

Provisional edition

Tuesday 25 June 2019, morning

Official report of debates

Continuation of sitting No 20 of Monday 24 June 2019

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The vote is open.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment 100. Mr GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): My congratulations on this new day. In the Draft Resolution, Paragraph 10: delete the following sentence: "However in order to ensure the coherence of the organisation's internal legal framework the assembly in its decisions should continue to comply with the statute of the Council of Europe and to take into due consideration relevant decisions taken by the Committee of Ministers therefore to ensure that the Member States right and obligation to be represented and to participate in both statutory bodies of Council of Europe and so on....". I think it's very important.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Opposite opinion, Mrs. De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Well, for the ones that are still with us, this is exactly the same as the previous amendment so I'm exactly, for the same reasons, I'm against it.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The vote is open.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment n° 80, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much indeed. This is about two-thirds the way down, where it says "the steps the Council of Europe are to take into consideration the relevant decision", what we're saying is to drop out "decisions taken" and put in "opinions issued" because we feel that

In this report:

1. Speeches in English, French, German and Italian are reported in full in English.
2. Speeches in other languages are summarised from the interpretation and indicated by an asterisk (*).
3. Speeches in German and Italian are available in full on the Assembly's website.
4. The text of the amendments is available at the document centre and on the Assembly's website. Only oral amendments or oral sub-amendments are reproduced in the report of debates.
5. Corrections should be handed in at Room 1081 not later than 24 hours after the report has been published.

is a very different thing to saying, listen this is basically the relationship we have with the Statute of the Council of Europe and the decisions taken by the Council of Ministers. We, therefore, believe this tightens up this entire thing and makes it more readable and also more coherent.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Mrs. De SUTTER, against?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, because, again, we say that we "take into due consideration". So we think about it, we debate it, and we do whatever we want. Whether it is a decision, an opinion, or whatever. So I don't see the added value in changing this.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The vote is open.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment n° 81, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you. This is to do with dropping out the last major sentence after the Committee of Ministers. It actually says in it: "It assures Member's rights and obligations, and are represented to participate in both statutory bodies". I think that taken as read, we know that already. Therefore I can't see why we need this in. It's nice, but it's not actually necessary. By dropping it out, I think it tidies up the whole paragraph, makes it more readable and therefore I think makes it better. Thank you.

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Well yeah, it destroys it, so I can't agree with that.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The vote is open.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment n° 155. Mrs. SOTNYK.

Ms Olena SOTNYK (Ukraine, ALDE): Thank you.

This is a substantial amendment. The main reason why I proposed it is so that everybody could really realise that this is not the right way to deal with one particular country –I mean with Russia– to change the Rules and procedures.

If you want them to come, let them come under equal conditions. Then we will talk about challenging the credentials and decide what kind of sanctions we are ready to impose, but without any exceptions, without changing the Rules and procedures.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Opposite opinion, Mrs. De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yeah, again, this destroys this paragraph. So it makes no sense to accept this amendment.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The vote is open.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment n° 205, MR. GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): In the Draft Resolution, Paragraph 10, we propose to delete the last sentence.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Mrs De SUTTER, against the amendment?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Well, it's exactly the same proposition as the previous Amendment, so no, it makes no sense.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The vote is open.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment n° 44. Mr OMTZIGT.

Mr Pieter OMTZIGT (Netherlands, EPP/CD): Thank you, Madame President.

It's very important that we decide what rights you cannot take away.

So if your credentials are challenged we propose that your rights to elect the Secretary-General, to elect the High Commissioner, to elect the judges, cannot be taken away.

But we still should keep some way of being able to punish delegations, so we can still do it with the other rights.

So this is a sort of compromise so we keep power in our own hands, so we stay relevant as an organisation, so please support this amendment.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Against the amendment, Mrs. De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, well this is of course an important amendment as I guess we all agree but it has also been the discussion of substantive debate in the Committee.

The Committee felt that we had to go further than what is written here.

So although I have a lot of understanding for the amendment I would want to stick to the text that we proposed in the resolution and not accept the amendment.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

We had an opinion for and an opinion against.

Excuse me, I did not see, but now we have had a justification for and against and we will vote on Amendment number 44.

The ballot is open.

Excuse me, Mrs. OOMEN-RUIJTEN, you have to put the microphone on.

Is that a point of order?

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD): ...that you didn't see the one who wanted to speak against.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The vote has begun, Mrs OOMEN-RUIJTEN.

We have one speaker in favour, one against. I can't give the floor to anyone else.

You had to show more and, above all, now you have to vote.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 204.

I call Mr GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): In the Draft Resolution, Paragraph 10, replace the last sentence with the following sentence: "the members' right to vote, to speak and to be represented in the Assembly and its bodies can be suspended or withdrawn in the context of a challenge to or reconsideration of credentials, in exceptional circumstances".

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Against the amendment, Mrs. De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, well this changes, again, what we proposed in Paragraph 10, so I would not accept this.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The vote is open.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 82, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much.

I don't intend, Madam President, for your ruling to read all this out. But to say that we'd like a substantial change to paragraph 10. It's basically "utilising the Court of Human Rights, the Commission of Human Rights, the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly." Only people who are part of this and doing the job that they're meant to be doing within this session and with this organisation, sorry, can actually have their credentials ratified. So it means they have to be part of this.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, a contrary opinion on this amendment, Mrs. De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes. Well, two things. First of all, it takes the same wording as the Omtizgt amendment. And secondly, while it is obvious that credentials should be ratified before further rights can be given, so the addition doesn't fit as well. So I'm against the amendment.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The vote is open.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 96. I don't know who's defending him. Mr. GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): It's amendment number (off-mic: ninety-six) thank you very much. In the Draft Resolution, Paragraph 10 replace the last sentence with the following sentence: "The Rules of Procedure do not impinge on the rights of the assembly members to take part in the elections of judges to the European Court of Human Rights, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly."
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Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Opposing opinion on this amendment, Mrs De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Well, the same argument again for the amendments we just treated, so I'm against.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 121.

Who is defending it?

Please. Please.

Mr Eerik-Niiles KROSS (Estonia, ALDE): Yes, we would like to change the last sentence of Paragraph 10 as follows: "the members rights to vote and to speak in the Assembly shall not be suspended or withdrawn in the context of a challenge to or reconsideration of credentials". That somewhat reduces the rights that cannot be suspended, and I think that is quite enough. Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Opposing opinion on this amendment, Mrs De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, so also the right to be represented is included in our text, as it was decided and discussed in the Committee. So I would not want to change this.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 1.

Madam, please.

Ms Marija GOLUBEVA (Latvia, ALDE): Yes. Well, as you notice by its number, this amendment was tabled the very first but, at the moment, it's the last chance to separate the right to elect the high officials of the Council of Europe from the rights to vote in the assembly, to head committees, to submit amendments, etc. and we suggest to separate the two.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Opposite opinion, Mrs. De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, it's - well, similar to all the other amendments that try to propose this, so I will not agree with that.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Was there a Commission position?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, indeed. The Committee was against: 14 votes against, eight in favour.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

Amendment 1 is rejected.

Amendment number 41.

MR. OMTZIGT.

Mr Pieter OMTZIGT (Netherlands, EPP/CD): Well, if you're in the context of a challenge of or reconsideration of credentials, the Member's rights to speak and to be represented in the Assembly shall not be suspended. That means that we can, if we adopt this amendment, suspend certain rights to vote. I think that's important to do because we should keep some way of punishing those delegations when their rights are being challenged.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you. Anyone against the amendment?

Mrs. De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, of course, it changes what we are proposing here. I just want to add to Mr OMTZIGT that there will be other possibilities to sanction delegations, of course, and I would not want to change the proposition in the resolution.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 76.

Mr OMTZIGT.

Mr Pieter OMTZIGT (Netherlands, EPP/CD): Once again, I think it's very important that we do limit the number of sanctions we can give, but we don't make them zero and that's exactly what this amendment is doing. It's the last amendment and we only tabled three, we didn't table 220. But it's very important that we don't pull all the teeth of this assembly out of her own mouth and, then, we'll really regret it in two years time. Thank you very much.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Opinion against the amendment, Mrs De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, well it's very similar to Amendment 41 that we just rejected, so I propose to do the same.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Take the microphone, please.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD): Madam President,

Today is a new day. Today 25th I think. So please, can Mr SAVITSKY change the date of the agenda, or do we need to have 2/3 majority. Agenda, yes. Approval of agenda. The change of the date.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The meeting is not over, I have not adjourned it, so we will continue our work until we have finished processing this item, as planned.

We will now proceed to Amendment number 62.

I give the floor to Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much, Madam President.

To basically, at the end of the paragraph to insert the words "with regard to the list of members rights, representation and participation in the activities of the Assembly and the bodies that may be suspended or deprived, in the context of challenge or the reconsideration of credentials, the Assembly considers it would be inappropriate to include the rules themselves as a category of measure in which case it could not have only been exhausted"

I think, this again, dare I said it, it guards our right as much as anybody else's.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

A contrary opinion, Mrs De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): It's a bit contradictory, if I may say so, but since we decided not to go into the details of the sanctions - and this has been always like that - I don't see any place for this addition in this paragraph. It would only confuse things.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 43, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much indeed. Where it says Members' rights to vote, we would suggest that we drop that and insert the following: In the context of the challenge or the reconsideration of credentials, Members cannot be part of a political group and enjoy the rights deriving from such membership.

Again, this is the same principle. We have a job to do here, we do it. Where there are people who haven't... having their credentials challenged, why should they be part? We actually want to make sure that we are the parliamentarians not being a subject to any other form of sanction. Therefore, I think this is an important amendment.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you. Any opposing opinion on this proposal?

Mrs De SUTTER.

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, I believe that the constitution of political groups is quite something different from what we are trying to deal with in this resolution, so I would not be in favour of adding this footnote in this paragraph.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 84, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Nigel EVANS (United Kingdom, EC): It's 20 past 12:00 now, and I do not believe that any legislature works this well at this moment in time. Listen, your legislators may work very well at 20 past 12:00 in the morning, but mine doesn't. And we've got proof of that because we used to do this in the 1990s. We don't do it anymore. We've modified our rules. Can I put a proposition, Madam President? That we suspend the session now and that we start again tomorrow morning, at a time of your choosing. Otherwise, we are going to be here till goodness knows when. So, Madam President, could I make that proposition, that we suspend the session?

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): What you're actually asking is that we adjourn the debate, which we're having right now, and continue it in another session. To do this, we must file such a request before the beginning of the meeting, which, moreover, as we have already said, we will finish. This session was on the agenda.

I would simply ask you to speed up the work as much as possible and try to avoid making successive proposals. It is late, but we will finish as we should, since it is our duty.

We now proceed to amendment number 84, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you, Madam President. I must admit I'm rather enjoying it, to say the least. So, therefore, we will continue! Can I just make the point, this is at the end of Paragraph 10: In context of a challenge to reconsideration of credentials, "members cannot adhere to a political group and enjoy the rights derived from such a membership". Again, I hope that's obvious, but it is an important part of what we're trying to do as parliamentarians and I'd ask that for consideration.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I would like to point out that the following amendment –amendment number 92– is exactly the same as amendment number 84, and that we will therefore only have one vote on both.

Against the amendment, against the amendments, Mrs De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, thank you. This amendment and the next one are already part of the footnote of the previous one. So with the same arguments, I would not accept these two amendments.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

We will now proceed to the vote.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

Amendments 84 and 92 are rejected.

Amendment number 98, Mr GONCHARENKO.

I would ask you not to read the text, because you will not be able to do so in thirty seconds.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): In the draft Resolution after paragraph 10, insert the following paragraph: "Therefore in order to clarify the scope of rights which are exercised by members of national delegations may be suspended or deprived of within the framework of a challenge or reconsideration of credentials. The Assembly decides to supplement Rule 10 of its Rules of procedures adding after Rule 10 the following clarification". Read the following clarification yourself.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr GONCHARENKO.

Please! Please!

Any opinion against this amendment?

Mrs De SUTTER.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): (*microphone off*)

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Please! Please!

I don't think this is the time to shout in this room.

I don't think so, if there have been any offenses, it's probably related to fatigue.

Let's hurry up and finish.

I would like to point out that amendment number 101 is exactly the same as amendment number 98.

Mrs DE SUTTER has asked to speak against these amendments.

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, well, as you can understand, paragraph 10 is drafted very carefully having all the elements that we felt were needed. The Committee approved of this. So changing that and the content and the purpose of this paragraph completely changes the purpose of the Resolution, so I cannot accept this kind of amendments.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

Amendments 98 and 101 are rejected.

Amendment number 99, Mr GONCHARENKO.

Mr KANDELAKI, a point of order?

Mr Giorgi KANDELAKI (Georgia, EPP/CD): Just one point of order for me. I have an official document of the Assembly published in the morning titled *Organisation of debates*. An official document which says, at the end of it, end of the sitting, midnight. Madam President can you guide us once again whether it is actually legal to continue the debate after midnight since the organisation of the debates document says that it must end at midnight.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): If you have followed this afternoon's debates closely, you will have heard that during this debate I have told you that, given the pace at which we are dealing with the various amendments, we will certainly have until 1 am.

We are not there yet. I am confident that I can do so and, in any case, this programme for the session does not contain this debate for another day. It is therefore our responsibility to complete it.

I give the floor to Mr GONCHARENKO to defend his amendment.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): So, big productivity. I admire it. I just want to say that I hope we will be as productive when we discuss the topics of Human rights defenders in the Russian Federation and also of releasing political prisoners, of Ukrainian marine sailors, military sailors and so on. I hope everybody will work the same way with the same productivity.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): An opinion contrary to amendment number 99, Mrs De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, the same argument changes the paragraph. We've had this before, so I cannot accept it.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The vote is open.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment n° 63, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much indeed Madam President.

Again it's the same thing. It just doesn't add anything. "And finally the Assembly considers the issue supplementing the Rules of procedure...". We know we can afford to delete this because it actually doesn't make any difference at all. Therefore, I would ask Ms Petra De SUTTER to consider removing this paragraph because I actually don't believe it adds any more to what we're trying to achieve. Thank you very much.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? Mrs DE SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Well, I want to remind my colleagues that this is, again, a compromise that we discussed in the Committee. The other option was going much further, and this was remaining as a consensual conclusion that we might consider in the future. So we don't take any decision. We just say we will examine it. So I would like to still keep it like that.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The vote is open.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment n° 67, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much Ms Petra De SUTTER. I wonder if I can tempt her with changing the last paragraph, 11. Finally, the Assembly considers the issue of supplementing its Rules of procedure with regard to inducing procedures for challenging credentials. We're not possibly opening the door to political abuse and will therefore not choose this option. I wonder if I can tempt her with that. I think it's an important change and I'd like you to consider that in light of the other amendments that we're going to talk about.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mrs. De SUTTER.

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Well, I'm not easily tempted, Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER, definitely not by this amendment. So I would rather stay with the original text.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The vote is open.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment n° 65, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much indeed. This is to add, after further consideration, putting: "After close consultation with the Committee of Ministers, the existing sanctions mentioned cannot be altered until the new sanction mechanism has been put in place."

The reason for that is, of course, you could have an ambiguity between the two systems, and I would think this would bring it together so there isn't... nothing falls between the two systems until the new one is in place. I, therefore, again ask Ms Petra De SUTTER to consider this.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mrs. De SUTTER.

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes. I'm not sure if this amendment is in the right place. It doesn't make sense to put it there. So it has to go somewhere else. I cannot accept it here.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 64, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

In the draft resolution 'after further consideration' to insert the words 'after close consultation with the Council of Ministers'.

Paragraph 11, if we're not going to drop it out then I think it needs to be tightened.

I think actually using those 5 or 6 words we would actually do this. Therefore I would ask again if we couldn't include that at the end, because I think the Committee of Ministers has an important part and a role to play in this.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Opposite opinion, Mrs De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): It is not consistent with the view of our relationship with the Committee of Ministers in other discussions we had. So I don't see the added value of putting this in this paragraph.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendments 69 and 156 have the same content.

I give the floor to Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER to justify them.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much.

This is paragraph 12. Again, it just says that if someone decides to change the rules of procedure set out, the present Resolution shall enter into force upon its adoption. I don't think we need this. So we can actually just drop it. It doesn't make any great difference - I don't believe - and, therefore, I would suggest and ask that this entire paragraph is gently removed and we can move on.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Opposite opinion?

Mrs SOTNYK, are you against this amendment?

No, it has already been justified.

I know, but it's the same text and only justifies it once. We did it like that before.

Against the amendment, Mrs De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): It's, of course, crucial that we state that this Resolution shall enter into force upon its adoption for all the reasons that we've been discussing all day.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

Amendments 69 and 156 are rejected.

Mrs SOTNYK, you have the floor for a point of order.

Ms Olena SOTNYK (Ukraine, ALDE): First of all, I need to talk before you vote. It is also abusing the rights. But as I understood you feel highly responsible before Russia to push through this Resolution. That's why you are doing this (Interruption) –Yes! Be polite and try to wait– in order to open a new era for this Parliamentary Assembly. I think that my colleagues and me don't want to be part of this era. Ukrainians didn't fight for these European values. I'm sure about this. We don't want to be a part of this... your values or crisis. Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I don't see how your statement is a point of order, but we listened to what you had to say.

But yes, you have the floor, please.

Sir Edward LEIGH (United Kingdom, EC): We are, I would have hoped, a family-friendly organisation. Our translators have been working very hard all day. What right have we to keep them here when we could be perfectly well doing this job tomorrow.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

As already mentioned, the best way to free the interpreters is to complete our work as soon as possible.

We will continue with amendment number 114, I give the floor to Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much, Madame President.

This is to insert into the paragraph 12: 'The Assembly hopes that the Committee of Ministers will start to work jointly on a new common sanctions system as soon as possible'.

I think this is absolutely crucial because it does mean that we have to be able to have a sanction system that is going to work straight away. We can't do that – it has to be the committee.

I therefore suggest that we look at trying to incorporate this into this paragraph.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Ms De SUTTER against the amendment?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, because we had discussed this earlier at another amendment. I don't think we have to mix these things and put it at the end of the resolution, so I'm against the amendment.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 93, Mr GONCHARENKO, I imagine.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): In the draft resolution paragraph 12 delete the words after 'enter into force' and replace with the following words:

'as soon as a new joint sanction mechanism with the Committee of Ministers has been established'.

It's very important because what we have proposed to do now is just to kill any sanction mechanism.

For the moment we don't have a joint sanction mechanism which will be made with the Committee of Ministers.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): A contrary opinion, Ms. De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Same argument as the previous amendment.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 206, Mr GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): We proposed after the words 'shall enter into force upon', insert the following words: 'six months after'.

The sense is clear; we propose to postpone this decision for six months.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

A contrary opinion, Ms De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, for obvious reasons, this is not what we would propose with this resolution, so I'm against the amendment.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 73, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much.

This is to add at the end of sentence 12. Delete the words 'enter into force' and actually put up the opening of the next ordinary session.

'Put into force' is an interesting adoption of words, but if you put in, you include the opening of the extraordinary session, it's very very obvious what that is. It's not ambiguous. It is very straightforward.

I hope it makes some sense.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Ms De SUTTER against the amendment?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, it is straightforward. But it goes against the whole purpose of the Resolution, so I cannot accept this.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 72, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you.

This is in the same vein where it says "upon its adoption" –which is the last three words– we would suggest you put in the following words "at the opening of the next part session".

Now we've already had this slightly earlier, but everything is a part session so it would seem sensible that we would do it on a set time scale, which obviously would have to be the opening of a part session.

I would therefore ask Ms Petra De SUTTER to look at this to see whether or not this would be a better resolution to the final three words in paragraph 12.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Against the amendment, Ms De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, I'm afraid I don't agree. It would not make it better, so I cannot accept it.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment 74, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you. Slightly following on from the other bit, for a different reason, basically dropping out the very end part and putting in "during the next ordinary session new credentials cannot be examined". Now that may sound a bit odd but the reason for it is that where you have new credentials put in in the middle of an ordinary session, it's very difficult, as we know, to make room in the timetable or, if they are challenged, what are we going to do about it? Because it means it has all got to go back to the rules committee to make a decision, so I'd ask them to consider that being put at the final part.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Opinion against the amendment, Ms De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, this doesn't add anything to this paragraph, so I don't agree with the amendment.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 85, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you.

This is slightly more complicated and it's a longer resolution.

Basically it sets out to add. "During the last 70 years the Assembly has been very cautious with considering ratifications of credentials..." –in respect to the delegations in Greece in 1969 and Turkey in 1981– "...even if the credentials of several delegations were challenged and that appeared in the deprivation of rights."

Basically I hope this tightens it up, including the Russian Federation and their various ins and outs.

The existing system needs to be used with utmost care. So we are trying to really...

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER, we have taken note.

Does anyone object to this amendment?

Ms De SUTTER.

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Well it's a nice text. It's a good introduction to say that we keep our right to exercise our own sanctions and are waiting for a new system. I don't see any added value in putting this at the end of the resolution.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 86, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much Madame President. I do apologize to the last one, I didn't hear the bell. This is to do with the Russian Federation to try to find a positive way out of some of the issues we have - like the rule of law. Mr Lienkov and Sergei and Yulia Skripal and the Russian officials who allegedly downed the Malaysian airliner. This is to try and find a way that Russia can come back and actually then use its position to bring people that we need to bring to the Hague and elsewhere. I hope this makes sense, and then we can include it in this paragraph.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Against the amendment, Ms De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, it has no place at all in this paragraph, in this resolution, so no.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The amendment is rejected.

Amendment number 94, Mr GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): That's my last Amendment, yes. And I just want to remind you when the next act of aggression of the Russian Federation happens, or a terrorist attack such as in Salisbury - these will be part of your responsibility. Those who are ready to sit through the night just to vote to take back the aggressor to this Hemicycle. That will be partly your responsibility. Just remember this.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Against amendment number 94, Ms De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): No added value

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

An opinion against this amendment, Ms De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, with all the same arguments. I mean this is not strengthening the resolution at all so, no.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

Amendment 1112 is rejected.

Amendment number 113, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you very much indeed. Again this is in the same vein but different, because it actually is talking about the strength in the decision process. The assembly can also call upon the 47 Members and States and the Russian Federation in particular to constructively engage in this procedure and abide by the statute, which is basically why we're all here. Therefore I would again ask Ms Petra De SUTTER to look at this as a potential, dare I say it, a dove, to the Russian Federation when they come back, or if they come back in the near future.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): An opinion contrary to this amendment, Ms De SUTTER?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Yes, it's very similar to the previous amendments. I don't see the added value of putting it at the end of our resolution here.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

Amendment 113 is rejected.

We will proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in document 14900, as amended.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The resolution was adopted by 118 votes to 62, with ten abstentions.

Ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to thank you for your active participation, your very large presence at this very late hour. I would also like to thank on your behalf all the people of the Office of the Meeting, the interpreters and the entire team that made it possible for our work to take place until this late hour.

The next public sitting will be held tomorrow morning at 10 am with the agenda of this part-session.

The meeting is adjourned.

I wish you a refreshing night.

The sitting was closed at 00h48

Next sitting at 10am

Opening of the sitting No. 21

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to take your seats, the meeting is open.

The next item is the examination of credentials for members of the Assembly, which has been submitted to the President in accordance with the rules and regulations.

The names of the representatives and substitutes in question are given in document 14913 Addendum. If there are no objections, these credentials may be ratified.

Are there any objections?

There are no objections. The powers are, therefore... Sorry, you have the floor Mrs GOGUADZE.

Ms Nino GOGUADZE (Georgia, EC): Madam President. In resolution 2134 of 2016, this Assembly decided that only significant and measurable progress towards implementation of Resolution 1919, 2034 and 2063 can lead to lifting sanctions on the Russian Federation. Since then, we have seen serious violations of the basic principles of the Council of Europe mentioned in Article 3 and the Preamble to the Statute, and persistent failure to honour obligations and commitments and a lack of cooperation with the Assembly's monitoring procedure: the illegal annexation of Crimea, occupation of Georgia's two regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and ethnic cleansing has not been reversed. The number of Ukrainian prisoners of war kept in Russian custody has only increased. There is no access to assess the human rights situation in Crimea, Sevastopol, in the occupied Georgia territories in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the Minsk Agreements have not been implemented. Therefore, I now invite colleagues to stand up and alongside me challenge the Russian credentials on substantive grounds.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Wait, wait, please.

It's not up to you to invite colleagues, it's up to me to do it.

Please, sit down, and I will tell you when you have the floor.

Mrs GOGUADZE is challenging the credentials of the Russian Delegation on substantial grounds, pursuant to Rule 8.2 of the Rules of Procedure. According to Rule 8, such a challenge must be supported by at least 30 representatives or substitutes present in the room, and belonging to at least five different national delegations. I now invite those who support this challenge to stand up. And please remain standing long enough so that we can count you without error.

Thank you.

I see that the number has been reached. The credentials are therefore referred without debate to the appropriate committee. In this case, the Monitoring Committee, that shall report back to us, and to the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities for Institutional Affairs, for their opinion.

The Committees responsible must report, if possible, within 24 hours, in accordance with our rules of procedure. So you may sit down again, and the chair is now proposing that... Mr. ARIEV. Yes?

Well, as you wish, in whatever order.

Mr Volodymyr ARIEV (Ukraine, EPP/CD): I would like to challenge the credentials of the Russian Federation delegation on procedural grounds based on Rule 7 of the Rules of Procedure on the grounds that the composition of the national delegation of the Russian Federation comprises members elected with illegal votes of Ukrainian Crimea, which was incorporated in a national-wide consistency and also comprises

individuals which are on the sanctions list of the European Union. This situation is contrary to the Statute of the Council of Europe and I would like colleagues now also to stand up and to support this challenge on procedural grounds.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Wait, we'll do as we did before, if that's okay with you.

Mr ARIEV contests the credentials of the Russian delegation, for formal reasons.

I therefore invite those who support this proposal, knowing that there must be at least 10 members of the Assembly from at least 5 national delegations, to stand up.

Thank you, you can sit down again.

The number of persons required and the number of delegations required has been reached.

The credentials of the Russian delegation are also being challenged, on formal grounds, in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of Procedure, as in the case of challenges on substantial grounds. Credentials contested on formal grounds are referred without debate, this time to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, which should report to the Assembly. Again, if possible, within 24 hours.

I remind the Assembly that, under the provisions of Rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure, members whose credentials are contested shall sit provisionally with the same rights as other representatives and substitutes until the Assembly has taken a decision. However, these members shall not participate in any vote related to the verification of credentials concerning them.

Mr Nigel EVANS (United Kingdom, EC): I would like to challenge the Russian credentials on substantive grounds. I speak as an openly gay man and I would reference Document 14572 of the (speaking off mic), it's on... the micro is on (speaking off mic)... under the persecution of LGBTI people in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, where it says that protecting all people from torture, degrading treatment, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and ultimately extrajudicial killings, irrespective of their origin, colour, age, gender or sexual orientation is one of the founding principles behind the creation of the Council of Europe and Document 14795, which references the Commission (interruption by Ms Maury Pasquier).

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): As I said earlier, we are not having a debate.

(Member speaking off-mic)

Yes, but the powers are already being referred for substantive matters. The Monitoring Committee will have the opportunity to discuss all the points that have been raised and even those that have not been raised.

She will report to us, and I propose that you put on Wednesday's agenda as the first item –Wednesday afternoon– the reports of the two committees seized: the Committee on Rules of Procedure and the Monitoring Committee on the formal challenge and on the substantial challenge of credentials.

Mr Nigel EVANS (United Kingdom, EC): *(microphone off)*

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): In any case, you have the possibility to deal with all these points within the monitoring commission.

There will be no debate here this morning.

Mr. GONCHARENKO, you have the floor.

Examination of credentials

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): Thank you. Madam President, you said Wednesday morning, why? If you want to change the agenda, we need to vote on it and we need a two-thirds majority. I just wanted to remind you of this.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I did not say Wednesday morning, I said first thing Wednesday afternoon. As the first subject of the afternoon session.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): *(microphone off)*

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Mr. GONCHARENKO, let me finish, please, and then you can react.

What I wanted to tell you is that it is Wednesday afternoon. Indeed, the Assembly will have to decide on the agenda if it is amended.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): *(microphone off)*

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Mr GONCHARENKO, if necessary, I will give you the floor when you ask for it, I have given it to you. And I repeat that it is a proposal made after discussion with the Bureau yesterday morning, to hold the debate on the two reports of the two committees on the challenge of credentials tomorrow in the early afternoon, as the first subject of the afternoon session. That's a proposal I'm making to you. Clearly, it is contested, which is why it is indeed for the Assembly to decide on the amendment of the agenda.

Now, what I have also told you is that we are obliged by the Rules of Procedure to process these two reports as quickly as possible. That is why we must put it on the agenda of this part-session. So, if you do not agree with the proposal I am making to you - to set it on Wednesday afternoon - you must make me another proposal that I will put to the vote.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): Excuse me. Why me? Why should I propose you something? If you want to put it on Wednesday afternoon, please put it on the vote because there is no such thing on the agenda.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): No.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): So, it is up to you. You said Wednesday afternoon, please put it to the vote.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I am making you the Bureau's proposal. I am obliged to do so, because the Rules of Procedure oblige me to do so, and oblige the Bureau to make a proposal for an agenda that includes the debate. The proposal that has been made to you, I ask you for a contrary proposal. If you do not have any, I will take it as adopted.

Ms Mariia IONOVA (Ukraine, EPP/CD): Okay. My proposition is Thursday.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thursday? Morning? Afternoon?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): Thursday afternoon.

No. For me, it's nothing...

Thursday morning, great.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I will therefore put to the vote Mr GONCHARENKO's proposal to hold this debate on Thursday morning and it will require a two-thirds majority.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC): Thursday morning, great.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I will therefore put to the vote Mr GONCHARENKO's proposal to hold this debate on Thursday morning and it will require a two-thirds majority.

The vote is open.

Sorry, the vote is not clear and I repeat: those who support Mr GONCHARENKO's proposal to hold this debate on Thursday morning vote yes; those who oppose Mr GONCHARENKO's proposal vote no.

The vote is closed.

The proposal was rejected.

Ms Mariia IONOVA (Ukraine, EPP/CD): Madam Chair, you didn't put to the vote your proposition, because I'm sorry we have letters from our sailors, prisoners of war. We would like you, you, please, to put your proposition to the vote, please. We are looking forward to it.

Changes in the membership of committees

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The House, Madam, as I have just said, is obliged to put this, this item, on the agenda. I proposed Wednesday afternoon. The majority refused to move it to Thursday morning. So that is absolutely correct and it is what we need to do.

We are moving on to changing the composition of the committees.

Proposals for changes in the composition of committees have been published in document commission 06 2019 06 *Addendum 2*, and there is no opposition to these changes: they are therefore adopted.

The next item is the *Election of a Vice-President of the Assembly in respect of the Russian Federation*. I have received Mr Slutskiy 's application in the prescribed form. If no request for a vote is made by at least 20 representatives, Mr Slutskiy will be declared elected. But I notice, apparently, that there is an opposition.

Mr Arieu, you have the floor.

Mr Volodymyr ARIEV (Ukraine, EPP/CD): Dear colleagues, Mr Slutskiy is on the European Union sanctions list for his crimes in Crimea. So, I think we should challenge his appointment without voting and due to the Rule 16.4, I call for voting with secret ballots on the candidature of Mr Slutskiy and I would like to stand up also now to support this.

Election of a Vice-President of the Assembly

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Mr ARIEV therefore requested that a vote be taken on the election of Mr SLUTSKY. Is this request supported by at least 20 members of the Assembly? If so, I would ask you to stand up, if you agree with Mr ARIEV's proposal.

The people who contest the election... then the required number is reached. A vote is therefore required for the election of Mr Leonid SLUTSKY. I propose that it be held under the usual conditions in the rotunda behind the presidency this afternoon, from 3.30 p.m. to 8 p.m. At the end of the session, at 8 p.m. or when we will probably have finished by 8 p.m. this afternoon.

So from the beginning of this afternoon's session to the end of this afternoon's session.

Mr. FOULKES, you have the floor.

Lord George FOULKES (United Kingdom, SOC): I'm slightly mystified, how can we elect someone from the Russian Federation as a vice president when their credentials have not yet been approved by the Assembly?

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): We can do so, Mr FOULKES, because it is specified –as I said earlier– that the members whose credentials are contested pending the report of the committee that has been referred to, have all the rights that are linked to the status of member of the Assembly, and therefore they can also be elected as vice-presidents of the Assembly.

Russia has the place of vice-presidency.

Is it still on this debate, Mr MIGNON?

Mr. KIRAL.

Mr Serhii KIRAL (Ukraine, EC): Madam President. Under Rule 6, I would like to ask the Secretary General if the Russian Federation has submitted the written declaration on the respect of values to this Assembly? Just to remind you that non-submission of such a written declaration is an automatic non-ratification of the credentials.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I can confirm that we have received the statements of all the members who are in the delegation of the Russian Federation.

Mr Rubinyan, did you have a point of order?

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, NR): Thank you, Madam President. I'd just like to announce that yesterday, during the vote, my vote was cast as against the report while my intention was to vote for it. Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr RUBINYAN.

It is not really a point of order; nor is it a personal matter. I take note of what you have said, but I cannot change the vote after the fact, but we have heard your statement and I thank you.

On the organization of the vote for the election as Vice-Chairperson, I have heard no objection to the proposal I have made to you: it is so decided.

Ms Mariia IONOVA (Ukraine, EPP/CD): Madam Chair, telling the truth if this is the situation here in the Plenary Hall, I would like to recommend to be in your presidency near you, the Russian military who is responsible for bringing a BUK-M1 missile launcher to Eastern Ukraine to shoot 300 people. You can choose, it's Mr Girkin or Mr Dubinskiy or Pulatov...

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Madam, this is not a point of order and I would ask you not to abuse this instrument.

The next item is the presentation by Mrs Petra De SUTTER of the progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee, Document 14911 and *Addenda* 1 and 2, Documents 14912.

Mr ARIEV, I give you the floor for a point of order, but I would like to draw your attention to the fact that this type of possibility must not be abused and must therefore be a point of order.

Mr Volodymyr ARIEV (Ukraine, EPP/CD): In our hemicycle, we were obliged to follow the Rule 6 and to respect the main principles of the Assembly and this is the obligation of every member sitting in this hemicycle. As we have sitting here with us criminals here involved in the bloodshed in the Ukraine we cannot stand anymore in this hemicycle.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): We take note of your statements and I will continue with the agenda.

I would remind you that we will have to finish examining this text at 11:20 a.m. We must therefore interrupt the list of speakers at around 11:15 am in order to be able to hear the committee's reply and proceed to the necessary vote.

Mr TOLSTOY on a point of order.

Mr Piotr TOLSTOY: Thank you.

First of all, I would like to thank our colleagues who worked yesterday until late at night so that the dialogue for which the Parliamentary Assembly exists can be carried out. The second thing, Madam Speaker, I would like us not to insult the delegations of parliamentarians who have been elected in their countries and not use the word "assassin".

(speaking in Russian)

And we represent the people of the Russian Federation. Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): We have taken note of your statement.

I would remind you, dear colleagues, that the speaking time of speakers is limited to 3 minutes.

I will now give the floor to Mrs Petra De SUTTER to present the progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee.

It seems that I have another point of order, but Mr FOULKES, I must also remind you that this point of order is an instrument that must be used to defend the proper conduct of our work and not to interrupt it constantly.

You have the floor.

Lord George FOULKES (United Kingdom, SOC): Yes, well a member of the House of Lords is always of good conduct, as you know. I'm not very clear about the ballot that you agreed: is there going to be a secret ballot on the nomination for vice president under the rules? Is that right?

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): That's right. I can repeat what I said earlier. The vote will take place this afternoon, by secret ballot, in the rotunda behind the presidency, from the opening of the session at 3.30 pm until the end of the session. To this end, we will appoint, as always in the event of an election, tellers, so that they can then count the ballots.

The question will be about the election of Mr SLUTSKY as Vice-President of the Assembly. Members will be able to say whether they agree with this proposal or not, since it is the Assembly that elects these vice-presidents. In case of agreement, Mr SLUTSKY will be elected; in case of a majority of refusal he will not be elected and Russia will have to designate another candidate for the position of Vice-President to which it is entitled. Is that clear?

Thank you.

I will now give the floor to Mrs De SUTTER to present the progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee. Mrs De SUTTER, you have 13 minutes speaking time, which you can divide at your convenience between the presentation of the report and the reply to the various interventions.

You have the floor.

Debate: Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC, Rapporteur): Thank you, Mrs President, and I also promise you that this is the last time that I will be standing here in front of you. So, I have had the honour to be able to present a progress report on the activities of the Bureau and the Standing Committee since the 12th of April, until today. Well, since the beginning of this reporting period, a lot has happened at a political level in Europe. I want to elaborate on two trends that I have been observing during this period:

First, we have been living influential political times, that will have far-reaching consequences for the coming five years at least.

Many Member States of the Council of Europe are also Member States of the European Union, and chose new representatives in the European Parliament between May 23 and May 26. The results of these elections are clear: citizens in Europe are divided. But many alliances are possible, and immediate action is required when it comes to Human Rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Obviously, the Council of Europe must contribute to that. In that way, I am looking forward to the report on “10 years after the Lisbon Treaty: Strengthening Council of Europe and European Union Co-Operation” - in preparation in the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy - and the concrete actions that the report will suggest.

These actions would be complementary to already existing proposals to step up a political dialogue. As suggested in Mr Kox's report on the Role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly, and the setting up of a joint EU/Council of Europe parliamentary debate on the rule of law, as suggested in my own report adopted in April last.

I very much hope that the Assembly will follow-up on these proposals, because in my new role as a member of the European Parliament, I will be deeply committed to promote an enhanced dialogue between the two institutions.

Secondly, we also have been living influential political times here, at the Council of Europe, and a lot has actually been achieved by this Parliamentary Assembly.

The Assembly has been confronted with big challenges the last years:

- 1) We had corruption. We had scandals that found their way into this institution.
- 2) We had, as an assembly, also to reflect on the role and mission that we have.
- 3) And it was clear that there is a need to strengthen the political dialogue and synergies between the two statutory organs, meaning the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly.

A firm reaction of the Assembly to these challenges was needed, and I'm deeply convinced that the work that has been done to overcome these challenges has led, and will lead, to positive results. Which would not only contribute to preventing scandals in the future, but also help to make the voice of this Assembly stronger in the future.

For instance, the Assembly took very seriously the recommendations provided by the independent investigation body and it revised its ethical framework.

The election of a new Secretary General of the Council of Europe, during this session, makes it a highly symbolic and crucial moment.

This is why, following a call from the Committee of Ministers made on May 17th in Helsinki, yesterday, we accepted that all delegations, including the Russian Federation and Bosnia and Herzegovina, could present their credentials in order to take part in the vote. I'm happy to see that the Parliament of the Russian Federation has responded to our call, and submitted the credentials of its delegation. We'll see, of course, what will be the future course of the challenge that has been raised.

I have to remind, and I really want to stress this, that the decision that we took yesterday did not strip the Assembly of its powers. We should not forget about the procedure that we voted for in April, which will enable a joint action against a Member State whenever it violates statutory obligations, or whenever it would not respect our fundamental principles and values. This will allow us to adopt a firm position towards any Member State. They are all welcome here, if they follow our rules and respect our principles. And we will take action, together with the Committee of Ministers, if this is not the case.

So, in fact, the report of yesterday is part of a bigger picture, of a puzzle, that puts the conditions in place to make this Assembly stronger than ever before. To strengthen its actions in times when our societies are radicalising, and use its competencies for the benefit of citizens who ask for more protection. Let's not forget, that if we work on this joint mechanism, the Assembly will have the initiative, the possibility, to have the right to initiate it, and that is different from the past.

Ladies and gentlemen, I must tell you that I'm truly convinced that what we are trying to do here now is to balance both organs of the Council of Europe, and these are like two wings of a bird. The Committee of Ministers on one wing and the Parliamentary Assembly on the other wing, and it's only when both wings are balanced and work together that the bird can fly. And the Council of Europe, in this way, can spread its wings to protect its citizens.

Now, to come to the report itself, I would like to highlight some punctual and very significant developments in the Council of Europe Member States, and the impact these developments have:

First, the presidential elections that took place in Ukraine and in North Macedonia, to which the Assembly sent observers. Also, the Assembly has been invited to observe early parliamentary elections in Ukraine on July 21.

Secondly, I welcome a revision of the Code of Conduct, on one hand, and the guidelines for the observation of elections aiming at preventing sexism, and sexual harassment, in parliaments and during election observations.

Today, you are invited to ratify the amendment to the Guidelines for the Observation of Elections by the Parliamentary Assembly, as to include a new paragraph which forms a bulwark against sexism, hate speech, sexist acts or sexual harassment.

Third, I want to invite national parliaments to give a follow-up to important texts adopted during the last Standing Committee in Paris, on May 24. Such as the Resolution on Air Pollution, for example, which is a major challenge for public health in Europe.

Then, ending the speech, I really want to thank all of you for your support during the last five years that I've been able to work here. Because, as I said, this will be my last speech. Next week I will be across the river as a member of the European Parliament. But, I promise you, and this institution, I will always carry the values and principles of this organisation in my heart. They are the value which both organisations share. And I will continue to endeavour to promote this house because it will, and has always been, my first political home.

I would encourage you to do the same and to make the Council of Europe better known in your own parliaments, in your own Member States, because Human Rights, the rule of law and democracy are really at stake, more than ever before. Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you indeed Ms Petra De SUTTER.

You have almost 5 minutes left at the end if you want to use it.

If I might just personally – as others would want to do – congratulate you on your election to the house across the bridge, to the chamber across the bridge, and wish you well with that.

Now in the debate I call our first speaker in the debate on behalf of the Socialist group from Austria, Mr Stefan SCHENNACH.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC): Thank you, Mr President,

I too would like to thank Petra De SUTTER on behalf of my group and personally for her extraordinary work in the Council of Europe. Especially as chairman of the Social Committee, she has always pushed us to the limits with topics, and introduced us to new topics. That was a fantastic time and in the last 48 hours Petra has been at the leader's desk all the time and has led us out of many different difficult dead-ends. I wish you all the best in your work in the European Parliament. We know that you, and you said it yourself, will be a small ambassador to the European Parliament for the Council of Europe. We just wish you the same success you've had in this house.

On the Activity-Report, Progress-Report: one of the most important things yesterday was the Council of Ministers in Helsinki, which was launched and which shows that the Parliamentary Assembly can very well inspire the Council of Ministers. With the so-called Cox report in April. Both together has led us out of a dead-end. I think how you did it, Petra, with such care, with such consideration, how respectfully you treated yourself here, deserves all our respect. In the Progress Report there is also the time in which I perhaps want to remember that there are two people in the house today: Mr Muslum MAMMADOV and Mr Shadman HUSEYNOV, both prisoners or inmates just a few months ago and today they are here in this house. What a pleasure.

The picture, you can only fly properly balanced with two wings, I find a very nice picture. It also shows the unity of the House here, the Parliamentary Assembly here, the Council of Ministers here and with all our accompanying institutions, such as the Venice Commission. It is important to intensify this. On the occasion of the 70th anniversary some activities took place and our President was, for example, in the Parliament in Austria. Conversely, there was a high-level conference of the Bioethics Commission here in this House on "the Right to a public debate on how technology and the use of Artificial Intelligence technology is evolving and the robotics system". I think this will be a very exciting and challenging job and again, Petra De SUTTER, thank you very much.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you. On behalf of the EC, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER from the United Kingdom.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC): Very much indeed, Mr O'REILLY. No backstops tonight, today, I can tell you.

Can I also thank Petra de Sutter. We've worked together for quite a long time now, Petra and I. I would tempt you to accept our thanks, if I may. And in fact, we were sparring even this morning, so I'm very grateful for everything you've done. Yesterday, I think we had a very large missed opportunity here. We did not celebrate the 70th anniversary here. The agenda was changed at the last moment by the President –no slight on you, Mr O'REILLY– so we didn't celebrate it.

Democracy should be celebrated. The Ancient Greeks celebrated it when they set up democracy millennia ago. We fought for it for millennia, and I would say that any organisation that does try to play fast and loose with democracy, opens itself to all sorts of problems. I don't want to be here in a year's time, with Petra in the European Parliament – we might have lunch – saying "I told you so". I really don't. We fought so hard to set these organisations up in '48, at the back of a devastating war. This place existed because of the vision of Europeans to do so. And I would urge you all, every colleague here, not just now but in the future, to read these words. To say "we have established something that matters and is special". But if you decide that you feel it is more important to just take money to try to solve a problem, then we're all in trouble. Because by the use of the lowest common denominator, you thereby define yourselves and us.

I would urge you all to think about that, because, ultimately, this place, if it does not change, and I do mean – not just internally, with the amount of people we employ and the way we operate – but externally. I would love to know how many of our reports are ever taken up by national parliaments. I certainly know mine doesn't, and it doesn't even follow rulings from the Court of Human Rights a lot of the time. But, therefore, that is the problem of relevance. And what I would say again to colleagues – because I have got to finish in 39 seconds – is that this place matters. It matters for what is going to come.

I would urge you all "yes, we must work together"; "yes, we must have prisoners released", and many other things that we find important. To not only ourselves and our nations, but to the collective that makes this place up. All the countries, the 48 countries. And that is what we've got to enshrine. And that is why I am sad that we didn't celebrate the 70th anniversary yesterday, so we had that ability to say "we've come so far, but we have to be careful and get the future right".

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Grainger, and I don't think, Liddel or Ian, it would be easy to establish a backstop to your eloquent flow of speech. If we could move on to the ALDE representative, Mr POLIAČIK, from the Slovak Republic.

Mr Martin POLIAČIK (Slovak Republic, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you Mr President. Thank you. In the name of ALDE I'd like to thank the Rapporteur not only for this report, but also for the work that she's done here.

I don't like the way she introduced the Russian delegation, but I would like to see her introduce a European Parliament delegation into this very Hemicycle one day, because that would actually strengthen this institution. That is something that we are really looking forward to in the future. I wish you all the best, my colleague, in doing so in the future.

On behalf of ALDE I welcome the steps being taken by the Bureau, especially regarding the revision of the code of conduct in accordance with the resolution on promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment.

Sexism and sexual harassment are often dismissed as the price women have to pay to be in politics. They interfere with women's rights to fully and equally participate in political life. It is very crucial to raise public awareness of sexism and violence against women in politics, and to bring about a change of mindset.

This issue needs to be taken into account systematically. Therefore I'm hoping it did not end with the successful revision of the code of conduct.

It must be ensured that this awareness is turned into a tangible change.

I could talk more about details in the report, but I think that there is another problem that we see after the voting last night.

It is the very word 'progress' that can be discussed in this Hemicycle. Are we really progressing if a country that has had seven chances, with seven documents passed in this Hemicycle, to do better, to uphold human rights, to uphold the rules when it comes to democracy and the rule of law, has not done anything, to show a gesture, that they understood that they have made mistakes.

If we have a country with four people – at least four people – on the European Union's sanction list who are here in this very room, and we are not doing anything about it.

If we see that the price tag of this very institution is somewhere close to 90 million euros, and it can be sold for someone who's breaking and breaching the rules when it comes to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and is allowed to come back to this very chamber.

I don't think, ladies and gentlemen, that we are progressing. We need to do something about it and make this institution proud again.

Thank you very much.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you. May I now call, on behalf of the UEL, Mr Tiny Kox from the Netherlands.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, Spokesperson for the group):

Thank you, Mr President. Never a dull moment in the past three months, shows the progress report of our Rapporteur and, indeed, we did a lot of work here in this assembly. In the April part-session, we took decisions on the role and the mission of this assembly and this organisation and our main challenges and that is now a work in progress. We are on the right track, as I said yesterday.

We formulated our proposals in a resolution and we formulated our proposals to the Committee of Ministers and a recommendation, and the good news is that, only one month later, in Helsinki, the Committee of Ministers in its Ministerial Conference adopted our main proposals. That was something quite new, that the Committee of Ministers, indeed, adopts our proposals and that was also progress, I think. It stated, in Helsinki, that all Member States, from now on, are obliged to be present in votes of statutory organs: Committee of Ministers and statutory organs. We are not a cafeteria. That this presence should be on an equal basis, we do not have first- and second-rank members, and that, as soon as possible, a mechanism should be put in place, in which the Committee of Ministers, the Secretary General and this assembly, for the first time ever, work together in cases of blatant violation by one or more Member States of the Statute and the Convention. I think that some colleagues still have to realise how big a step forward that is.

I hope that President Macron, when he is here in October, will be ready to show us the outline of this new robust mechanism, which gives this assembly, as the Rapporteur quite rightly said, far more power than we had in the past. Let's use that power in a diligent way. I hope that this will be a significant improvement in our situation. The good news is that, after the decision of this assembly and after the decision of the Committee of Ministers, at least one national delegation has come back to this assembly. As the Rapporteur already did, I also welcome our Russian colleagues here to this Hemicycle, you have been away far too long. I said it time and again, it was wrong of the assembly and it was wrong of the Russian side, but now you're back and there are a lot of things to be discussed. It's a pity that our Ukrainian friends left the Hemicycle today but I hope and am sure that they will be back because we have a lot of difficult, often painful things, to discuss but if we do not discuss things, then we do not do our job as politicians.

Last remark, with regard to the Rapporteur, Petra De SUTTER has shown that being a politician is not an easy job. Of course, there are a lot of colleagues who think that it's an easy job but Petra, you are a jewel in the crown of the Parliamentary Assembly. I think you have shown how a good politician could and should work here. As I have said often, this is not an arena – we have our national parliaments, we have others – this is a hemicycle, in which we talk with each other in order to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Madam De SUTTER, I take my hat off to you because, as I said you are a jewel in the crown of this assembly. Thank you very much.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Now, to speak on behalf of EPP from Hungary, I call Mr Németh, please.

Mr Zsolt NÉMETH (Hungary, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Dear colleagues, in the name of the European People's Party, I would like to draw your attention to two important recent developments.

One is the change of presidencies, and the other is the change of the Secretary-General.

Concerning the presidencies, I would like to congratulate the outgoing Finnish presidency from my heart. They have done a good job.

I would like to welcome the new French presidency. They seem to have a very good and very dynamic programme for their priorities.

Both countries seem to play a remarkable role in a very difficult time for the Council of Europe. I think we will owe a lot to these presidencies in the future.

Concerning the change of the Secretary-Generals, I would like to congratulate the work of Mr Jagland. He also led this organisation in difficult times. I would like to welcome two excellent candidates who are running in a very democratic campaign of quality. I believe we have got a very good perspective that the new Secretary-General will be able to renew the organisation against negative signs, which we all can feel and see.

I still would like to declare here that I see a very good chance that the Council of Europe overcomes the serious crisis, and that against negative scenarios the Council of Europe becomes a pan-European renewed forum for dialogue.

However, obviously the clarification of forms and content is crucial in this regard.

Be a defender of human rights in Europe which is able to respond to old and new challenges, for example the rights of national minorities.

Concerning new challenges, I would like to mention the danger of artificial intelligence and settle its relationship with the European Union based on a clear division of labour, in a time of mutual reset of the entire activity of both organisations.

Dear ladies and gentlemen, the Ukraine presidential elections drives me to underline that Ukraine needs our solidarity. Europe should assume much more responsibility towards Ukraine.

I would like to welcome the result of the North Macedonian developments. It is high time for the European Union to follow the path of NATO to bring North Macedonia into its framework. Thank you very much for your attention.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr NÉMETH. The rapporteur will reply at the end of the debate but does Ms De SUTTER wish to respond at this stage? No. So, we will move on to the Speaker's list proper and I now call from the EPP Mr KANDELAKI, Giorgi. Mr KANDELAKI is...

Mr Giorgi KANDELAKI (Georgia, EPP/CD): Thank you, thank you, Chair. For the attention of journalists, media and citizens who watch this broadcast, I want to clarify that the matter of Russian credentials is not over yet, that they have been challenged, there is another procedure in the Monitoring Committee and there will be another vote on challenging the Russian credentials. So the question is not closed yet.

It is clear that decision-makers in countries which supported yesterday's motion, and it's not a secret it's an open secret, regard the Council of Europe as a very unimportant organisation. In fact, the significance of the Council of Europe and its weight, so to speak, has continued to fall over the years. These decision-makers think that by making this concession the current leadership of the Russian Federation will take this move as an opportunity for dialogue. You will see, very soon, that this approach is worse than a crime, to quote one historic figure. It's a mistake. Because such moves have been made before over and over and over. And time and again, they have proven mistaken. When after the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia, the Russian credentials were not challenged, what did we get in return? A much larger problem, a much larger invasion of a larger country and many more lives lost.

I also want to clarify that no matter how this ends it doesn't mean that the sanctions (economic sanctions, personal sanctions), the very painful and important sanctions of the European Union and United States, are changing. No, these sanctions are all in place and will remain in place. Nevertheless, when Russia joined the Council of Europe in 1998, the question was asked: will the Council of Europe change Russia or will Russia change the Council of Europe? Russia, as it is, has changed the Council of Europe beyond recognition and I regret that.

Finally, I want to address my colleagues from respectable political parties, from mainstream traditional parties. At home, they talk to their voters about the dangers of populism, how toxic populism is, and here, they have fought on a common front, with crazy populists from the radical left and the radical right, which I think is the same thing. How does that work? If it's dangerous, why do you find yourselves in the same boat as them? Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): On behalf of the EC, Mr MELKUMYAN, Armenia, please.

Mr Mikayel MELKUMYAN (Armenia, EC): Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to say that Mrs De SUTTER's work is very good.

In a rapidly changing world, we are witnessing new developments every day, such as unemployment, poverty, local military actions, the displacement of large numbers of refugees from their countries of origin, as well as other challenges. This situation is both an external challenge and a consequence of ineffective internal management.

It is in this context that I will present to you a current problem in our Republic. Armenia shares borders with four countries: Georgia, Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan. The borders with the last two are closed. There is no railroad to Iran, and on the territory of Georgia rail links are cut off for known reasons.

However, Armenia has no access to the sea and no railway lines to the outside world either. This means that the competitiveness of our domestic products is suddenly decreasing due to logistical problems. Of course, the structure of our economy has changed in favour of information technology, but the whole economy cannot collapse in this way.

On the basis of these facts, I have a concrete question for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: if two members of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Europe –Turkey and Azerbaijan– block the border of another member of the Council of Europe –Armenia for 30 years– should the Council of Europe intervene or not? In my opinion, it is crucial that the Council of Europe should take a clear and binding decision to unblock borders and carry out a legal and political assessment of this phenomenon.

Ladies and gentlemen, we come here, we sit in the same room, we express our views on different issues concerning Europe and the whole world, talking about moral values and at the same time showing contradictory behaviour.

I appeal to an atmosphere of sincerity and dignity in this room, not to concealment and banal hypocrisy.

Of course, the bloody hands of a surgeon and those of an executioner are different, but the latter will be responsible for the flagrant violation of the law, Human rights and peaceful coexistence, from international law to the non-use of force.

I address the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: I ask for your reaction to the blocking countries.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much. I think sadly our Ukrainian colleagues have left us. Unless I get an indication to the contrary I'll move on to the next speaker who on behalf of the EC is Ms Naira ZOHRABYAN, please forgive the mispronunciation if that's the case, from Armenia.

Ms Naira ZOHRABYAN (Armenia, EC): Mr President, ladies and gentlemen,

Today I want to talk about a rather important and urgent issue, such as the right of the population of unrecognized States to education and health as inalienable rights. At the moment, it is a serious problem that citizens of non-recognised states are deprived of their rights to be included in European education programmes and to participate in this process.

Based on the Convention against Discrimination in Education adopted by UNESCO on 15 December 1960, I would like to draw your attention to the problem of non-recognition of higher education qualifications, a very important problem for the people of the Republic of Artsakh.

Specialists, students and schoolchildren living in Artsakh are deprived of their right to education in accordance with international standards. The Artsakh authorities have made considerable efforts to create the necessary conditions for its citizens to fully enjoy their right to education, and today there are 219 secondary schools, 6 education and vocational training institutions and 5 higher education institutions. Yet citizens still face insoluble problems and obstacles across borders, particularly across borders.

The non-recognition of final degrees creates external obstacles for the further professional development of thousands of university students in Artsakh. Artsakh students are excluded from the European Higher Education Area, and do not benefit from the programmes provided by the Bologna Process. However, the UNESCO Convention states that the right to education is a fundamental right regardless of where one lives. So the same applies to the right to health of Artsakh citizens, the exercise of which, as you know, must not be conditioned by the status of Artsakh.

I am counting on the support of the Council of Europe to find a solution to this very complex problem. All citizens, ladies and gentlemen, wherever they live in Europe, have the same right to life, health and education, and it is unacceptable, as well as unforgivable, to condition their rights according to the political status of their State.

Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, thank you indeed. On behalf of ALDE, I now call Mr HUSEYNOV from Azerbaijan.

Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV (Azerbaijan, ALDE): Thank you, Chair. First of all, I'd like to note that false speech, full of lies and slander. Our Armenian colleagues, once again, demonstrate their real face. Dear colleagues, today when discussing this progress report, the Council of Europe is as if it is standing on the border. That was exactly 70 years ago. At that time, this organisation was coming into being and Europe, as well as the world, was on the verge of an important border. After the Second World War, another Europe and the world was formed and the Cold War era began. And the biography of the Council of Europe confirms that it was a successful organisation of the Cold War era because all the major achievements of this organisation in the field of democracy and human rights coincide with this period. When the Cold War era was over, real blood

conflicts had begun to emerge, the Council of Europe could not demonstrate its previous efficiency. The Council of Europe cannot and does not provide practical assistance in preventing military conflicts and occupations as well as addressing the problems of millions of refugees and IDPs. Unfulfilled weak resolutions on paper, double standards of behaviour, noncompliance between word and action, managed groups, distinct relationships with various member states indifferent attitude to regular violation of the charter, decorative characteristics of the reform and many other similar reasons. The Council of Europe needs a special anti-violence program to address these shortcomings, otherwise, this machine, the common property of all of us, the Council of Europe, makes an error, its memory freezes, it seems overloaded. Therefore, in my opinion, the Council of Europe should move from this threshold to the border not to cosmetic reform but to radical change after 70 years of existence. The new era shows that you do not need to work much with the power of the word. It does not give the same effect. Therefore, it must be a real force to move forward so that the speech can become operational. The Council of Europe, covering 47 countries, should create a concrete mechanism of action that can directly serve the implementation of its decisions and resolutions. Practice clearly demonstrates that the Committee of Ministers cannot achieve anything by remaining solely as an advisory body without a function in the mechanism that directly impacts the implementation of decisions and resolutions. Every member country should know that when the moment comes it could be subject not only to political but also to very serious economic and other sanctions. Sometimes we are faced with pessimistic considerations about the assessment of Council of Europe as an organisation that has already ended its life. If the Council of Europe steps into the next decade of its life as a substantially changed organisation, which corresponds to the requirement of its period, there would be no room for such disturbing thoughts. Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): No, thank you. Mr OMTZIGT, Netherlands, please. OMTZIGT, Netherlands. Mr OMTZIGT, thank you.

Mr Pieter OMTZIGT (Netherlands, EPP/CD): Thank you, Mr Vice-President and thanks for all the work being done on the progress report. I have a question for the Rapporteur, who was also chairperson of the Rules Committee.

At the beginning of each session, each of us has to sign that we agree to the values of the Council of Europe. Those values are not for nothing in international law because they protect mostly the smaller countries against the big countries. One of the values I thought this assembly was built on is a territorial integrity of each nation. If you work together, you accept the territory of the others. There are maps also in the Council of Europe. We are very clear which parts belong to the Russian Federation and which part belong to Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. So, for instance, Crimea, on the map of the Council of Europe, has the color of Ukraine.

If you then sign, do you then sign that you accept that that's a territorial integrity? I'm asking this not for a sort of fantasy reason but because here we have a delegation which all signed the Declaration of Interest and said we share the values and at the same time, they have someone coming from a country which we think is part of another country, namely Crimea.

So, I would like to know whether that's possible or not? Whether, within how we understand the declaration, whether that also has any legal force or whether it's a sort of voluntary declaration of goodwill. Because if it has legal force it means that you recognise that Crimea is part of Ukraine. I may remind you that there are other territorial problems within the Council of Europe so there is the occupation of Northern Cyprus by Turkey, there is, Azerbaijan and Armenia have quite a different view on Karabakh but they don't present candidates from those parts. We haven't seen any people arriving here.

So I hope to get an answer to that question because I think it's a very important question as to how we are going to stick to the Rules of Corporation. Thank you very much, Mr President.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you indeed. I now move on to call, from Germany, Mr OEHME, from Germany, so thank you.

Mr Ulrich OEHME (Germany, NR): Mr. President,

Dear Members of Parliament, Dear rapporteur Mrs De SUTTER,

I'd like to talk about point 2.8 of your report. This includes the non-recognition of our group, new European democrats, Europe of Nations and Fatherlands. I am speechless as the Members of this House, who constantly and prayerfully emphasise that the Council of Europe is founded on democracy and Human rights, can trample these very foundations underfoot.

We, the 20 Members, are the ones who created these groups. We were elected by 17 million people in free democratic elections. Due to the decision of the office, however, we are only able to fulfil their mandate to a limited extent. To date, we have not received any valid justification. I'm asking you, Mrs. De SUTTER, who vetoed this? In any case, your committee has not positioned itself. So was it the office? What was the basis for the veto? You will probably now justify yourself by saying that you have formally and legally rejected our motion on the basis of Resolution 22 78 this year by amending the Rules of Procedure of the Parliamentary Assembly. Looking at the report, it quickly becomes clear that this change was deliberately awaited. The motion to amend the Rules of Procedure is based on the fact that on 4 September 2017 the Office had already had to agree to the creation of the Group of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party.

Of course, the other political groups did not like this. It turns out that you only interpret democracy and the understanding of law in such a way that you do not want to involve those who do not approve of you or could even become dangerous to you. This decision was clearly only about safeguarding the existing order. How else are the following statements of the Minutes to be assessed?: "First, how can we stop them? And secondly, there is nothing formally wrong with the foundation, but the attitude does not fit."

What is happening here reminds me of my time in the resistance against communism in East Germany. Then, as now, here in this House, those who have a different opinion from that of the prevailing unity of opinion are being fought by all means. Back then by a party of opinion. You, dear colleagues, from the former socialist and communist countries know what I am talking about. I had previously believed that Europe had fought for democracy and freedom of expression in 1989-90. I made a mistake. This is not about democracy, this is about domination of opinion. This decision is another disgrace to the Parliamentary Assembly. In yesterday's debate on Russia, everyone conjured up democracy. I ask you to turn your back on yourself and live this democracy so that this House and the idea of a peaceful Europe of peoples and nations do not abolish themselves. Thank you. I'll take care of it.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Mr AMRAOUI from Morocco please.

Mr Allal AMRAOUI (Morocco): Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to acknowledge all the work done by Ms De SUTTER, and I would also like to express our satisfaction after the unanimous adoption of the *Third Assessment Report on the Partnership for Democracy*, which has linked us to the Parliamentary Assembly since 2011. Year in which the Moroccan Parliament became, in a voluntary process, the first country to benefit from this status.

Sharing the same values, we had taken some time of political commitment to join the European legal area, strengthening democracy, the rule of law, respect for Human rights and fundamental freedoms. The progress of reforms being the main goal of this partnership, nine years later, these advances have been evaluated in a positive way with a record of strengthening democratic governance considered very satisfactory.

Since the 24th May, the date of the Standing Committee's meeting, the pace of reforms has continued. With the adoption at the beginning of June of the Organic Law on the establishment of the National Council of Languages and Cultures, a genuine mechanism for the protection of linguistic and cultural pluralism in Morocco, and the Organic Law on the Amazigh Language, which allows its official status to be established, thus increasing from 21 to 22 the organic laws provided for in the new Constitution.

Now, the legal tools exist to ensure that our new Constitution is fully implemented.

Since last April, Morocco has also become a partner for local democracy of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. We remain convinced, as Mrs MITAJOVIĆ, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, expressed it well last April, that the establishment of a culture of Human rights is complex, and that our mission is not to make a sprint, but rather to continue as if we were running a marathon. Patience, commitment, courage and dialogue are needed to pursue reforms and their real ownership by all.

After almost ten years of successful practice of the status of partner for democracy, which remains the flagship model of the European Neighbourhood Policy, and given Morocco's major role in the Mediterranean, in the Middle East, the Moroccan Parliament wishes to launch with you –together with our colleagues in the Assembly– a reflection on the evolution of this status, so that it allows us, as parliamentarians, to become more involved in the work of this august institution, in which we have the honour to participate. Make a more effective contribution to addressing the challenges of security, stability, migration, as well as those related to the fight against terrorism and extremism, sustainable development, the environment and renewable energies.

Finally, I would like to return to the conclusion of the Rapporteur, Mr KILIÇ –a worthy European representative whom I highly welcome– in which he describes Morocco as a part that can still play an important role between Africa and Europe. For this reason, we hope, and it is the duty of all of us, that the European column on which this section is based will be as broad and solid as possible.

Thank you for the attention.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you indeed. Our next speaker is Mr SEYIDOV from Azerbaijan, please.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC): Thank you very much, Mr President.

Again, I want to express my gratitude to the Rapporteur, she has done a really great job yesterday and today, this is very visible and very valuable and, I think, very important for this organisation because we need this dialogue, we need mutual understanding. We need to understand that without communication it would be impossible to create a friendly atmosphere within this house, within Europe, because a lot of hate, a lot of mistrust, a lot of disrespect, attitudes and style of behavior can unfortunately be seen, not only in this house, not only in Europe, but all over the world.

From this point of view, I think Azerbaijan is a very good example of how we can organise this dialogue between people, confessions, representatives of different religions. Just recently, we organised in Baku a celebration, the so-called Baku process, where representatives of different religions (Muslims, Jews, Christians, Catholics, Orthodox and others) sat down together and discussed the future and relationships between each other. We need to see the same approach here but unfortunately sometimes we can see, in order to get some more votes and be a little bit more popular than they are, some not understandable and even unacceptable speeches. This is really very dangerous, we can see some absolutely false information, unrealistic approaches and from this point of view I think we should withdraw this kind of approaches, this kind of attitudes from this assembly.

We heard, just a couple of minutes ago, a representative from a neighbouring country talk about the blockade and the absence of the possibility to access education and other things, but none of them mentioned the reasons why they have these problems: because of illegally occupied territories of my country, because of ethnic cleansing. Could you imagine? Ethnic cleansing of the territories of Azerbaijan. And now, without any Azerbaijani, without any representatives of the different and other nations and ethnic groups, they try to create democracy. Is it possible? No, never! Because in diversity, in dialect, in mutual understanding we can find the truth and this assembly is because of that, not because of ethnic cleansing, not because of those who try to present unreal things. That's why I call on you Madam Rapporteur, to pay attention to these matters also. Thank you very much.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you indeed.

Now, our final speaker from Armenia, Ms Tatevik HAYRAPETYAN.

Ms Tatevik HAYRAPETYAN (Armenia, NR): Thank you, dear colleagues. First of all, I would like to wish lots of success to Ms De SUTTER in the European Parliament and I'm sure we will feel her absence here in the PACE. And getting back to the progress report, and instead of replying to my Azerbaijani colleagues, I would like to talk about the continuation of democratic developments in Armenia, because we are sure that democracy and security are interconnected. I would like to talk about the role and the meaning of elections in Armenian political life nowadays. It's already a fact that parliamentary elections in December 2018 were organised on the highest level and were considered to be free and fair also by the Council of Europe. I would

like to underline that afterwards there were carried out several local elections and in certain places the opposition candidates won the elections. You may ask why I find it important to speak about this fact? My answer will be because in more than recent 20 years, all kind of elections in Armenia were questioned and debated afterwards by the representatives of the opposition. And after the revolution, it's an undebatable fact that all kind of elections are accepted as fair and free from oppositional forces presented in the parliament or outside of the parliament. Not only as an MP from the ruling faction but also as a citizen of Armenia, I am delighted to notice that after the Velvet Revolution of 2018, the government for the first time in the recent history of Armenia, is the guarantor of free and fair elections even if there is a danger to lose those elections. Armenian citizens from now on are the real power in my country and the elections became working to express gratitude towards, to express attitude towards the political spectrum. For Armenia, as I mentioned before, security and democracy are interconnected. We do believe that democratic values should be the base for a peaceful and secure state, where violence is fully rejected by citizens and the election is the main tool to express satisfaction or dissatisfaction towards political decisions. Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much. That concludes the list of speakers. I now call Ms De SUTTER, our Rapporteur, to reply. You have 5 minutes remaining of the 30.

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC, Rapporteur): Yes, thank you, President.

I will try to react briefly to a few things that have been said in the debate and I thank everyone who took the time to speak in this session.

I heard the proposition that the EU and the Council of Europe should work together on the issues of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. You know that the EU has taken initiatives in this respect and we had a report on this in April but I completely agree with my colleague who says that we should really work to push forward the EU to adhere to the convention so that maybe one day there will be an EU delegation also sitting in this Assembly. I would very much appreciate that.

Secondly, quite a few speakers, of course, mentioned yesterday's report and what happened and the presence of the Russian delegation and the challenge to their credentials. To Mr OMTZIGT, I can say that it's not up to me to answer your question because I do not have the mandate to decide on that, but I can tell you that in the process of challenging the credentials, which is now under examination in the Monitoring Committee and, of course the Rules Committee, we will also look at that in terms of the formal challenge that has taken place. We will work on this, this is what we will do today. And I hope that the Committee will be able to present an answer to your question in its work this afternoon and later tonight and of course this will be subject of the debate tomorrow.

The second thing is that I want to really stress again because of the interventions of quite a few of you, the importance of working on this joint mechanism with the Committee of Ministers. I have already mentioned it in my introductory speech, I think this is crucial in strengthening our reaction to member states that do not uphold their obligations and the convention. So this is really something that we should put very high on the agenda in our work programme for the upcoming weeks and months and I heard that as soon as October there may be some initiatives as to how this joint mechanism will look.

I honestly also hope that the the members of the Ukrainian delegation who just left the assembly will be back very soon because of course we can't progress in any positive way if one delegation comes back and the other leaves because this, as it has been mentioned, is the house of parliamentary dialogue, and it is our way of creating more understanding between one another.

And it was also mentioned in the debate yesterday, and mentioned by Mr SEYIDOV, I think, that, yes, member states can have and have conflicts, territorial conflicts like Ukraine and Russia and Georgia and Moldova, but Azerbaijan and Armenia are both sitting in this Hemicycle and we've heard it in the debate, of course. They are critical towards each other but they're still speaking and they're having a dialogue and I think that is something that this Hemicycle and this Parliamentary Assembly is valuable for.

I want to answer Mr OEHME who asked why his group has not been acknowledged by the Bureau, and I can only say that indeed on May 23 there was a very thorough, very thorough discussion in the Bureau to come to that conclusion by a vote. I was not present in the Bureau at that time so I cannot, I think, take responsibility for what was the argumentation there but I can tell you that, according to the criteria that have been set in

order to form a political group, any number of parliamentarians make such a request and if you feel that you can try to submit a new application in accordance with these criteria, you're free to do so. But I cannot, of course, comment further on the decision of the Bureau of 23 May.

I also heard somebody saying and, it's indeed true that we are, at this moment, at a crucial point in time where the Secretary General Mr JAGLAND will leave us soon and will be replaced with one of the two candidates that will be elected tomorrow. I think this is a crucial time for the Council of Europe and that really can lead to a renewal, and hopefully, to a positive future for this institution because rather than only working on national interests and geopolitical strategic affairs and conflicts, we should look at common interests of human rights that are more important than just for single member states. I'm talking about migration, this is not going away as it is a major issue that we will be confronted with on the European continent and that has so many human rights aspects to it.

And allow me as a green politician, also, to mention climate change, this is really a challenge for all of us and even at a global level, of course, because it will lead to economic, social and also human rights consequences which are very important to deal with.

And finally, and this is one of my very subjects of personal interest, indeed the bioethical subjects that have been mentioned I think it was Mr SCHENNACH briefly touched upon them, I had a few reports on these issues, but also these are extremely important to work on in this Assembly: artificial intelligence, and maybe also, the challenges and opportunities that new genetic technologies will bring us. I'm sorry for the time but I will stop here, thank you very much.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much to Ms Petra De SUTTER, and again our very best wishes to you personally.

Now that closes the debate as such. Now we have some references to Committees. The Bureau has proposed a number of references to Committees for ratification by the Assembly set out in documents 14911, document 14911 Add. 1 and 2, and document 14912. Is there any objection to the proposed references to Committee? There is no objection so the references are approved.

Now we move to the approval of the remaining items in the progress report. I invite the Assembly to approve the other decisions of the Bureau as set out in the progress report. Document 14911 doc again and Add. 1 and 2, and documents 14912. If there is no objection, the progress report of the Bureau and the standing Committee is approved.

We move now to the joint debate on the budget and priorities of the Council of Europe for the biennium 2020-2021, and expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2021.

We now come to the joint debate on two reports from the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs. The first is titled Budget and Priorities of the Council of Europe for the biennium 2020-2021, document 14903. The second is titled Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium, again 2021, and document 14901. Both reports will be presented by Mr Mart van de VEN. In order to finish by 1 p.m. I will interrupt the list of speakers at about 12:30 to allow time for the reply and the vote. I remind members of the speaking time and debates being limited to three minutes.

I call Mr Mart van de VEN, rapporteur, to present the two reports. You have 13 minutes in total which you may divide between presentation of the reports and reply to the debate. So welcome and thank you Mr Mart van de VEN, if you want to take the floor... Mr Mart van de VEN is organising to do that now. Mr Mart van de VEN can we call you to speak? Are you ready to start, please? Thank you. And as I said you have 13 minutes in total which you may divide.

Joint debate: Budget and priorities of the Council of Europe for the biennium 2020-2021 / Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2020-2021

Mr Mart van de VEN (Netherlands, ALDE, Rapporteur): Thank you, Chair.

Dear colleagues,

This is the last time that I will present the reports to this assembly. This time, I will do so as your General Rapporteur on the budgets of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly and budgets are my favorite subject. Colleagues, following the acceptance by a large majority of my reports on the budgets of the Council of Europe and our Parliamentary Assembly in the Rules Committee, in Paris on 3 June, and my constructive meeting with representatives of the Budget Group of the Committee of Ministers, in Strasbourg on 11 June, I have the honour to present to you a Draft Opinion - on the budget and priorities of the Committee of Ministers - and a Draft Resolution - on the expenditure of our Assembly in the next two years.

Before introducing my reports on the budgets for the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2020-2021, I would like to make the following comments.

The Assembly has no powers in the area of the budget, other than present an opinion each year on the budget and priorities of the Council of Europe and a Resolution concerning its own expenditure.

Further, a clear distinction should be made between the approved budgets and the authorised budgets for the biennium 2020-2021.

The approved budget will represent total appropriations on the basis of the 47 Member States' assessed contributions. The approved budget includes, in other words, the annual contribution of the Russian Federation which, however, has not been paid since the middle of 2017.

The authorised budget will represent the factual authorisation to spend money. This authorised budget will ultimately depend on whether or not the contingency plan of Secretary General Jagland has to be implemented. And the enactment of this contingency plan depends on payment by Russia of due contributions now.

Dear colleagues,

Our yesterday's debate on the De SUTTER report and the decisions taken in this House make it clear that a breakthrough could be realisable for the return of the Russian parliamentarians in our assembly.

Having said that it may be clear to all of you that my preparation in recent months of the Assembly's opinion on the budgets of the Council of Europe and our Parliamentary Assembly for the next two years 2020-2021 has taken place in a strange context. The Assembly is asked to comment on the budgets 2020-2021 on the basis of the participation of 47 Member States, whereas in the factual situation we have to decide on an opinion and a resolution on these budgets without clarity as to the funding from Russia.

Just for information purposes: If the contingency plan of Secretary General Jagland were to be triggered, a €32 million reduction will result for the budgets 2020-2021, spread over a 3-year period, starting in the second half of 2019. The Assembly itself has been asked for a reduction in that 3-year period of €2.2 million. That is 15% of our budget. I note that the contingency plan does not provide for redundancy payments for staff to be dismissed. These redundancy payments are expected to be in the range of €20 million.

In the part-session meeting of the Rules Committee in January 2019, I asked the Secretary General to investigate alternatives to his contingency plan, while proposing one possible alternative of the so-called "third-party session". This was refused.

In the final analysis, I conclude that before the Assembly agrees to cuts in its budget - still to be authorised - all alternative options should be studied seriously by the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers. Unless - as a follow-up to our yesterday's debate and our acceptance of the credentials of the Russian delegation - this delegation returns in the Assembly and now pays its contributions.

Having made these comments, which are of a financial nature, I trust that you will understand that I can be rather brief on the priorities for the work of the Council of Europe and our PACE.

The Assembly's actions tie in with the three thematic pillars of the Council of Europe's Programme and Budget, visualised human rights, the rule of law and genuine democracy.

The work of the PACE will be focused on the areas of women's and children's rights, gender equality and internet governance.

Where appropriate, the Assembly may propose new standards in new areas or on emerging issues, such as new technologies, digitisation and artificial intelligence. For more detailed information on the proposed actions and related workload, I refer you to my reports.

I have one concluding remark.

Due to the current political situation as to the acceptance of the credentials of the Russian delegation, my reports do not and cannot take into account the consequences for the activities, operations, sustainability and future of our Parliamentary Assembly in the event that the contingency plan needs to be executed.

Lastly, I would like to thank all colleagues, parliamentarians and the staff for the excellent cooperation enjoyed whilst working on human rights. I thank you for the trust that I received from all of you.

Thank you, Chair.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Rapporteur, you have seven minutes left to reply to the speakers.

In the general discussion, I call, on behalf of the political groups, on behalf of the European Conservatives, Mr LEIGH.

Sir Edward LEIGH (United Kingdom, EC, Spokesperson for the group): We all agree that the Council of Europe has a budget crisis but it should not solve this budget crisis by compromising its principles, by letting in a state which does not abide by its core principles. The Council of Europe should return to the principles on which it was founded 70 years ago and should concentrate on fighting the evils of fascism and communism and totalitarianism and violence and the denial of human rights.

The truth is, Madam President, there are huge opportunities for savings. The Council of Europe has three pillars: human rights, the rule of law and democracy that accounts for sixty-seven percent of its budget but it spends as much on administration as it does on promoting democracy. It spends 2.4 times as much on administration as it does on promoting the rule of law. Governing bodies and general services take up a further 16%. There are too many reports produced, too many reports on issues that don't really concern our core values. For instance, in 2019 the Council of Europe will spend 1.845 million euros on promoting sport integrity. Isn't that best left, Madam President, to Olympic Committees and national bodies?

Over two thousand staff enjoy tax-free salaries. We all pay tax. Two thousand members of staff here don't pay tax. The hierarchy is like an old-fashioned army - too many chiefs and not enough people to do the work. The chiefs are generously paid. All grades A5 and above take home every month more than 10 000 Euros without tax. When Mr JAGLAN was campaigning for his job 10 years ago, he made the assessment that the organisation was like a monster with ten heads and countless arms. Ten years later, how many of those heads and arms have been cut off? How much progress really has been made? Do we need more than 10 different departments dealing with the issue of migration?

We put, for instance, a question the European conservatives, to ministers: "which NGO in terms of budgetary constraints was awarded more than 1 million euros by the Council and on what basis?" We are still waiting for a reply. Do we really need to pay journalists, to beg to cover us? In conclusion there is available money if it is wisely spent and if we count every penny and we rely on the new Secretary General to bring order to this organisation.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I call Mr RICHEMBERGH, on behalf of the ALDE Group.

Mr Goran BEUS RICHEMBERGH (Croatia, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

On behalf of all the political groups, first of all, I would like to thank Mr van de VEN for his efforts in highlighting the main problems and challenges in our budgetary politics here, or policy.

We are welcoming that approach in setting up the revision of our income and expenditure after the years of very comfortable spendings. The actual budgetary aggression made by the Russian Federation taught us, I hope, a lot about the vulnerability of our budget and the needs of our structures in accomplishment of our mission. Therefore, we are very in favour of keeping all main activities and programmes, which are carrying this institution for 70 years. What we are not comfortable with is a proposal of the Secretary-General, and I have to admit that we were shocked by the proposal to cut down, very radically, the budget targeting youth activities and the Youth Department. Please look at the gallery of our hemicycle. Whenever you look there, you will see that the big majority of spectators and people who are coming here to learn about our institution, are young people. There is no other targeting group which is of a higher importance than the youth.

Youth networks across Europe have developed extremely important activities accounting on support of the Council of Europe. Me, personally, I have entered this hemicycle for the first time in my life as a youth activist leading the group of people who would like to learn more about democracy, rule of law and protection of the human rights. Why? Our approach is now so non-generous to young people we would like to warn that the future of this institution cannot be even imaginable without young people and their role. And setting up a new face of the future of this institution and the basic principles we are standing on, young people are those who will create a future of Europe and the values we share. So, don't stop the activities in that direction to help them to learn to be more active citizens, to participate and to solve our continent. Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I call Mr ÖZSOY, on behalf of the United Left Group.

Mr Hişyar ÖZSOY (Turkey, UEL, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I also would like to thank Mr Rapporteur for the effort and time he put into the report. The report makes repeated references to the reason why the Council of Europe is having an unprecedented financial crisis as an institution: that a member state named Russia didn't fulfill some financial obligations and refused to make its annual contributions over the last three years and so we are having a huge crisis now.

On the surface, this seems to be the reason but I think the problem is a much bigger one, more structural and more institutional than simply a misbehaving Member State. I mean, yesterday, we talked about Russia, who knows tomorrow we may talk about Germany or France or Turkey or the UK not paying annual contributions. So the question here to ask is why and how, in the first place, the Council of Europe, the leading institution to protect and promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law, is so easily taken hostage or blackmailed, to quote from yesterday's debate, by this or that Member State? Why are we so fragile and vulnerable financially as an institution?

Here are a couple of disappointing facts: the report informs us that PACE doesn't have any power over the budget of the Council and we currently use 6.5% of the total budget and ten years ago that was 7.2%. It seems every year our budget is shrinking because, leaving aside member states making larger contributions, we do not even have a zero real growth budget model that includes an increase in annual contributions of Member States to adjust to inflation rates. It seems that Mr Secretary General requested from the Committee of Ministers larger contributions from Member States and, if that was not possible, then at least a zero real growth model but then we learn from the report, again, that two of the 47 member states actually refused this proposal, one of them being the United Kingdom, the other I couldn't learn.

We have also learned that – this is important I think to highlight – the daily budget of the European Union is more or less the same as the annual budget of the Council of Europe. We spend around 50 cents or even less per person, per year, to serve 850 million people in the field of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. So we live in an age of increasing authoritarianism, illiberal democracies, more violence, more discrimination, more xenophobia. It seems everybody loves to talk about democracy and human rights – I'm concluding – but very few are willing to provide more financial resources so that the Council can serve better the citizens who live in Member States. Thank you so much.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

For the Free Democratic Group, Mr ZAVOLI

Mr Roger ZAVOLI (San Marino, FDG, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam Chair, dear colleagues. On behalf of the Free Democrats Group, as the group strongly fighting for the freedom of representation, I condemn the attempt of this report to deny the right to small countries and young economies to be represented in the Court of Human Rights and this shamefully on the financial basis. This is not the way to fill the budget of the Council of Europe. I invite all the countries, their honourable representatives, to vote against setting the minimum amount for member countries' contributions since this is directly opposite to defending the right of representation, one of the main principles of our organisation. Thank you all.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

For the EPP Group, Mrs DALLOZ.

Ms Marie-Christine DALLOZ (France, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

Thank you, Mr. Rapporteur.

Yes, the budgetary situation of the Council of Europe is difficult. However, at a time when the rise of populism and nationalism is exacerbating tensions and trying to attack our values and Human rights, it would be suicidal for us democracies and for Europe to weaken the only pan-European institution, our only common home. Especially since it is the only organization whose purpose is to defend Human rights and the Rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights is our watchdog and, undoubtedly, as the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers has pointed out, an asset that is unequalled in the world.

Today, the mission of this court is to preserve the fundamental rights of 830 million European citizens. It protects our common European values, which are reflected in individual rights. Maintaining its financial resources is therefore essential and must be a priority in the reflection we are conducting on the organization's future budget. We owe it to all those who defend the rights of the Convention, sometimes at the risk of their lives.

Mr Rapporteur, I support your proposal in paragraph 24 on the need to take inflation into account in the amount of Member States' contributions. This would allow the organization to carry out its missions. And what a mission! This is not about finance, business, but about men and women, about suffering and hope, about freedom and equality. Can we choose among such missions? Can we sacrifice the protection of such a person's rights because we have to save money? I do not believe so and, as we celebrate the 70th anniversary of our organization, that would be a very sad message.

As I read your report on PACE, I can only be concerned about the visibility of our work. Currently, the existence of minutes in the official languages, or even of proceedings of our Assembly, is an asset in making our exchanges known and giving access to our work to a large number of citizens, including those who do not use social networks. The savings that could be voted on on minutes or translations in committees seem all the more inappropriate to me because the preservation of multilingualism is a real challenge in Europe. I am therefore particularly reserved about setting up a rainbow report as in the European Parliament. I also believe that adding new restrictions on the use of working languages in committee will be difficult.

Since I entered this assembly, I have seen how little known, but essential, these missions are. Thus, electoral observation missions are a unique exercise in democracy. We were at the origin and we can be proud of it. Having participated in many missions, I am firmly convinced that, in order to advance democracy, we must encourage by pointing out both efforts and mistakes. Dialogue, so dear to our founders, is at the heart of its missions. The Secretary-General, Mr. JAGLAND, in response to one of my questions, had undertaken to preserve their budget.

I hope that his or her successor does not call this commitment into question.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I call Mr MÖLLER on behalf of the Socialist Group.

Mr Ola MÖLLER (Sweden, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you. Thank you Madam Chair.

It has been said here before that the cuts on the youth section is a scandal. We could only agree. In a time when you raise their voice all over the world in the spirit of my countryman Greta Thunberg, it is astonishing that we suggest to cut on our own future. As a politician you know that there are two things, maybe more, but especially two things when it comes to budgetary cuts that hurts the country most, and so as well, the whole continent of Europe. That is cuts in education and public health. That strikes our weakest and our future. So to present these cuts on the youth section, especially to close the site in Budapest, in a country with a development that is very, very alarming, would stress huge problems and send a very, very bad signal to the whole continent that the Council of Europe doesn't trust the youth and doesn't trust youth's possibilities to change the world for a better future.

So from our group we say there are a lot of places that need to take budgetary cuts. With or without the Russian money there must be great efficiency promoted in this organisation. We've heard some examples here of where you can do the cuts. Of course the youth section can take some of the cuts, but to close the whole section and to rely on some some voluntary contributions would be a disaster. Youth should not be suffering because adults can't agree. That is the worst thing that can happen.

In a family, in a community, and in a parliament we must stress democracy. We must talk to each other and we must believe that youth can do what we cannot. They are holding peace camps between Russian and Ukrainian citizens and youth. They've discussed how to solve the crisis between Ukraine and Russia. That is something we must assist. We must tell people that that is the way forward. So don't let youth suffer because grown-ups cannot communicate and cannot get along together. Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I give the floor to Mr. JAGLAND, our Secretary General.

Thorbjørn Jagland (Secretary General of the Council of Europe): Thank you very much.

I have heard the two interventions on the so-called cuts in the youth sector which are based totally on misunderstanding or misinformation about what the proposal is. The proposal is namely to reinforce the youth sector. We want to join forces with the European Union in this field. We want to make a partial agreement which makes it possible to also get financing from the European Union.

I saw a proposal from Chancellor Merkel some time ago. She proposed to set up a youth work within the European Union. Then I asked myself, is that the right thing to do? To have one youth work in European union and one in the Council of Europe? Why shouldn't we join forces and have a strong youth sector in the Council of Europe but with the possibility of the European Union to also contribute to financing it?

We have several partial agreements in the Council of Europe. Some of them are the most successful. For instance, some weeks ago I traveled to Spain and the King of Spain handed over a very prestigious award to the Council Europe for our cultural roots, which we have organised across the continent. 38 cultural roots. This is a partial agreement. In the Council of Europe my proposal is to do the same with the youth sector in order to reinforce it. It is up to the Committee of Ministers and Member states to respond to it. But I also have to say in this hall, since I heard from the British colleague.. There were so many wrong things said in that intervention, so I cannot correct everything. But we have to keep in mind we have lived without the contribution from a major contributor for several years. We have managed to do it because we have had a very responsible management of this organisation.

The problem has been that it has been blocked in the Committee of Ministers to move from zero nominal growth to zero real growth so that we can get compensation for inflation. That has been blocked by a couple of states. This is the real problem for us. I would like to say here, if you want to change this, speak to your governments. Raise proposals in parliaments. And if you want to have a youth sector, support the proposal so that we can join forces and not have two separate institution in Europe. One in the European Union and one in the Council of Europe. We have too much of it already. Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

In the general discussion, I give the floor to Mr KÖCK.

Mr Eduard KÖCK (Austria, EPP/CD): Dear Chairwoman,

Dear Secretary General,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe that we can very well talk about the budget of the Council of Europe. I am also very grateful for the reports, which are very well prepared. In recent days, in the course of discussions over the resumption of dialogue with Russia, we have often discussed the budget. It has been repeatedly argued here that this dialogue should only be opened in order to reestablish membership contributions from Russia. I think this situation is a very, very bad one. We should learn the right lessons from this situation, for the future as well. The budget of the Council of Europe should be restructured in such a way that, a situation like this, will never take us to such an interpretation again.

Much has already been said, also about measures to act differently in the future. On the one hand, increasing income or setting fewer activities. Yesterday we revised the budget for 2017 from 8 p.m. to midnight, and could see that a lot has been saved already, also in terms of personnel. And that is a very, very responsible approach we have certainly taken here. There is one other point that attracted my attention, and that is the House in Paris, which, I believe, also has an impact of 6.5 million EUR. I do not know all the circumstances surrounding this House, but I think that we can conduct our sittings here quite well. This is one of the starting points that I have seen. Otherwise, and I think this is also a discussion to have with the Member States, to talk here; installing real zero growth in contributions. I think that it is very important and necessary, and that it should be like that. We will have to discuss this with our delegations, with our governments.

On the other hand, it is also repeatedly mentioned that fewer activities should be undertaken, and I take a very, very critical view on that. I do not believe that cuts should be made at all in the European Court of Human Rights; or in electoral observation missions; or in our debating sessions here. I think the Council of Europe has done a very, very good job and it should continue to do so. Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I call Mr HOWELL.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to start by criticising, if I may, gently, the first sentence on the summary of this report. It says "As it celebrates its 70th Anniversary, the Council of Europe is facing budgetary pressure from the Russian Federation". I don't believe that what we're talking about today is the budgetary pressure from the Russian Federation but it is our reaction to the Russian Federation and our reaction to that budgetary pressure.

Now, of course, Russia is crucial to this report and Russian money is crucial to this report but I don't think the issue here is how much money they owe or when it will be repaid. The question is do we just continue as normal? I heard the Secretary General just criticize my colleague, Sir Edward Lee, for getting facts wrong and it would be useful to have a meeting with the Secretary General to look at that in more detail but if you look at what the Council of Europe does it has moved significantly beyond its original role as a Human rights organisation.

I am attacked at home for my loyalty to the Council of Europe. I am attacked for that loyalty at home because they see it as just a general organisation, covering a whole number of different issues. It is interesting –isn't it?– that this is the first time, for ages, that we have had the British press interested in what we are doing – because it is the issue of Russia that has been at its heart– yet we have so many issues that are fundamental both to our Human rights agenda and to a broader perspective. They include artificial intelligence, which is mentioned in the report, and they also include climate change, but the budgetary requests that this report makes are premature. They are not challenging the necessity of why we do things and what we are trying to do is to increase the efficiency of this organisation. What we are trying to do is to look at fundamental things such as the pension costs in this organisation, to make sure that they are right and that they are at the right level.

Of course, we are going to lose staff but it's inevitable that such a large part of our activities are going to be concentrated in staff losses because it is an organisation that consists largely of staff. If we had gone about reforming this organization at all in the last 10 years or more we would not be in this situation and I would urge that we undertake a more fundamental review with the help of parliamentarians in this, in order to be able to see where we go next.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I call Mr LE NAY.

Mr Jacques LE NAY (France, ALDE): Madam President,

Mr Secretary General, my dear colleagues,

The Rule of law, Human rights and Democracy: these are the three pillars that support the Council of Europe's mission and justify its budget. As our rapporteur, Mr Mart van de VEN, points out in his resolution, our Parliamentary Assembly is fully in line with this mission with the assets and particularities conferred by our role as parliamentarians.

As we all know, the draft budgets of the Council of Europe and our Assembly are currently facing very strong budgetary pressure. It is due to one of our Member States. For political reasons, it attacks the means of functioning of an international organization which, however, only carries out the tasks entrusted to it by the Member States, and to which each of them has freely subscribed by becoming a member. The Council of Europe and your Parliamentary Assembly would thus be faced with an unacceptable alternative: either to renounce defending the values on which they are based or to be perniciously deprived of the necessary resources to do so.

In the first case, we would have to compete in financial inventiveness to make up the shortfall; in the second case, it is up to us to demonstrate a solid legal creativity that allows the Russian Federation to remain with us without changing our fundamental requirements.

Yesterday's vote should make it possible to respond to this last option without altering the nature of our institutions or reducing their capacities. This should hopefully prevent the implementation of the budget contingency plan scenario. It would have a very significant impact not only –and this is essential– on the high quality staff we need to carry out our mission, but also on other capacities, such as those related to translations and the organisation of our sessions.

I fully support the analysis as well as the proposals of our excellent rapporteur and I hope, like many of us here, that this political-financial episode will soon be behind us, and that we can finally resume our work in complete serenity.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I call Mrs D'AMBROSIO.

Ms Vanessa D'AMBROSIO (San Marino, SOC): Thank you, Madam President.

I speak on the question of the budget for the next two years for several reasons that I will try to represent in these minutes. I join those, including the rapporteur, who are concerned about the state of play of the Council of Europe budget. I would remind you that the *ad hoc* committee had already begun discussions on how to optimise resources to deal with the budget deficit. I agree with the rapporteur on the parts which stress the willingness to protect the programmes on artificial intelligence, gender equality and greater cooperation with the United Nations, just to take up some parts of the content of the text.

Having said that, I cannot, in any way, agree with paragraph 21 of the Doc. 14903 in which a principle is introduced which, in my opinion, is undemocratic, and which has ignored on an equal footing the territorial and economic realities of 16 Member States. A passage that ignored the rules and conditions that the states accepted when they joined the Council of Europe.

Introducing a minimum contribution of 500.000 euros goes against the principles of Article 38 of the Statute, thus putting at risk the participation of 16 countries in the Council of Europe. I have my doubts: are we a big Human rights house or a private club? What is the price of a Human right? How much does it cost for a citizen of any country that we represent here to appeal to the Court of Rights? I am convinced that in a multilateral context such as the Council of Europe, citizens, as well as rights and States, are not numbers and therefore do not have a price.

For these reasons, the proposal to introduce a minimum is wrong, it is geared towards exclusion and not inclusion.

Some people might think that in principle this reasoning could be shared, but in practice how can we translate it? You see, the answer is probably even simpler than the question. What could happen if these 16 countries failed to pay the famous minimum that they are trying to introduce? Simple as it is trivial: another budget deficit.

My country is one of the 16, but my reasoning would not change a bit even if it were a big contributor, because it's a question of fairness.

I would have expected to read how to make the Council of Europe work by cutting and optimising; I would have expected to discuss how to lighten bureaucracy because, as you all know better than I do, heavy bureaucracy has a cost; but never, never would I have expected to read and have to oppose the introduction of a minimum contribution thus transforming the house of rights by selling it out to those who can do without rights and values because they can simply pay more.

One final point: judges do not work for their own country, but in the sole interest of the Court and, I repeat, of all the citizens who have recourse to it. The same applies to the officials of the secretariat who work here: they are at the service of the organisation as a whole.

I would like to end by thanking and asking the House to support the amendments that we and other Members have tabled to delete the introduction of the minimum, and I would ask the rapporteur and my colleague, Mr Mart van de VEN, to be willing to take them into consideration. Thank you. [Chuckles]

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I call Mr KANDELAKI.

Mr Giorgi KANDELAKI (Georgia, EPP/CD): I have one simple message. Anybody who tried to pressure members of this assembly with the financial argument, was dishonest. This whole exercise was dishonest.

Georgia is a poor country, but Georgia paid fifty percent of its annual membership fee extra.

Georgia paid for the Russian citizens to continue using the European Court of Human Rights, even though the Russian Constitutional Court can, and has, overturned its judgements.

Why wasn't it possible to redistribute the amount in question for other countries?

Why not?

The amount, if redistributed for other Member States, per Member State, was really peanuts.

Those who pressured this assembly with the financial argument are dishonest.

Thank you

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I call Mr BALFE.

Lord Richard BALFE (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you, Madam President.

I'd like to begin by congratulating Mr Mart van de VEN. Having presented budgets myself over the years, it's a thankless task.

What you find is that politics is basically about spending other people's money. Political speeches are about not coming up with the money to be spent. We've heard a bit of that this morning.

I could tell Mr Hişyar ÖZSOY that I believe the other country apart from the United Kingdom that was opposing the contribution was Italy. Again, it is a country which has certain question marks over it, but then I'd remind Mr Hişyar ÖZSOY that Turkey itself decided to stop being a *grand payer*.

I believe that, at least, you need zero real growth, because we can't keep on starving European institutions. We look around and we're constantly criticising. Frankly, if you look at the qualifications needed to be a member of the staff here, they are pretty high. If I look at the wage that my local doctor gets it's actually higher than the 100,000 that was mentioned by an earlier speaker. Yes, this is a generous salary but it's not an outrageous salary. It is certainly no more than many people will achieve in the outside world. Let me remind you, every single member of the European Parliament gets 88,000 a year in salary.

As for the Russian contributions, yes, they are useful but we did once survive without them. The skill of budgeting is to raise the money from where we can. I believe that the minimum contribution proposal is a quite sound one, because of course there should be a minimum. But I also believe that we need to look seriously at the pension scheme. As with so many international organisations, the Member States have actually made a mess of the pension scheme. The deficit is far too high. When in the 1970s they decided to take the money out, they built themselves a problem which they are going to have to live with now.

I regret that the British government, in its negotiations with the European Union, has among other things threatened not to pay its fair share of the outstanding debts. That is a threat which must hang over institutions such as this one. I would look to the Rapporteur and his successors to come up with a way of securing the pensions in a slightly better manner than we have at the moment. I've had a lot of years in pensions. I can tell you that the international pension obligations are very badly met in most international organisations. We need to do better.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I call Mr LÓPEZ.

Mr Pere LÓPEZ (Andorra, SOC)*: Thank you very much.

I'm taking the floor to address an issue of great concern to my country, as well as my colleagues from San Marino, and that's introducing the idea of having a minimum level of contribution of around 500 000 euros for countries.

Before I go into my thoughts on the matter, let me give you some figures. I'm an economist, but I promise not to bore you. Our current contribution is below 250 000 euros. So that would mean we would have to more than double our current level of contribution to the budget.

What is more, is that it would actually amount to seven euros per inhabitant. Our figure - just to give you a relative idea - is equivalent to that of Germany, with their 80 million inhabitants. You would have to look at this in terms of the multiplication factor per inhabitant.

So I think there is confusion with the absolute values here. To multiply a budgetary contribution by two would require a significant effort for any State. Ask your Ministers of Finance, colleagues, if they can multiply their delegations' budgets two-fold.

A few years ago I was Minister of Finance, and I can assure you that I'm well versed in such matters. Above and beyond these figures, we have to perhaps dig a little bit deeper and question the motivation for these changes. If it is a collection issue, it doesn't seem like the hundreds of thousands of euros that San Marino and Andorra can contribute - and much less other the small countries - will be able to solve much.

Moreover, as I said before, the relative effort needed to make these contributions, as well as to travel to and attend meetings, is far higher for smaller States than for larger ones.

At a different part in the document, it mentions a possible cost impact. We are talking here about a judge, an administrator and an assistant. From our point of view, and obviously with all due respect, we're talking about professionals that are working for the organisation as a whole and not for individual countries. I think that that is particularly clear-cut in the case of judges.

Therefore, we appreciate you listening to our case and we ask you to consider the amendments put down by my colleagues from citizens of San Marino with respect to this point.

Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I call Mr FOULKES.

Lord George FOULKES (United Kingdom, SOC): Madam President, we have been a bit too preoccupied with Russia, just as the United Kingdom is a bit too preoccupied with Brexit.

I want to take a wider perspective. This is my third time as a delegate here. I was here in the 1980s, at the beginning of this century, and here I am again. Grayer and whiter than when I started. My feeling, however, is that it's almost exactly the same as when I first came here, it has hardly changed at all.

This whole organisation is very conservative, very sclerotic. It's really very difficult to get any changes in it. Actually, it makes the House of Lords look progressive, which is a quite a feat.

I want to make one or two suggestions:

First of all, we should focus more on our key Human Rights objectives. What I'm interested in is media freedom, and the safety of journalists. We're doing some good work on that, we could do more, and this is the kind of area we should be involved in.

Secondly, the PACE budget needs to be increased, as others have said. I must say, and I'm at risk of the Secretary General jumping up and telling me how wrong I am again, but I'll face that. I don't see why we have to have this huge administration of the Secretary General and a deputy Secretary General. Why do we need a deputy, with all the panoply that a deputy has? Someone else could stand in if the Secretary General isn't available, there is a huge directorate to do that. Whereas the assembly itself is being starved of resources.

Thirdly, the different parts of the Council of Europe seemed to work in silos. The Court, the Human Rights Commissioner, the Administration of the Council of Europe and us in the Assembly. We should be working more closely together, cooperating more, there's a great deal more that can be done.

So finally, I just want to say, what we need when we're looking for a new Secretary General - and goodness me I'm looking forward to that - we want someone with imagination. Someone who can see the excitement, the potential, the way in which this organization can develop, and can make it into a true active, progressive, Human Rights organization representing the whole of Europe

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I call Mr GATTI.

Mr Marco GATTI (San Marino, EPP/CD): For these reasons, I certainly welcome the draft report that has been presented to try to contain expenditure and also to evaluate greater revenue for the organisation's budget. However, I would ask for attention to be paid to ensuring that the economic reasons for this report do not override the reasons for law and justice.

This is what I am saying about a paragraph that has already been mentioned, namely paragraph 21 of the report, where perhaps the only well-defined proposal is to introduce a minimum contribution to be paid by all the Member States, justifying it, as has been said, by the need to cover the annual cost of a judge or an administrative person and an assistant. The provisions of Article 38 of the Council of Europe Statute, which stipulate that contributions must be calculated according to the population of each country and that the method of calculation must be established by the Committee of Ministers, have probably escaped consideration. Just as it has escaped the fact that the judge does not work exclusively for that country; on the contrary, for small countries he works mainly for all the other countries, like the secretariat, as has already been mentioned.

Therefore, establishing a minimum contribution certainly penalizes countries with a smaller population and also the poorest countries.

We believe that what the Committee of Ministers has established to date –therefore a criterion that takes into account the number of the country's population and GDP– is the right criterion. Then we will work on the parameter, but not on the criterion at all.

We therefore call for a review of this position with the amendments that have been tabled.

From my point of view, there is also a reason why the Committee of Ministers decides: that is, because in the Committee of Ministers there is equal dignity for the countries; each country has one vote. It is not that countries, because they have a larger population, greater representativeness in the Assembly, can also decide on small ones. I believe that this must be strongly reaffirmed by this House.

Finally, I would like to raise two questions. The first in law: respect for the Statute. I do not believe that the Statute can be superseded by a regulation or a resolution. The second is a question of justice: the crisis cannot be paid for by the smaller countries or by the poorer ones.

Therefore, I hope that, in accordance with the Statute and using common sense, the use of a legal opinion can be avoided. Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The last speaker in this debate is Mr RAVALLIA.

Mr Mohamed-Iqbal RAVALLIA (Canada): Thank you Madame President.

May 2019 marked the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe.

As a Canadian delegate I'd like to highlight the importance of that commemoration by recalling some key elements of Canada's participation in the Council of Europe.

Canada became an observer state within the Committee of Ministers in 1996.

Canadian parliamentarians were granted official Observer status with the assembly in 1997.

As part of our involvement, Canada helped develop, sign and ratify certain Council of Europe conventions, including the Convention on Cybercrime, which was ratified in 2015.

Canada is also party to some Council of Europe partial agreements, such as the European Commission for Democracy through Law, the Venice Commission.

Canada had become an observer with the Venice Commission since 1991 and joined as a full member just a few weeks ago.

The contribution of Canada to the Venice Commission is approximately 50,000 Euros annually.

Canada is also party to a Council of Europe partial agreement known as *Eurimage* - the European support fund for the co-production and distribution of creative cinematographic and audiovisual works.

As an associate member of your *Your Image* since March 2017, Canada contributes approximately 1 million euros to the fund annually.

The financial commitments of Canada also include a five million dollar contribution over a three year period to the Council of Europe's action plan for Ukraine, announced in February 2019.

Although Canada is not a Member State of the Council of Europe, and therefore does not contribute to the organisation's regular budget, or to the Parliamentary Assembly's expenditure, we are one of the Council of Europe's largest external financial partners.

Canada is a strong supporter of the rules-based international order, a fundamental principle of organisations such as the Council of Europe.

Looking ahead at the Council of Europe's future challenges, such as rising extremism and populism, hate speech and the potential impact of artificial intelligence on human rights, I note that Canada shares these challenges.

I would like to recognise that the Council of Europe is a valuable partner for Canada.

We share its challenges, but also its ongoing work and its core values in support of democracy, Human Rights and the rule of law.

As we celebrate its 70th Anniversary, I hope that the Council of Europe and Canada continue to foster our rich and vibrant relationship well into the future.

Merci.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you to you.

The list of speakers is thus exhausted.

I call on the Commissions to reply.

Mr. VAN DE VEN, you have seven minutes left. You have the floor.

Mr Mart van de VEN (Netherlands, ALDE, Rapporteur): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank all the colleagues for their contribution to this debate. I think it helps me to gain insight, on the one hand; on the other hand, I would like to start with mentioning something on the economisation as to the organisation of the Council of Europe in recent years. This organisation is already, since 8 years, under continuous reorganisation to sober up its expenses. It was not helpful that a zero nominal growth was introduced. Staff has to be paid and they are living in a world that's getting more expensive. That has been solved by dismissing 10 out of 94 staff in the last eight years. So the salary increase, which is necessary for 84 people, was solved by dismissing 10 people.

Also we have seen –it was mentioned today– that Turkey ceased to be a *grand payeur*. Also this triggered a further sobering-up of the organisation. I think it is wrong to start with continuing a zero nominal growth and requesting to further sobering up in years to come because there is indeed a challenge as to Human rights. I believe the Council of Europe is the only international organisation that is facing such a zero nominal growth, already since 8 years. So it's about time and I didn't mention it in my introduction today because I'm convinced that we have past this hurdle, I really hope so, that we passed a hurdle and that we will have at least zero real growth.

So I agree to the comment of the Secretary General and there was a request from Mr Howell to have a discussion and I think it's wise that indeed these facts are shared with typically the UK delegation so that they know what the facts are and then they can further deliberate in this respect.

As to youth and youth activities, the Secretary was also very helpful in explaining that another solution is to be found. I have sympathy, of course, for the fact that youth activities and the youth department should be supported, one way or another; on the other hand, this is, of course, lobbying and there are more institutions in the Council of Europe that I expect will be starting lobbying and it is to the benefit of the youth that they start so early. So they are really on the move with the lobbying work but as a general Rapporteur I have to look where you can, indeed, have some restrictions if that is going to happen, hopefully not.

On the zero nominal growth Mr ÖZSOY was also clear, so I dealt with that one.

Now we come to the point of the proposal to have a minimum contribution by all Member States and I want to be quite clear, as your general Rapporteur, that I feel that if you are a member of a sports club you have to pay your contribution and there should be a minimum contribution. Having said that I accept, of course, that you can discuss on a 500 000 amount as a minimum contribution but I think there is no such thing –also not on Human rights– as a free ride. So you have to pay for the services that are rendered by this organisation but, of course, you have to look at possibilities and what is a justifiable contribution also by smaller countries. There were, indeed, very important amendments proposed this morning by the Rules Committee, we will come back to that.

I conceded to the fact that we, indeed –but I'm now a little bit in advance of the amendments– I concede that I agreed to the proposal to cross out the amount of the five hundred thousand Euro and, in that respect, I hope that I, indeed, made a gesture, stretch out a hand to the smaller countries that it is a matter to be discussed, but claiming that Human rights ensues that you do not have to pay anything is, for me, a little bit too far.

Then, to the next issue, what I see is there's a lot being said about Russia and the payment by Russia. I will not go into detail because that would be a repetition of the discussion we had –to a certain extent– yesterday evening but I hope this will be solved. It is a pressing matter and I hope that we have a solution there and I referred to that in my introductory comments.

Well, indeed, Mr. Howell also pressed the fact that now in the UK, Russia is in the newspapers, sorry, the Council of Europe is in the newspapers as to the background of the Skripal issue and that is a reason to act.

Mr. HOWELL referred to the pension cost, but he was not the only one, also Lord BALFE referred to the pension scheme and this is experience from the past. I fully agree, there are now three different pension schemes in this organisation and, in fact, that is a time bomb, so to speak, that can explode in the face of the former staff of this organisation.

I believe that Lord FOULKES had some very good comments as to possible work for the organisation, the fora and the journalists and he also supported, in my view, that the budget of the PACE should be increased. I think it's having said that I can thank Mr. RAVALIA for his speech. I thank Canada for the support, the financial support but also otherwise that Canada gives to this very important international institution on Human rights. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr. Rapporteur.

Madam President of the Commission, you have the floor. You have three minutes.

Mrs. De SUTTER.

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Mrs President, of course, this report has been prepared by Mr Mart van de VEN after substantial discussions in the committee.

I just want to thank him for the work that you did.

I don't have any comments as to the substance. It was all discussed in the debate. His answers made it clear that we still have a lot of work on the budget, and all the challenges that we have in front of us in the coming years. But I have nothing else to add at this moment.

Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you to you.

The Committee on Rules of Procedure has presented a draft opinion to which four amendments have been tabled, and a draft resolution to which an amendment has been tabled.

First of all, we will examine the draft opinion. Amendments will be called in the order in which they apply to the text as published in the compendium of amendments.

I would remind you, ladies and gentlemen, that the time limit for each amendment is 30 seconds.

We come to Amendment No. 3. If adopted, Amendments 1 and 4 fall.

I call Mrs d'Ambrosio to support Amendment number 3.

Vote: Budget and priorities of the Council of Europe for the biennium 2020-2021 / Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2020-2021

Ms Vanessa D'AMBROSIO (San Marino, SOC): Thank you, President.

We are calling for paragraph 21 to be deleted, because the introduction of a minimum amount means going beyond the principle of proportionality in Article 38 of the Staff Regulations.

I still remember that judges, like the members of the secretariat, work for the collective interest and of all, not for the countries they belong to. So it's true, we're not in a sports club, we don't play golf, nobody said that small countries don't have to pay, but they ask to respect the principle of proportionality. Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

That is not the case.

What is the Commission's opinion?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): Unanimously against.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The Commission unanimously opposes this.

We will proceed to the vote.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

Amendment 3 is rejected.

Ms Marie-Christine DALLOZ (France, EPP/CD): Madam Speaker, the amendment is defended.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against Amendment No. 1?

Ms Vanessa D'AMBROSIO (San Marino, SOC): Thank you very much.

Well, I am opposed to this amendment because we have this principle of a minimum contribution, which is mistaken because Member States should be making contributions which are proportionate. Having a minimum level contribution means aggregating this principle of proportionality. We are in favour of proportionality not a minimum.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

What is the Commission's opinion?

Mr Mart van de VEN (Netherlands, ALDE): Thank you Madame chair I listened to the comments made.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): I am not asking the rapporteur for his opinion, I am asking the Commission for its opinion.

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): I'm sorry. The committee was in favour.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The Committee is in favour.

We will now proceed to the vote.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

Amendment number 1 is adopted and this means that amendment number 4 falls.

Amendment number 2.

I call Mr GALE, Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER, Mrs GOGUADZE?

Mr. HOWELL is not here. Does anyone support this amendment number 2? Apparently, no one. Under these conditions we do not vote...

Sorry, Mrs GOGUADZE.

Ms Nino GOGUADZE (Georgia, EC): Thank you Madame Chair.

The suggestion is in the draft report opinion, paragraph 25, to replace the second sentence with the following sentence:

'Referring to its recommendation 2153 of 2019 the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to ensure that all Member States comply with their statutory obligations and ask to implement article 8 and 9 of the statute of the Council of Europe without further delay if the Russian Federation still refuses to pay a part of or all it's unpaid contributions'.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

That is not the case.

What is the Commission's opinion?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): In favour with a large majority.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

We will now proceed to the vote on Amendment No. 2. The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

Amendment 2 is adopted.

We will vote on the draft opinion contained in document 14903, as amended.

I would remind you that the required majority is two thirds of the votes cast.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The draft opinion was adopted, with a 2/3 majority.

We will now consider the draft resolution to which an amendment has been tabled, and to support amendment number 1, Mr DAEMS is still not here.

Madame d'ALLOZ.

Ms Marie-Christine DALLOZ (France, EPP/CD): Yes, Madam President, in order not to lengthen our debates, the amendment is defended with the arguments noted in the document.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Ms Petra De SUTTER (Belgium, SOC): The committee is against with a large majority.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The Commission objects.

We will now proceed to the vote.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

Amendment 1 is rejected.

We shall now proceed to vote on the draft resolution, contained in Document 14901.

The ballot is open.

The vote is closed.

The resolution was adopted.

Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have reached the end of this debate. I wish to thank our general rapporteur on the budget: this is always a delicate and important task.

The next sitting will be held this afternoon at 3.30 p.m. with the agenda of this part-session which has been approved.

The meeting is adjourned.

I wish you a good appetite.

The sitting was closed at 12h50