participation of the representatives of consumer associations from all member States were assured and if it were to be thoroughly prepared. Furthermore it believes that the main theme of discussion of such a meeting should be judiciously chosen in consultation with consumer associations.

6. As regards the proposal made by the Assembly in paragraph 12(c) of Recommendation 947, to convene a meeting of Ministers responsible for consumer protection, the Committee of Ministers believes that it is too early to envisage such a conference; the question could be reconsidered at a later stage, *inter alia* in the light of the outcome of the meeting of consumer associations mentioned in paragraph 12(b) of Assembly Recommendation 947."