Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Provisional edition
Monday 23 January 2023, morning

Official report of debates

Opening of the part-session

Opening of the sitting No. 1

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Attention.

The sitting is open.

On behalf of you, I would like declare the 2023 –after the new year– Ordinary Session of the Council of Europe open.

Thank you.

Allow me, dear friends, to say that our sitting is open, and to declare our Ordinary Session –of this after new year 2023 session– of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe open.

Welcome.

I would like to welcome the Secretary General.

It is nice to be together.

Allow me, friends –and sorry for the joke– being an honourable longstanding member of our Assembly, and having the honourable duty to say a few words on the beginning of our session. After that, we will go with all possible procedures for the election and for the approval of our seats in committees and chairmanships.

Allow me to say that I remember very well when I entered these exact facilities of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, this hemicycle, for the first time in 1993. At that same time, I met Ms Despina CHATZIVASSILIOU-TSOVILIS. It was her first year too.

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.

So, Ms Despina CHATZIVASSILIOU-TSOVILIS, 30 years for both of us together. I can humorously tell Ms Despina CHATZIVASSILIOU-TSOVILIS: you still radiate youth! The conditions in our post-Soviet prisons were indeed poor. That was connected to your report during those times. But later, Lithuania accepted the criticism and corrected the situation.

Separately, looking back on the history of the Assembly, I would like to thank the Kingdom of Denmark and their delegations for the historical resolution proposed in 1960 with the courage of the member of parliament and the conservative leader of the Danish party Marie Antoinette von Lowzow, who died in 1985, and that was adopted by the then consultative Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe regarding the unrecognition of the occupation of all three Baltic states by the Soviet Union.

In 1996, Russia was obliged to withdraw its troops from Moldova and to pay a compensation to those deported to Siberian gulags.

Most of those commitments from 1996 with the Russian Federation were not fulfilled.

We will be heading for another world war, then told our delegation when Russia rejected to fulfil all their obligations to the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and to the Council of Europe's executive part.

If you remember, dear friends, Russian democrats in this room, in this chamber, talked about... Boris Nemtsov, sending with his head held high, as the Maidan barricades in Kiev, said that the Russian democrats are with Ukraine. For that he was killed in front of the Kremlin.

After the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, after the unprovoked annexation of Ukrainian Crimea in 2014, with the representative of bordering states –especially Poland, the Baltic states, from time to time our Romanian colleagues– constantly tried to warn you about the threat to us from Russia.

Ukraine –which now has the status of a proud European Union candidate country– is now under attack by mass murderers.

This country, Ukraine, even during the war, when the bombs are falling, heroically takes decision that corresponds to the spirit of the values of the Council of Europe.

Dear Secretary General,

Let's applaud our Ukrainian friends for that. That you continue to vote in favour for conventions and resolutions created by the Council of Europe.

We just recently unanimously recognised the Kremlin regime as terrorists. Therefore, I hope that the on 17 May of this year the upcoming Council of Europe Summit in Reykjavik will achieve concrete results in stopping Russian aggression against the whole democratic world.

Persons who commit crimes of aggression in Ukraine must face the retribution and take responsibility for their actions. Those who gave orders to destroy cities and kill every day civilians. It is for this purpose that the special tribunal must be established to investigate the crimes of Russia's aggression.

Whether the dividing line is drawn today, dear friends, by the democratic world, it will remain there for many many years to come.

In his speech yesterday, in occasion of the 60 years of the 1963 German-French agreement, President Macron drew attention yesterday to the project of the European Union which we will all have to defend. We must defend European sovereignty as if it had been struck by German and French leaders yesterday.

After 24 February, we unanimously reached a formula, and would like to stress unanimously, unanimously, in this chamber, reached the formula of all kinds of support –including tanks– for Ukraine.

Therefore, I ask each of you in your political parties and groups, in your honourable districts, to seek support for the Ukrainian nation, which is bravely fighting a desperate war of our values.

As the great bells struck midnight in the Kremlin on New Year’s Eve 2022 the cheer went up that “Russia is Expanding”.

You should know, Mister Putin, that the entire democratic world, shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine, is toasting not for the expansion of Russia, but for the enlargement of the space for democracy, peace and European values. To that, we can say in this new year, "Hurray".

On 27 January, just in a few days, we will commemorate the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. You know very well, like former colleague Mr Boriss CILEVIČS, I am from a Holocaust surviving family. My mother, Paulina, spent four years in a Nazi camp, tortured every day.

On behalf of the victims of the Holocaust, I would like to ask Mister Putin to stop using the false anti-Nazi slogan against Ukrainians. To stop using the sacred memory of the victims of the Holocaust for the criminal imperial expansion of the territory of Russia.

So, be brave Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Glory to Ukraine! *Slava Ukraini! Bon courage !*

Now we will start the examination of the credentials.

The first on the agenda is the examination of credentials of members for the 2023 year Ordinary Session of the Assembly.

The credentials have been submitted to the President in accordance with Rule 6 of the rules of procedure. The names of the representatives and substitutes are on Document 15687.

If no credentials are challenged, the credentials will be ratified.

Are there any credentials, dear friends?

Yes, about credentials...

Mr Harald WEYEL (Germany, EC/DA): That's Mr Harald WEYEL from Germany.

I must challenge the credentials because our delegation has been corrupted by the last elections on the Federal level. The composition of the delegation consists of two members of the Left Party, and the Left Party did win their seats only on the Special Rule of three direct mandates, two of them in Berlin. The Berlin elections have to be repeated by order of the Berlin Supreme Court on 12 February this year.

The composition of the delegation is not just because of the results and the organisation of the elections of 2021, which have to be repeated. Therefore, I bring it to your attention, colleagues, and may you back my motion that it has to be challenged. We are a democracy. We are an exemplary democracy, and that is an issue which concerns not only Belarus but all countries which are members of this great Assembly.

Thank you.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much. Please, can you remind me your name?

W E Y E L.

Thank you

The Assembly now will have noted what you, dear colleague, said, but I must rule that it does not constitute a formal objection under our Rules of Procedure, so I will still thank you for your contribution, dear colleague.

So, for that reason, I would like to declare credentials set out in Document 15687 are ratified. Okay?

So, thank you.

I would like to go ahead with the election of the President of the Assembly.

The next item on the agenda is the election of the President of our Assembly. We have received two candidatures, that is for Mr Tiny KOX. He is here in the hemicycle, yes? Incumbent President of the Assembly, member of the Dutch delegation, and member of the Group of the Unified European Left. And our dear friend Mr Oleksandr MEREZHKO, member of the Ukrainian delegation and member of the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance.

So the list of candidates and supporting signatures can be found in the document under number 2023/03. In accordance with the rule 15 the President shall be elected by secret ballot. If neither candidate obtains an absolute majority of the votes cast as the first ballot, there will be a second ballot, in which a relative majority will be required.

The vote will be conducted using the electronic voting system.

I would like to announce that five tellers representing each political group will help oversee the election and counting. The tellers are, I would like to announce the names: from Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group our friend Ms Klotilda BUSHKA, from Group of the European People's Party Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN, from Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Ms Mireille CLAPOT, from European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, from Group of the Unified European Left Mr Paul GAVAN.

So that's all our honourable friends who will be counting and supervising the elections.

Now I would like with your support to invite the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly to recall the voting procedure and to present the technical Arrangements that have been put in place for this election.

Please the floor is open Madam Secretary General thank

Ms Despina CHATZIVASSILIOU-TSOVILIS (Secretary General of the Council of Europe): Thank you, Mister President.

As it has been announced to you, please note that the vote will be conducted electronically using the Scytl system online voting platform.

I remind you that only members entitled to vote, namely the representatives and the substitutes who have been duly notified within the prescribed deadline, will be able to take part in the vote.

To vote, you must use your personal email address as well as the mobile phone number you have previously provided to the Secretariat. If you have any problem because, for some reason when you put your email address in, it does not work, please make a sign to us. We have the list of all the email addresses you have provided to the Secretariat.

If for any reason you don't receive the code by SMS, which normally is the procedure within a few minutes after you have identified with your email address, again, we can help you. There is a help desk just behind the Chamber for this purpose. Just make a sign to us.

When the voting is open, you will indeed receive an email with a link to the electronic ballot, and then you follow the instructions. Another message will inform you of the closure of the vote, but this is in any case foreseen for 12:20 p.m.

Again, please, if you encounter any technical problems, just make a sign to us. We will be helping you. We can also provide you the link to go to the ballot procedure as soon as you show that there is any problem.

Thank you very much.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you for clarification, dear Madam Despina CHATZIVASSILIOU-TSOVILIS.

Now I would like to announce that we are moving to the election of the President.

We will now open the vote that will close at 12:20 p.m. That means we have one hour. After that, the votes will be checked and verified.

The result today will be announced at 1:00 p.m. The Assembly will conclude the other items of the sitting as set out in the draft agenda.

I'm declaring that the vote is open.

I would like declare to you, again, that the results will be announced at 1:00 p.m.

Ms Despina CHATZIVASSILIOU-TSOVILIS has just provided for us the technical support for those who will be a little bit lost in the technical procedures during the electronic voting.

Thank you.

The consultation, if you would like to have one, is behind the place where the former place of our voting usually was, behind the scene here and the podium.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Slowly, slowly.

Dear Friends,

I would like to ask you to take your seats. We are underway to announce the results.

Dear Colleagues, Dear Secretary General of the Council of Europe,

It is an honour for me to be here shortly in presiding our great Assembly to announce the results of the election for the President of the Assembly.

Just now I will go through the points announcing the results in every part of the elections.

The total number of members voting was 223.

The number of spoilt ballot papers was 4.

The number of valid votes was 219.

I would like to remind you that 110 votes are required for an absolute majority of the votes cast.

Now I declare the results:

Mr Tiny KOX has received 175 votes.

Mr Oleksandr MEREZHKO received 44 votes.

Looking at the fact that our colleague Mr Tiny KOX has received 175 votes, and that is the absolute majority of the votes cast,

I declare Mr Tiny KOX elected president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for this ordinary session.

I am glad to congratulate Mr Tiny KOX on his election, and I would like to invite Mr Tiny KOX to take his place.

We have spent many years together with you, friends, and with Mr Tiny KOX, so you will allow me to wish you a good, healthy and safe new year and *Slava Ukraini.*

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Madam Secretary General,

Mister Deputy Secretary General,

Madam Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly,

Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors members of the Assembly and all those who are following our meeting online or from the gallery,

First of all, I would like to sincerely thank Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS for opening this first part of the 2023 Session. I would also like to thank Mr Oleksandr MEREZHKO for his participation in this election.

I would like to thank all of you, Members of the Assembly, for re-electing me as your President.

I ask for your support for this coming year, which could be as challenging as last year.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Dear Colleagues,

Last year we were confronted with the beginning of Russia's unilateral war of aggression against our member State Ukraine.

We, together, had to take unprecedented steps.

Less than one day after the invasion, we suspended the membership of the Russian Federation in the Council of Europe.

Within three weeks, we expelled Russia from this organisation because of its blatant violation of our statute, which obliges us all to maintain and protect peace in Europe.

By crossing Ukraine borders –as I have said several times– Russia also crossed our red lines.

Within two months, we adopted the proposal to create an ad-hoc tribunal to deal with the crime of aggression. Since then, the support for this Assembly's proposal has grown as member States and other international organisations, including the European Parliament, now endorse it.

We also adopted many other relevant decisions and took many bold decisions and actions to counter this illegal unilateral aggression and its awful consequences for the state and the people of Ukraine.

May I thank all of those with whom I worked hard on these matters last year, and I hope we remain as committed, creative, and united this year.

Thank you very much, Madam Secretary General. Thank you very much to the ambassadors and the Committee of Ministers, to the leaders of national delegations and political groups, the president of the congress, the Human Rights Commissioner, and all the others, for our intense and fruitful co-operation in these challenging times.

May I ask you all to continue this co-operation, as we are now on the road to Reykjavik for the Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government in mid-May, made very much also on our request, to decide on the future of the European multilateral co-operation and our place in Europe's political architecture.

May I ask you, dear Members of this Assembly, to continue to intensify our functioning as one of the most relevant European agoras to find together sustainable answers to the existential questions in these so dangerous times.

I especially thank the great team of our Secretariat and the leadership of our Assembly's Secretary General, as well as the members of my private office. Together they make it possible for me and for us to do our work to the best of our abilities, together with the great staff of our whole organisation led by our Secretary General of the Council of Europe. To do the best we can do, which is so much needed in these very challenging, and as I said, dangerous times.

Dear Colleagues,

The war has been dominating, and is dominating, and will continue to dominate our agenda and activities. It is dominating every single day of every single Ukrainian citizen.

As we speak, again, Ukrainian people suffer and die in a war that should have never had started and must end as soon as possible.

May I, therefore, propose, as we did before, to have a moment of silence for all the victims of this brutal Russian aggression.

Thank you so much.

I wish to repeat what I have said many times in the past.

This war should never, never ever, become a normality. We must not allow our attention to be shifted away from it.

It is on our agenda, it will stay on our agenda until we achieve what is said in the statute of this Council of Europe, to achieve piece.

I salute the members of the Ukrainian delegation who are here amongst us, and I ask them and you all to begin this first plenary session of 2023.

Must will be asked from us all, from me, but also from you. I'm confident that together we can deliver.

Thank you very much. Let's now start working.

Thank you very much.

I hear a point of order.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC/DA): I'm so sorry. It took a little time to cut in.

Congratulations, Tiny, on being adopted. I wish to talk about a point of order that happened earlier, and I don't know if you heard it.

The credentials of the German delegation were challenged because of the situation in Berlin.

The person who actually challenged them –I'm not sure if he's in the room, I can't see that far because I haven't got my glasses– put word out using the word "credentials" twice. He's sitting in his place.

I've also looked at Rule 7, and I cannot see where you have to use it to type wording. If the word "challenge credentials" is used twice, and it is on the video, Mister President, it is there. Then why will we stop? I would ask you, Mister President, that we be allowed to stand on this issue, because I believe that this situation has not been handled well. I know you were not in the chair, so it is not your blame, but I do think that this is not the way we should, in a democratic organisation, be behaving.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I take note of your remarks, Mister Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER.

I was in the Hemicycle. What I saw is that a statement was made by a member of the German delegation. I did not hear him indicate whether he was challenging credentials on Rule 7 or Rule 8.

Sorry, sir, you do not have the floor. We behave here in a normal way. I do not know from which parliament you come, but you do not shout, and you do not say "rubbish!". You just listen.

We are now answering a point of order from Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER. That was not indicated. The chair then ruled that this was not a challenge of the credentials, and there he asked whether the credentials would be accepted. There was no opposition, and then the credentials have been adopted.

Whatever is said now, I will seek advice of the President of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs. But these credentials have been adopted. We cannot and undo that. I would like to leave it here. If it's the same point of order, we are not going to continue. You understand that as well?

You have a point of order.

Mr Richard BACON (United Kingdom, EC/DA): My point of order, Mister President – and congratulations on your election – is that you should look at the video.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Would you please repeat? Because I did not understand.

Mr Richard BACON (United Kingdom, EC/DA): Mister President,

My point of order is that the words "challenge the credentials" were used. All you have to do to believe that is to look at the video. I understand you may not have seen it, but all you have to do is to look at the video.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

That is what I concluded. Now, sorry, we are now going to stop this discussion.

What we do conclude is that, one, the credentials have been ratified. That is the fact we cannot change. I will seek advice from the Chair of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs on what has happened and, if needed, we will come back to the issue. But the decisions have been taken. This decision is taken.

I now continue with the rest of our Agenda. The next item on the Agenda is the Election of Vice-Presidents of the Assembly. Eighteen nominations for Vice-Presidents are listed in document AS/Inf (2023) 01.

If there is no request for a vote, they will be declared elected.

I do not see a request for the vote.

Since there is no request for the vote, I declare these candidates elected as Vice-Presidents. I congratulate them all on their election and the Vice-Presidents shall take precedence by age.

The next item on our Agenda is the appointment of members of committees. The candidatures for the general committees of the Assembly have been published in document Commissions (2023) 01 + Add. 1.

Are these proposals agreed? I do not see any objections, so they are approved. The committees are appointed accordingly and can from now on function.

Let's see what the Agenda brings us now. Before we examine the draft agenda, the Assembly needs to consider requests for debates on urgent and current affairs procedures.

The Bureau has received the following:

– a request on an urgent procedure on "Legal and human rights aspects of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine", requested by the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights,

– a request for a current affairs debate on "Recent tensions between Pristina and Belgrade", requested by the United Kingdom delegation,

– a request for a debate under urgent procedure on "Attacks against public service workers", requested by the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance,

– a request for a current affairs debate on "How to improve Council of Europe's co-operation with civil society, as a way to strengthen and protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law, including in Belarus and the Russian Federation", from the Norwegian delegation and

– a request for current affairs debate on "Addressing the humanitarian consequences of the blockade of the Latchin corridor".

I inform you that at its meeting this morning the Bureau decided to recommend to the Assembly to hold the urgent debate on "Legal issues and human rights violations related to the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine" as well as the current affairs debate on "Recent tensions between Pristina and Belgrade" and "Addressing the humanitarian consequences of the blockade of the Latchin corridor".

We will first consider the request for debate on the urgent procedure. Does the Assembly agree to the Bureau's recommendation to hold an urgent debate on Legal and human rights aspects on the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine? I do not see any objections, so the Bureau's recommendation is accepted and the request for urgent procedure is therefore approved.

It is proposed that the debate will take place on Thursday morning as set out in the Agenda and be referred to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights.

As set out this morning, the Bureau agreed to recommend the Assembly that the request from the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance group for debate on urgent procedures on "Attacks against public service workers" is not supported.

Is the Bureau's recommendation accepted?

Mr Bob De BRABANDERE (Belgium, EC/DA): Car burnings and targeted attacks on firefighters, medical staff, and security forces on New Year's Eve have become a yearly habit in several countries: Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden. Public servicemen and servicewomen.

(Mr Tiny KOX says: It's not time to have a long statement.)

I want to ask for a vote to put this debate under urgent procedure back on the agenda.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Mister Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER?

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC/DA): Mister President, thank you very much.

The reason this is..

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I am very sorry, Ian, I'm now not following the rules.

We have one speaker on each item. We will surely hear from you during the week, Ian, but here you have to follow the rules.

Okay.

We have now this request for a vote. That means that we have to put it to vote. Yes?

As you see, I'm just elected so I could not see these files before, because that would not have been fair. There is an objection to the Bureau's recommendation on the request for an urgent debate on attacks against public workers. We, therefore, must proceed to the vote.

We will hear one speaker for the request, one speaker against, and a representative of the Bureau speaking in its name.

Who wishes to speak in favour of upholding this debate?

Sir, you have the floor, 30 seconds.

Mr Bob De BRABANDERE (Belgium, EC/DA): Targeted attacks on firefighters, medical staff, and security forces on New Year's Eve have become a yearly habit in several countries: Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden – I can't name them all.

Public servicemen and women are there to protect and help us. We owe it to them to give these terrible crimes the necessary attention in this Parliamentary Assembly.

So, I want to ask for a vote to put this debate on the Urgent Procedure back on the Agenda, where it belongs.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, sir.

Who wants to speak against the request?

Nobody wants to speak against this.

Sorry. Mr George KATROUGALOS.

Mr George KATROUGALOS (Greece, UEL): I would like to support the decision of the Presidential Committee of the Bureau to proceed with the debate that we have already decided. I should also consider, on its merits, the request for the urgent debate by the European Conservatives Group.

I think that what they promote, that the celebration of oppressive injustice not to become a pretext for mass riots, arson, and vandalism, is not of the character of an emergency that needs to be discussed.

In my understanding, also, it is a kind of criticism to demonstration in general, not violent demonstration, not these kind of events that we want to avoid.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Your 30 seconds have passed. We have now had one speaker in favour.

We now shall vote on the request for urgent procedure.

Please listen carefully. The decision needs a two-thirds majority. Those who are in favour of holding this debate should vote "Yes". Those who are against holding such debate should vote "No".

The vote is open.

I close the vote. I call for the results to be displayed.

The request is rejected as it does not have a two-thirds majority.

We are now on page 55.

We now come to the consideration of the request for current affairs debate on rule 53.1.

The Assembly may hold one or two current affairs debates.

The first request is for a current affairs debate on the "Recent tensions between Pristina and Belgrade" from the United Kingdom delegation. At its meeting this morning the Bureau approved this request and therefore recommends to the Assembly that the matter be debated during this part session.

Does the Assembly agree to this recommendation?

I do not see any objection. Therefore, the request for a current affairs debate is therefore approved. The debate will be opened by Mr John HOWELL.

We now come to the second request for a current affairs debate on "Addressing the humanitarian consequences of the blockade of the Latchin corridor" from the United Kingdom delegation. At its meeting this morning the Bureau approved this request and therefore recommends to the Assembly that the matter be debated during this part session.

Does the Assembly agree to this recommendation?

I do not see any objection.

I do not see any objection. I have to inform you that this was a proposal from the Presidential Committee.

I see an objection.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Mr President, let me first of all congratulate you for your reelection to this position.

I hope that you will be able to manage this Parliamentary Assembly in a very acceptable way.

Today, early in the morning, we saw some problematic issues which are very strange, especially for me as a member of the European Conservatives Group, the president of our group already mentioned that.

But I'm against this current affairs debate, of course, because this is not true.

I know that I will be in the minority, but I have to say that this is not true.

The Lachin Corridor is open. That's why, when you are entitled, said that humanitarian consequences of blockade, this is exactly against the realities in the region.

That's why I am completely against.

I have proof of that - I will be able, I hope, to present to this Parliamentary Assembly the real facts that the road is open and nobody's going to block the road but some forces try to present the situation in an absolutely upside down situation. That's why I'm against.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV you spoke against this debate.

Does anybody want to speak?

No, first we are going to finish this one. [Off-mic: Point of order!] Yes, I hear you, sir, but first, we are going to finish this one. Does anyone speak in favour of the debate to be held? Does anybody wish to speak in favour of the debate to be held? Do you want to speak against?

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN, you have the floor for a point of order.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): Thank you, Mr President.

I think we shouldn't accept the objection by Mr Samad SEYIDOV simply because you asked: "Is there anyone against?"

There was no sound after that.

Then you said, "Okay, no one against".

It was after that that Mr Samad SEYIDOV said that he objects.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Point taken. We have listened to Mr Samad SEYIDOV, we are listening to you, and now you wanted to speak in favour of the debate, Mr RUBINYAN.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): Now I have to speak in favour but I still think that this is against the order.

Anyway, the Lachin Corridor is blocked.

We have a catastrophic situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

It's a humanitarian crisis; it's not even a crisis in the making anymore - it is a crisis - and it has to be debated.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

We now shall put the proposal to the vote.

A simple majority is needed. Those who are in favour of holding the current affairs debate should vote "Yes". Those who are opposed to hold this debate should vote "No".

The vote is open.

I close the vote. I call for the results to be displayed.

The current affairs debate is approved.

Mr Paul GAVAN will open, no, Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ is going to open the debate.

We now come to a request for a current affairs debate that we already have adopted, too. Well, so that ends the story. We cannot deal with the third request because we have already adopted two current affairs debates.

The next item of business is the adoption of the agenda for the first part-session of the 2023 Ordinary Session.

The draft agenda submitted for the Assembly approval was adopted by the Bureau this morning. Is the draft agenda agreed? It is.

Any additions to this or we finish that?

We now come to the adoption of the minutes of the proceedings of the Standing Committee. The minutes of the proceedings of the Standing Committee in Reykjavik on the 25 November have been distributed. I invite the Assembly to take note of these minutes.

That is the case.

The Assembly will hold its next public sitting this afternoon at 3:30 p.m. with the agenda which was approved this morning.

I'm sorry for some some misunderstanding at the beginning of this debate.

I hope the rest of the week will be excellent.

The sitting is adjourned.