



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 November 1985

I enclose a copy of a letter to the Prime Minister from the Prime Minister of The Netherlands proposing that the European Council in Luxembourg should decide to reduce the number of European Councils held each year to two.

MP I should be grateful for a draft reply making clear the Prime Minister's enthusiastic support for this proposal.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to David Williamson (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

Colin Budd Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

e

oo



ROYAL NETHERLANDS EMBASSY

② CCF
Prime Minister
Mr. Lubbers proposes that
the Luxembourg Council
agree to reduce
European Councils to

London, November 26, 1985

two per year.

MB

CDP
26/ki

Dear Prime Minister

Acting upon instructions received from my authorities I have the honour to present to you the English version of a letter which Mr. R.F. Lubbers, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, has addressed to the Prime Minister of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg concerning the forthcoming European Council.

Yours sincerely

J.L.R. Huydecoper

The Right Honourable
Margaret Thatcher, M.P.
Prime Minister

I am writing this letter in the hope that, during the European Council Meeting in Luxembourg on 3 and 4 December 1985, the Council will be able to agree on the number of sessions it should hold. As our Ministers for Foreign Affairs have found, there is a large measure of agreement on the desirability of reducing the number of sessions from three to two each year, i.e. one per Presidency. This would also be in accordance with the recommendations of the Dooge report. Naturally it would remain possible, just as it is now, to organise a special meeting of the European Council if circumstances so required. I am very keen to see a decision along these lines made during the forthcoming European Council Meeting, so that the new arrangements can enter into force at the beginning of 1986.

I should like to emphasize that my wish to reduce the number of sessions is not motivated by any desire to lessen the role played by the European Council. On the contrary, this step is tended to enhance the Council's role. Since the European Council was formalised during the Conference of Heads of Government in December 1974 in Paris, it has been shown that the Council can play an important part in initiating and directing the growth of European unity and in taking action to reconcile and mediate when decision-making in the organs of the European Community is in danger of coming to a halt.

Nonetheless, the excessive number of sessions has resulted in a certain erosion of the Council's ability to operate effectively. I also believe that we should take advantage of the opportunity which we will have in Luxembourg to improve the operation of the Council by effecting preparations in a more organised fashion. I should like to propose, for example, that participants should not be permitted to raise new topics or distribute new documents or declarations after the President has finalised the annotated agenda for the Council. The conclusions drawn by the President at the end of the session should also as a rule be based on the agenda and should relate solely to matters discussed by the heads of State and of Government.

Lastly, we might perhaps devote some attention to the size of delegations. Now that a larger number of Member States will be participating in these sessions, there is all the more reason to reduce the total number of officials involved in them. I have the impression that there is a large measure of agreement among participants in the European Council with regard to the view that the size of civil service delegations could be substantially reduced without damage.

I have forwarded the text of this letter also to the other Members of the European Council.

