

**Provisional edition**

Wednesday 10 April 2019, afternoon

## Official report of debates

### Opening of the sitting No 15

#### Joint debate: The role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance / Stop hate speech and acts of hatred in sport

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly):** The sitting is open.

Our next business is to consider the proposed change in the membership of committees. This is set out in Document Commissions (2019) 04 Add. 3.

Is the proposed change in the membership of the Assembly's committees agreed to?

It is agreed to.

The first item on the agenda is the continuation of the joint debate on the reports titled "The role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance", Document 14845, and "Stop hate speech and acts of hatred in sport", Document 14842.

I will interrupt the list of speakers at about 4.40 p.m. to allow for the replies and the votes. I remind members that speaking time in this debate will be limited to three minutes.

I call next Ms Naira ZOHRABYAN.

**Ms Naira ZOHRABYAN (Armenia, EC)\*:** In this Chamber we have on a number of occasions discussed the issue of the role of politicians in the fight against racism and intolerance and have adopted a number of resolutions, but have all these discussions, resolutions and appeals made to politicians and Member States of the Council of Europe contributed to a reduction in racism and intolerance in Europe? After all these resolutions, do not politicians, both men and women, in Member States continue to use hate speech and xenophobia as an essential plank in their political rhetoric?

I agree with the rapporteur that Europe today is confronted by an alarming rise in hate speech, racism, xenophobia and intolerance, and hatred and xenophobia are being used in particular by politicians. Yet, colleagues, have we really, truly asked ourselves why for example we hear racist or xenophobic declarations here in our Assembly? That is the case because, as the report rightly states, our Assembly has taken no practical measures with a view to ensuring that politicians submit to the political and moral obligation to refrain

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In this report:

- speeches in English are reported in full;
- speeches in other languages are reported using the interpretation and are marked with an asterisk (\*);
- speeches in German and Italian are reproduced in full in a separate document.

from resorting to hate speech. When the ombudsman from Azerbaijan states that Ramil Safarov, who killed an Armenian army officer in his sleep using an axe, should serve as an example of heroism for every Azeri, and when the President of Azerbaijan states that the entire Armenian people are his enemy, and our Assembly sits back and says nothing, the increase in hatred and intolerance starts to become alarming. It is no coincidence that it was announced here that Aliyev did not seek peace with Armenia. When I gave here in this Chamber tangible examples of Armenophobia in Azeri core textbooks, this Chamber once again said nothing, and when the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance stated its concern that the political elite in Azerbaijan and educational establishments and the media in Azerbaijan were spreading Armenophobia, our Assembly just took note of this, as well as other similar declarations.

So now, colleagues, if we are here just to talk once again and give examples of xenophobia and intolerance and then adopt a resolution with a worried mien, but we fail to take any practical measures to prevent the spread of xenophobia at state level in certain Member States of the Council of Europe, as well as in Europe in general, we will be adding just one more resolution to the graveyard of past resolutions.

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly):** I remind the speakers to respect the time limit, which is three minutes.

**Mr Paulo PISCO (Portugal, SOC):** I congratulate the authors of the reports on bringing such relevant matters forward for discussion. As democrats and defenders of human rights, we all have an individual and collective responsibility to fight hate speech, disinformation and fake news, which are related phenomena designed to weaken our democracies and the European Union. The fight is a serious one, because the enemies of open, plural and tolerant societies have a hidden agenda; they are often guided by other powers; and they have no scruples. Migrants, refugees and minorities are the targets of hate speech, which dehumanises relationships between people and causes divisions and tensions in our societies.

Although we have more legal instruments than ever to fight discrimination of all kinds, we nowadays experience more intolerance and confrontation, and less dialogue and co-operation. Extremist movements and parties continue to grow, and they understand that they will gain power more quickly if they invent enemies and blame ethnic, religious or social groups than if they use constructive arguments about tolerance and solidarity.

To defend tolerance, solidarity and respect for human dignity regardless of social condition, origin, religion, gender or sexual orientation is to defend our freedoms and democratic values, and thus to defend civilization. Television, radio and newspapers have a fundamental role to play in creating a transparent environment, being more objective and fighting prejudice. Because the fight is an unequal one, the law must be more assertive in combating and condemning hate speech and discrimination. Political parties, movements, websites and individuals who promote hate speech should be suspended, sanctioned or prohibited. Political parties, politicians and civil society organisations should be more aware of their role in this domain.

It is not acceptable that supremacist and identity-based groups can grow and spread racial and religious hatred in their texts and manifestos, which are as easy to obtain on the internet as a children's book in a bookshop. Utøya, Charlottesville and Christchurch are the dramatic evidence of what supremacists inspire, so the big digital groups that manage the internet and social networks should not hesitate to ban such texts. If we want to preserve our freedoms and defend human dignity, we cannot allow the growing influence of intolerance and hate speech.

**Mr Killian MUNYAMA (Poland, EPP/CD):** I join colleagues in congratulating Elvira and Goran on the great job that they have done in presenting the reports. It was only during the January part-session that we had a minute of silence for the murder of the Mayor of Gdansk, Mr Adamowicz, who was a victim of hate speech in politics. There should be zero tolerance for hate speech.

Hate speech at sports grounds is a complex phenomenon, which can be approached from a legal, political, cultural, pedagogical, linguistic or sociological perspective. In the legal context, we can consider hate speech from the point of view of the protection of human rights, and from the point of view of criminal and civil law. We must also realise that hate speech has been inherent in the human species since the first appearance of a human being on Earth. However, the scale of its occurrence, because of the media that spread it – traditional or otherwise; it may happen on social media or in large gatherings of people in stadiums – must cause us the greatest anxiety and lead parliamentarians and governments to seek remedies. That is an extremely

complicated task, because it requires us to face the paradox of balancing freedom with dignity. In our time, freedom has become a thoughtless fetish, which is invoked at the expense of the dignity and equality of individuals and social groups.

The Montenegro-England Euro 2020 qualifying match on 25 March was an illustration of the hate speech that still occurs in sports. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated in the 21st century, and it should be strongly condemned. I am convinced that stadium violence cannot simply be dealt with at stadiums, and we cannot make action against it the sole responsibility of the police. We will not achieve the results that we all want – that is, we will not eliminate hatred, xenophobia and banditry at stadiums – purely by force of strength. Only educated young citizens will be able to eliminate hate speech of the kind that we are experiencing.

**Mr Betian KITEV (North Macedonia, SOC):** Congratulations to Ms Elvira KOVÁCS and Mr Goran BEUS RICHEMBERGH on these crucial and useful reports. Hate speech is an extreme form of intolerance that contributes to hate crime. If left unaddressed, it can lead to acts of violence and conflict on a wider scale.

Hate speech is not free speech, because no one should speak as they please with no regard for the consequences of what they say. We very often hear about the right to freedom of speech, but mention is rarely made of the responsibilities of speech or the possible consequences. Politicians and officials often make sober statements that may not sound extreme in isolation, but the problem arises when those suggestions are seized upon by hard-line vigilante individuals or groups as justification for violent attacks.

A network of hate is being cultivated to spread the message, using multiple actors such as paid media, paid “experts”, party funders, extremist groups and junior politicians, as has happened in a number of cases across the globe. Multiple actors produce a climate of rising intolerance in an unco-ordinated but mutually reinforcing way. These connections are not formal, which makes it difficult to hold any single leader accountable when hate crimes happen. Politicians and other public figures have particular responsibility in that regard because of their capacity to influence a wide audience. Together with government authorities and key social actors, they need to be committed to combating hate speech and intolerance.

As politicians, we should be aware of the influence we have and extremely cautious about the message we spread. Our message needs to combat the exploitation of race, religion, sexual orientation and other matters by including the values of moderation and tolerance. The topics disseminated should not contribute to the extent of hate speech on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion or life stance, disability or sexual orientation. Speech that spreads hatred against other people cannot be tolerated. Politicians should work for an open, peaceful and inclusive society in which everyone feels a sense of belonging – a society based on democratic values, universal human rights and mutual respect among individuals and groups.

**Mr George LOUCAIDES (Cyprus, UEL):** I thank the rapporteurs for their reports. Ms Elvira KOVÁCS's report contains some very useful suggestions for combating hate speech and intolerance, which, unfortunately, are still on the rise. We therefore support the draft resolution's recommendations, including the recommendation that Member States take the legislative and other measures necessary to ensure that political parties are in line with the relevant ECRI recommendations, not only through voluntary self-regulation mechanisms, but through well-defined sanctions for infringement, including the withdrawal of financial support.

However, to be more efficient, we should focus on preventing the root causes of the phenomena. As evidenced in the report, the stigmatisation and stereotyping of particular groups in our societies will inevitably lead to the sociopolitical and cultural exclusion of those groups, paving the way for their marginalisation and the creation of parallel societies. Nevertheless, before considering the marginalisation of the victims, it is necessary to consider the conditions that have allowed perpetrators to penetrate and influence considerable segments of our societies – themselves socially marginalised and disillusioned – that have embraced racist and offensive rhetoric. Those conditions are linked mainly to poverty, persisting inequalities, dismal working conditions and the lack of sufficient cultural and educational opportunities. To be proactive, politicians should therefore invest in policies that promote social inclusion, social justice and equality, participatory democracy and diversity. We must also continue to foster a culture of tolerance and respect for human dignity.

We cannot defeat hate speech, racism and intolerance in the courts. I am not saying that we do not need court judgments; on the contrary, they are essential tools in our fight against those phenomena, and the numerous judgments of the European Court of Human Rights are invaluable in that respect. However, they are not enough. We must defeat fascism, hate speech and xenophobia in political terms. We must react

collectively, speedily and efficiently, showing zero tolerance for all expressions of hate. To achieve that, we must convince our citizens of the primacy of our core democratic values and principles through consistent effort and political arguments.

Finally, hate speech and racism are not just an expression of a different opinion in a democracy. They are an attack on democracy and human rights, with many dangerous consequences, as history has taught us.

**Ms Annicka ENGBLOM (Sweden, EPP/CD):** I express my sincere sympathies with Mr John HOWELL. I, too, have been a victim of death threats connected with my political task. Those threats included my family. Being a mother of two daughters who are not much older than the youngest spectators present today makes you hesitant about continuing with politics and continuing to express your views. That goes not only for parliamentarians and politicians, but for decision makers and journalists.

Hate speech and harassment affect all of society and are a fundamental threat to freedom of speech. However, we sometimes have to walk a fine line, because there is a grey zone between freedom of speech and hate speech. When you are the object of harassment or hate speech, it is very easy to call for laws to be strengthened or websites to be blocked, but we should be very cautious not to step over the line.

I draw the Assembly's attention to the methodical and systematic manufacture of hate speech that we can see foremost on social media. We are all objects of such hate speech for those who have economic, political or other interests in dividing us. An Assembly such as ours is therefore more vital than ever. The report sets out the close co-operation that is needed among countries, politicians and, for that matter, intelligence services. Finding best practices and, to a certain extent, self-regulation is more important than ever.

I thank both rapporteurs for their important and timely reports. I also thank you, dear colleagues, for a very good debate.

**Ms Sahiba GAFAROVA (Azerbaijan, EC):** I congratulate our colleagues on their reports, which are timely and necessary because hate speech and intolerance are on the rise in Europe. As Ms Elvira KOVÁCS rightly mentions in her report, hate speech has become part of political discourse, with increasing use of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred.

The fact that some politicians are voicing racist, xenophobic thoughts can lead to dangerous results. We know that the stable atmosphere that is enjoyed in Europe nowadays was not achieved easily; Europeans have given millions of lives and suffered severe privations to get where they are now. Returning to the years when racial, religious and ethnic discrimination was rampant in Europe will bring no good to anyone.

I agree with Ms Elvira KOVÁCS that politicians have a vital role to play in combating hate speech and intolerance and that they bear a moral responsibility to do so. Unfortunately, however, in discussing the responsibility of politicians to combat hate speech, we have had to listen again, in this very Assembly, to the hate speech of some representatives of the Armenian delegation.

This is not the first time. We have repeatedly witnessed such speeches here in previous years. Representatives of the occupant country, Armenia, falsely accused the leadership of Azerbaijan, when there was talk about the implementation of several resolutions of the United Nations and many other international organisations about the immediate withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Representatives of Armenia falsely accuse the Azerbaijani leadership of "promoting racial hatred and racism", but they forget about statements made by former leaders of Armenia. I will remind members of a speech made by ex-President of Armenia Robert Kocharyan – who, by the way, is in prison now, having been arrested for his crimes against the Armenian people. In January 2003, in this very Assembly, Kocharyan said that Azerbaijanis and Armenians are "ethnically incompatible" to live together. That is a vivid example of hate speech. I will give another example. In an interview with British journalist Tom de Waal in 2000, ex-President Sargsyan said *Before Khojaly, the Azerbaijanis thought that they were joking with us; they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We needed to put a stop to all that. And that's what happened.* It happened in Khojaly. It was planned by Sargsyan and his military junta, and the genocide in Khojaly led to about 700 civilians – women, children and elderly people – being killed in one night.

I do not want to give other examples of hate speech, because speaking about hate speech is a kind of hate speech. I hope that the present Armenian leadership will put an end to such hateful statements and start taking the necessary actions to prepare the Armenian population for peace with neighbouring Azerbaijan. Hate speech does not help to solve the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but instead is aimed at violating negotiations on the settlement of the conflict.

**Ms Shpresa HADRI (North Macedonia, SOC):** Hate speech in sport has become commonplace. It is in opposition to the positive values of sport such as respect, tolerance, mutual understanding, fair play and friendship. It is discourse designed to call attention to and manipulate social differences, constructing the “in-group” in extremely positive terms and the “out-group” in dehumanised terms, characterising the out-group as posing a threat to the in-group and cherished in-group values and traditions. Hatred, which has been defined as the extreme dislike of a person or group of people because of their race, ethnicity, religion or gender, has often been used to recruit and socialise new members to groups that make hatred a primary purpose for their being.

This is reflected in the world of sport more than anywhere else. You are either a fan who watches sport with love and passion but within normal boundaries, or you are an obsessed fan who projects at a football match all your rage accumulated during the week because of problems at home or in your job. People can do all sorts of morally wrong things because of an inability to keep their sport-related emotions directed towards the game.

Hate speech has been present in sport for decades, and today it has escalated mostly because everything we could not read a decade ago is now readily accessible and visible. It is unacceptable that at sports facilities, sport and its ethics and values are endangered by racism, xenophobia and intolerance. Council of Europe Member States should strengthen co-operation with sports organisations in areas including the monitoring and reporting of incidents and information and awareness-raising activities. “No Hate Speech” campaigns should be organised with enhanced involvement of stakeholder organisations, youth, clubs, fan groups, the media, NGOs, public authorities and other civil society organisations. Moreover, since education is key in preventing hatred and intolerance, special attention should be paid to the role of schools in transmitting values of tolerance, acceptance and human dignity.

To overcome hatred and hate speech in sport and in the wider context, among other measures, we need to teach people that team play, tolerance, respect and fair play are not empty clichés but values that positively impact our interaction and the cohesion of our societies. I will conclude by reading Martin Luther King’s famous quote on love versus hate: *Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.* Let us all love each other and make the world a better place to live.

**Ms Maria Elena BOSCHI (Italy, SOC)\*:** I would like to thank and congratulate the rapporteurs for their comprehensive reports. Unfortunately, hate speech is increasing in all our countries, and it is hatred towards anyone who is different because of their gender, sexual orientation, religion or – in most cases, as the report says – ethnic origin. It is no coincidence that the main victims of hate speech today are the Roma community and the Sinti, and in particular migrants.

Hatred has always existed; it is part of human history, but today it appears that people can give free expression to their hate. We have gone from free love to free hatred. No one is ashamed any longer of publicly stating what they think of other people or threatening and offending them, often using social networks to go viral. Barbaric statements are no longer condemned; they are almost made with pride. Political leaders should surely set an example, but the nationalist, populist and xenophobic political leaders are selling fear. They are trying to exploit a sense of insecurity in the face of globalisation, mass migration and economic difficulties. They are trying to reap immediate rewards by using hate speech, without realising that if there are leaders, there are followers. That is the case with social media, but it is also true in society at large.

Political leaders can be influencers and can change mindsets with their rhetoric and attitudes. That is why we have a huge responsibility conferred upon us by history. We know that in the past, totalitarian regimes started with an escalation from verbal violence to physical violence. Of course, hate speech does not always end up with a form of dictatorship, but each time a dictatorship has emerged in history, it is because hate speech has metamorphosed into a form of physical violence. I am not proud of what is happening in my country. Deputy Prime Minister Salvini is a very negative example, given his statements on Roma and migrants. We need true leaders who go against the current and condemn such hate speech. It might mean losing votes or having to relinquish an immediate consensus, but one can always rely on fundamental values in difficult times.

Jo Cox was a committed politician who died for her values. That is a classic example of verbal violence that ends with physical violence. Unfortunately, in spite of herself, she became a symbol. I hope that one day we will live in a society where we do not need figures such as Jo Cox, but we need them today in order to stand up to hate speech.

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Mr Alexander CHRISTIANSSON, registered in the debate, was not present in the hemicycle.

**Ms Yuliya LOVOCHKINA (Ukraine, SOC):** I express my sincere gratitude to both rapporteurs, who carried out a broad-ranging examination of the increasing propagation of hate speech and intolerance around the world. The rise of the hate speech phenomenon deepens divisions at the level of the individual, communities, states and inter-state relations. In everyday life, hate speech incites violence against certain groups in the population or pushes psychologically vulnerable people to commit suicide. When hate speech is emerging as an integral element of political discourse, it heralds radicalisation and the emergence of parallel societies.

Unfortunately, Ukraine faces challenges with hate speech, information propaganda, fake news and radicalisation, which undermines democratic processes and destroys the security and integrity of the country. I fully agree with the rapporteur, Ms Elvira KOVÁCS, that the most effective way to prevent hate speech and intolerance is to promote a model of society that embraces diversity and respects human dignity. It is obvious that, in the information age, online hate speech, intolerance, misinformation and manipulation are the defining challenges for the next generation. It is our common responsibility to create effective new mechanisms to combat this phenomenon. The aim to raise awareness, consciousness and the responsibility of individuals, communities, opinion leaders and politicians should be accompanied by additional steps and measures. Given the direct correlation between online content and offline behaviour, the credibility of information is critical for democracy. One way to ensure both credibility and that there is a variety of sources is the application of media regulation to the net. To achieve that, it is crucial to introduce the general principle of accountability on the Internet, to secure the protection of human integrity. Inclusiveness, tolerance and human dignity on the Internet cannot be achieved without the recognition of accountability and standards that cover all actors on the net.

I am convinced that only the joint efforts of international institutions and national authorities will enable us to eliminate the danger of hate speech. In turn, our Assembly has a special responsibility to ensure there is a balance between freedom of speech and the securing of tolerance, inclusiveness and human integrity, and in responding to the challenges of hate speech and intolerance.

**Mr Georgios PSYCHOGIOS (Greece, UEL):** I thank the rapporteurs for their excellent work. This joint debate comes at a crucial period for Europe's future. The greatest thing at stake in the upcoming European Parliament elections is the battle against far-right, fascist ideas and racism and xenophobia. It is more than evident that nowadays hate speech and intolerance are on the rise all over Europe. Among other acts of hatred, hate speech has been witnessed in all parts of social and public life.

It is appalling that almost every week we see racist incidents and phenomena in the stadiums all around Europe. A recent example was the welcome given by a section of Montenegro fans to the English team's players of African origin, which led the English federation to react. That was important. There was also an incident in Italy last week in which Moise Kean, an Italian international player of African origin, faced racist behaviour from fans and stood in front of them to show his reaction. UEFA and its president, who has shown sensitivity in some policies on combating racist phenomena, recognised that racist, xenophobic and homophobic phenomena still occur, and proposed that if they do, referees can stop games, and that if teams and individuals act in such a manner, they will be punished by the team having to play in empty grounds with no crowds.

It is important for the Council of Europe to call on all Member States to promote policies of integration by implementing positive measures in all policy areas, adopting legal frameworks for that purpose, and punishing such acts strictly. We also have to implement policies to reduce and eliminate the social inequalities that are the background of all such behaviours.

In Greece, we recently voted for an important law that provides all the things included in the memoranda between UEFA and the Council of Europe on human rights, integrity, good governance and non-discrimination in sports. We have given to all migrants, refugees and asylum seekers the right to participate in amateur championships. We are increasing the participation of women in sporting institutions and will punish clubs and

individuals who commit acts of hate speech and adopt hate-speech symbols. Sport is a strong means for integration. It leads to the collapse of discrimination and hatred, destroys stereotypes and teaches us how to live and struggle together for a collective goal. The report on sport is a good start. We all need to stand up for these principles.

**Ms Ganira PASHAYEVA (Azerbaijan, FDG):** I congratulate the rapporteurs. The topic we are discussing is important for Europe and the world, today and in future. The rise of Islamophobia in Europe should also be of great concern to us all. In the draft resolution, after the words on racism, hatred and anti-Semitism, it is important to add Islamophobia as a kind of radicalism. We should not be indifferent to such situations and must strengthen our common efforts to prevent them. To prevent anxiety, it is important to teach younger generations the values of tolerance, respect and understanding of different ethnic, religious and social groups, from a young age. Education, media, and politicians have a great role to play in this regard, but unfortunately the speeches of some politicians in some countries contribute to the rise of intolerance, hatred and racism. That will lead to big tragedies in the near future unless we can prevent such situations. We must all recognise this responsibility and not forget the tragedies of the 20th century.

I am sorry that a member of the Armenian delegation, Ms Naira ZOHRABYAN, gave some wrong information about my country, Azerbaijan. As a representative of Armenia, the country that committed the Khojaly genocide and did not allow 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes, she should apologise to those people. Unfortunately, though, she again gave the Assembly wrong information about Azerbaijan. I wanted to make a different speech, but after Ms Naira ZOHRABYAN's unjust speech, I wish to share some information with the Assembly.

As a result of the intolerance and hatred against the Azerbaijanis initiated among the younger generation in Armenia by politicians, in 1988 hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were forced out of their native lands in Armenia. After that, the Armenian armed forces occupied Azerbaijani territories, killed thousands of Azerbaijanis and committed genocide against peaceful Azerbaijanis in Khojaly city. More than 1 million Azerbaijanis have been expelled from their homes and are living an IDP life. Despite the resolutions adopted by international organisations, as well as Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1416 (2005), Armenia does not allow them to return to their homes. In my opinion, such a serious human tragedy can help us to understand this subject in greater detail. As a representative of a country suffering from such situations, I support all the issues reflected in the report and call on Member States to increase their sensitivity to these issues.

Representatives of different religions and nations who live in Azerbaijan have never encountered intolerance or any phobias. Tolerance and multiculturalism have existed in Azerbaijan for centuries. The Baku International Centre of Multiculturalism operates in Azerbaijan, where we have undertaken a number of international initiatives to strengthen the dialogue between cultures and civilisations around the world. There is no alternative to tolerance and multiculturalism in the modern world, so this issue should always be monitored in the Member States of the Council of Europe. We must further strengthen our common efforts to prevent negative trends, regardless of where they happen.

**Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, NR):** The current xenophobic environment in the world makes it imperative to define mechanisms to combat this phenomenon. It should be noted that all forms of xenophobia are inter-related and mutually supporting forms of oppression. In this regard, I will draw your attention to the existence of hate speech in regions that have conflict zones. The growing manifestations of hate speech, xenophobia and war-mongering by political leaders in regions that have conflict zones have a substantially negative influence. Frequent military rhetoric and hate speech directed at ethnic groups, especially in conflict zones, may hamper negotiation processes, as well as threatening visions of reconciliation in the future.

We can see the prevalence of expressions of hate speech as a factor that may give an impetus to violence and even to new wars, crimes against humanity and genocides. *In the beginning was the word* – this quote from the Bible perfectly sums up the huge consequences that speech, and in this case hate speech, can have. Hate speech kills. It kills debate, it kills arguments, it kills politics and if it is not prevented and if it is not condemned, it kills real people. Thus, we urge parliamentarians to establish effective mechanisms within their parliaments and interparliamentary platforms, aiming at monitoring expressions of hate speech and tackling the issue in appropriate reports. As politicians, we must make sure that hate speech is condemned, not only in general but in each and every instance that it is present. We must make sure that our speeches are aimed at peace, not war, and at life, not death.

In this context, I will tell you about the recent developments that took place in the Armenian public discourse in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The newly elected Prime Minister of Armenia, who you will have a chance to address questions to tomorrow, has made quite remarkable statements recently. He stated that the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict must be acceptable to the people of Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. This is the first time ever in the context of this conflict that a leader has acknowledged the other side and talked about acceptance of something by the other side.

In an understatement, the Prime Minister talked about the necessity for the leaders of the sides in the conflict to talk, not only to their own societies, but to each other's societies, thus reaffirming that they do not want war. He also talked about intolerant comments written on social media by the citizens involved in the conflict, which were aimed at each other, stating that this is leading nowhere and that we should focus on substantive issues instead.

These statements must sound pretty normal, even mundane, to you, but they are a truly huge step in a region loaded with ethnic tensions. They are a huge step towards changing the discourse of intolerance in the region, and even though we have not yet witnessed the same level of constructiveness from our neighbours in Azerbaijan and aggressive rhetoric is still present, we hope that the discourse in Azerbaijan will change eventually, because building peace is a parallel process.

As a sign of our constructiveness, I will simply not respond to the groundless allegations made by our Azerbaijani colleagues, because we are here for human rights and democracy, and not for nationalist crossfire.

**Ms Elissavet SKOUFA (Greece, UEL):** Hate speech is defined as a form of expression that discriminates against specific social groups due to their nationality or ethnicity, their religious ideas, or their sexual orientation. Hate speech incites, promotes or justifies hateful actions that are based on intolerance. However, we also ought to recognise a particular kind of hate speech, which is addressed against political ideas and is motivated by political intolerance. We must completely separate hate speech from political criticism. Criticism enriches democracies; hate speech undermines democracy.

On 25 January this year, the Greek Parliament voted for the Prespa agreement, which was preceded by a vote by the Parliament of Northern Macedonia. This agreement puts an end to the aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism in both countries. It establishes the foundation for peaceful co-existence and co-development in the western Balkans. However, especially in the days around the votes for the agreement, we experienced in Greece and Northern Macedonia the intolerance expressed in the words and actions of groups and individuals still motivated by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism. We encountered it on TV panels, on soccer fields and even in our Parliament. In many cases, a mob capable of threatening words and actions was formed, which even led to the burning of houses and cars, and the destruction of other property. It is noteworthy that many members of football clubs participated in these crowds. Unfortunately, other European cities are also experiencing similar events. For example, in Paris there is the so-called "Yellow Vest Movement", which has developed racist and anti-Semitic features.

I believe that the rapid spread of hate speech is based on the following main causes, which are all shortcomings of a modern democratic societies. First of all, there is the perpetrators' sense of impunity, which is why I fully agree with the wording of paragraph 7 and the measures set out in paragraph 12 of the draft resolution. Secondly, those engaging in hate speech rely on the fake argument that any penalty or even limitation of such speech constitutes a blow against freedom of expression. However, we should remind supporters of this view that respect for the right to freedom of expression presupposes and includes respect for other rights, namely the dignity of other people and their life, and respect for their property. Anyone who does not respect these fundamental democratic rights should face the appropriate legal penalties and sanctions. Last but not least, in schools and indeed in education in general, there should be specific courses, which run through all levels of education, about constitutional and democratic freedoms and rights, and of course the rule of law.

In conclusion, political criticism is completely different from targeting specific groups due to their race, religion, sexual orientation or political beliefs. We must use all means to fight against hate speech and acts of hatred. Democracy has to defend itself from its enemies.

**Mr Vladimir VARDANYAN (Armenia, NR):** The verbal expression of hatred – hate speech – is the root cause of the huge range of crimes that are based on intolerance, discrimination, xenophobia and racism. Its very existence poses a great danger and a great question for democratic society, the protection of human rights and the rule of law.

Hate speech is extremely dangerous, especially when it is a precursor for the planning and perpetration of genocide, and other crimes against humanity. It tends to humiliate, stigmatise, degrade and demonise, and consequently leads to the dehumanisation of certain targeted groups, creating fertile ground for the commission of those mass outrages.

It is not by chance that in all cases of genocide hate speech was the catalyst. Every single Armenian was labelled as alien, or as a traitor, in the course of the Armenian genocide perpetrated by Ottoman Turkey; virulently anti-Semitic newspapers were published during the Holocaust; and the radio broadcasting during the Rwandan genocide was a central pillar of the genocide propaganda machine. Today, when we are commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, it is worth noting that the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda has recognised the nexus between hate speech and incitement of genocide in numerous judgments.

Nevertheless, it is alarming that even after the centennial of the Armenian genocide and the 70th anniversary of the Nuremberg trials, we still face cases of Armenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of xenophobia within Europe and across Europe. It may seem unbelievable, but even today there are several leaders, politicians and other public figures in our Member States who continue to spread hatred, by using offensive wording and discriminatory labelling, in their daily agenda, aiming to divide their societies into “we” and “the others”, separating unwanted groups of humans from the “right” ones. Unfortunately, hate speech is widely and shamelessly used in politics as an electoral tool, to create a fake image of an opponent or enemy and to gain the protest vote.

The dangerous volume of hate speech becomes even more alarming in the digital era, when social media can have unprecedented consequences. Hence, it is urgent, for the sake of a better tomorrow, that all human rights-orientated societies join forces against this disease, which brings out the worst in people. I call upon all the Member States of the Council of Europe and their respective parliaments to form a united front to condemn and prevent all manifestations of hate speech by using all possible means that are necessary and proportionate in a democratic society to make Europe an area free of hate speech. To achieve that, let us start with this respected Assembly and be an example to others.

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Mr Bernard SABELLA, registered in the debate, is not present in the hemicycle.

**Ms Tatevik HAYRAPETYAN (Armenia, NR):** I thank the rapporteurs for the reports. I speak not only as a representative of the Armenian delegation at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe but as a young female politician who believes that women should and can speak and act for peace in a very persuasive way. Women – as mothers, sisters and wives – symbolise peace. It is no secret that there is a long-lasting conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. That conflict has taken many lives from Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. Anna Hakobyan, the wife of our Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, recently came up with a brave and outstanding initiative called Women for Peace. The initiative is very simple: as mothers, sisters and wives we should call for peace among all conflicting sides, Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. We should fight against any act of hate speech and war rhetoric. Anna Hakobyan addressed Azerbaijani women to stand for a peaceful and non-violent solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

I want to tell the Assembly the response from neighbouring Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, the Vice President Mehriban Aliyeva, who is also the wife of President Ilham Aliyev, announced that the Azerbaijani flag should fly in every village of Nagorno-Karabakh. I truly regret to hear war rhetoric from a female representative of Azerbaijan. As women leaders and politicians, we should be careful to stand for peace and against violence and hate speech, especially in the context of conflicts. There is a clear link between hatred towards foreigners and violence in society. I am happy to note that the absence of hate speech among officials in Armenia was one of the reasons we managed a non-violent velvet revolution on the path to democracy. Violence has always been condemned by the society that went through genocide and exterminations back in 1915 during the Ottoman empire. Nowadays, there are many calls to prepare nations for peace, because no solution can

work if nations are not ready for peace and mutual understanding. In this uneasy process, the role of women politicians and leaders is essential. I hope that will be understood in Azerbaijan, and they will be able to use the language of peace instead of the language of war.

**Mr Armağan CANDAN (Cyprus):** Racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and discrimination against LGBTI individuals are problems that concern every aspect of life. Sport is no exception. However, it is also true that sport could serve as a powerful instrument to change mindsets, build bridges and eventually contribute to harmonious and diverse living, instead of breeding hatred and intolerance. The Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2131 (2016) “Sport for all: a bridge to equality, integration and social inclusion” emphasises the role of sport in *providing opportunities for people...from different cultures to meet...thereby strengthening the culture of ‘living together’*. The report rightly points out the fact that *sport for all is not a reality yet*.

I would like to draw your attention to the situation of sports in Cyprus. While Europe is striving for sport for all, Turkish Cypriots who I represent are unfortunately deprived of any kind of sporting participation in international forums. Turkish Cypriot athletes cannot attend international tournaments or the Olympic games. It is not acceptable that the Turkish Cypriot community – a member of the European family – is excluded from such sporting activities. Unfortunately, in Cyprus, sport is sacrificed for the sake of the political status quo on a daily basis. We speak about the power of sport to unite people, but even friendly football matches between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot football clubs remain almost impossible. Young Turkish Cypriots are rightfully asking how we will live together or govern a state together in Cyprus if it is so difficult for us even to play football together. Nevertheless, some efforts are being made, which help us to remain hopeful.

Within that context, the activities of the organisation PeacePlayers, which brings Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot youngsters together using the power of sport, deserves attention. It is worth mentioning the recent friendly football day organised by the renowned organisation Peace and Sport, of which Prince Albert II of Monaco is patron, which brought together the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot football teams Mağusa Türk Gücü and Nea Salamina in the city of Famagusta. It is encouraging that there are a couple of Greek Cypriot footballers playing for Turkish Cypriot teams, in spite of all the criticism from Greek Cypriot nationalist circles. To best use the uniting power of sports, the international community should encourage Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders to form a bi-communal technical committee on sports to work on possible confidence-building measures. To conclude, I reiterate that we should not hold sports hostage to politics. I therefore call upon international sports organisations such as the International Olympic Committee, FIFA, UEFA and others to find ways to integrate Turkish Cypriots into international sports activities.

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mister Candan. I was a football player during my youth, but I remind speakers that we do not need props or objects to make a point in the Assembly.

I call Mr Akif Çağatay KILIÇ.

**Mr Akif Çağatay KILIÇ (Turkey, NR):** I congratulate the rapporteurs on their report, which gives examples of hate speech and hatred in sport. As a former minister for youth and sports, I have first-hand experience of how sport can bring people together. It is common to cheer for your football team, basketball team, tennis player or any sports figure that you admire. However, when people are in a crowd and chanting, sometimes they forget what they are saying. We have to look into the education side, the atmosphere and culture in sports clubs and the strong influence of social media. Twitter and other social media platforms can bring about things that we do not want to see in sports arenas. There are deep-rooted differences across societies. Certain religious beliefs are banned; runners in France who wanted to wear a hijab found that a supplier of that sports gear had to stop making it because of pressure and threats it received.

The recent massacre in New Zealand showed us what hate speech, hatred and not understanding each other can bring the world to. I have followed very closely what the Parliamentary Assembly President said in her press releases. If I am wrong she can correct me, but I was sorry that not a single sentence has been put on the Parliamentary Assembly website about the massacre in New Zealand of 50 Muslims at Friday prayers. We have to lift geographical borders when there is a really serious incident that affects us all.

The international federations governing sporting events have to look into opening up certain issues, and co-operating more with each other, because certain unfortunate rules prevent people from taking part in sporting events as they would like to. It is a positive step in the world of sport that not only the Olympics but the Paralympics are now live-streamed, but we have to take further steps in future.

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mister Kiliç.

Unfortunately, I must now interrupt the list of speakers. The speeches of members who are on the speakers list and who have been present for the debate, but have not been able to speak, may be given to the Table Office for publication in the Official Report. I remind colleagues that their typewritten texts can be submitted, electronically if possible, no later than four hours after the list of speakers is interrupted.

I call Mr Goran BEUS RICHEMBERGH to reply. You have eight minutes.

**Mr Goran BEUS RICHEMBERGH (Croatia, ALDE, Rapporteur):** I thank all colleagues who have contributed to the discussion, who recognise the importance of the topic, and who supported the main messages and recommendations of the report and, in particular, the resolution. I also thank the experts we consulted, especially Ms Aleksandra Knežević from Serbia, and Mr Carlo Balestri from Italy. We consulted some Olympic committees, and got fruitful replies, as well as committees from Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Greece and Hungary; I thank them.

In conclusion, I stress the point made in paragraph 73 of the report. As we all know, the majority of insults, violence and intolerance comes from our neighbourhood and environment – our home, school or street. It is extremely important to educate young people about the right way to approach physical education. Encouraging school pupils to achieve good results in sport should not overshadow the importance of promoting the numerous benefits of physical activity and fair play. Success and good marks in physical education cannot depend exclusively on formal sporting results; it should also be about individual effort and dedication, and should take into account objective and subjective circumstances that may limit performance.

Children and young people should feel not excluded and deprived of sport, but welcome and included, and account should be taken of their abilities and skills. They should not be singled out as potential targets of hate speech or discrimination by fellow pupils or peers because of lower achievements in sports. If we take the right approach, they will not express hate for others. They will not display that type of behaviour to members of other groups. Sport in general should not be exclusive. It should contribute to a better, healthier life, and not be a battlefield. Others are not enemies, and nobody should treat them as enemies. Nobody has the right to insult others, or to be intolerant to the extent of being violent, because everyone is responsible for others' lives.

Once again, I thank colleagues very much for the support expressed in our discussions. I hope that they will also show it in the voting.

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mister Beus Richembergh. I call Ms Elvira KOVÁCS, rapporteur, to reply. You have six minutes.

**Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, Rapporteur):** I thank all colleagues for taking part in this really fruitful debate. The number of speakers who signed up to speak in it shows how important and timely it is. All the contributions are really useful to me personally, and to the future work of the committee; I really appreciate them.

Unfortunately, as colleagues are aware, it is impossible to respond to all of them. That is why I used the break and will use my notes to respond to a few comments, which I have grouped together. In my introductory speech, I spoke about the sad fact that there has been a rise in populist movements in many European countries, but as we heard in the debate, hate speech has been spreading among not only extremist but mainstream political parties. Many of you spoke about the distinction between freedom of speech and hate speech; one speech was even critical on the subject. I strongly believe that the violation of human rights and violent attacks, even if only verbal, cannot be justified by reference to freedom of speech. We, elected representatives, all know that people are driven by emotions – hate, hope or even uncertainty – when casting their vote. I agree that hate is a strong emotion. An additional problem that we face is widespread fake news.

With regard to Serbia, there are some who promote violence in public discourse; despite that, Serbian institutions are trying to avoid a vicious circle of violence, and any escalation of violence, by preventing it, so as to give an example of a culture of dialogue and tolerance in communication, as well as in political culture in general. Sanctions are the last way of resolving the issue of violence and hate speech. Unfortunately, Serbian society often fell victim to hate speech during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, as most of you know.

Coming back to the responsibilities of politicians, I would like to strengthen the political and moral obligation, mentioned by Ms Stella KYRIAKIDES, to recognise and abstain from hate speech. We have to promote awareness-raising. Education is crucial in building a fair society; several of you mentioned that. I strongly believe that by educating the young, through either the school curriculum or digital education, we can secure the peaceful co-existence of various minorities in our society.

Today's discussion is important because warning signs are not written in small letters, or spoken in whispers. We all bear political responsibility, because indirect *responsibility for things we have not done, this taking upon ourselves the consequences for things we are entirely innocent of, is the price we pay for the fact that we live our lives not by ourselves but among our fellow men*, as Hannah Arendt, philosopher, says. The task of public officials is to do everything to create a political environment in which democracy is freedom enshrined in certain legal rules. Only in such an environment, where freedom is entered into the law, will discrimination not constitute a value framework for reality. We have real political responsibility, based on the very fact that we are members of political communities. Our common task is to be responsible, thinking people.

Xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism can lead to collective violence and to atrocities of unimaginable proportions. Any society, no matter how advanced in cultural or scientific and technical terms, can become criminal at that moment when it loses the ability to distinguish justice from injustice. I believe that we can all educate ourselves to become, for example, doctors, engineers or politicians; but we can only be brought up to become people.

Before closing my response, I thank you all for your congratulations and nice words but, as you know, we must say a big thanks to the best secretariat. Perhaps I may be a bit subjective, since I chair the committee: I thank Sonia Sirtori-Milner, Giorgio Loddo and all the others. I say a big thanks, too, to the committee members because, as the President says, we had a few discussions about this topic. Each time everybody added a lot to the content of this report, so this is our work. Thank you for your attention.

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Miss Kovács.

I call on Ms Petra BAYR to speak on behalf of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. You have two minutes.

**Ms Petra BAYR (Austria, SOC):** Hate speech appears in all our lives, as we heard from impressive witnesses and testimonies that lasted for hours. It is in all our societies and all our countries. These two reports focus on the spheres of sport and politics but, wherever hate speech or the incitement to hatred occurs, it has the same elements in common. It is deeply rooted in discrimination and the belief that some groups of people are of greater value than others. It dehumanises people because they are a member of a particular group or assumed to be so. Hate speech can be curbed by education and dialogue, and by bringing people together to diminish prejudices. Mediation and codes of conduct are among the forms mentioned in the report.

We also have cases where we need clear really laws, and we always, always have to protect the victims of hate speech. In the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, we had a set of fruitful debates and hearings on both reports. I really thank both the rapporteurs for their sensitive and well-balanced reports, and for their suggestions and considerations. It will need action from us all – in all our Parliaments and private environments, but also in all our other environments – to be vigorous, in the spirit of these two resolutions. We need to have a real impact on people and societies to provide a life for everybody free from hate because of their race, religion, ethnic features, disabilities, sexual orientation or gender identity, or any other attribute. We should really start that with our work here and now.

## **Vote: The role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance / Stop hate speech and acts of hatred in sport**

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Miss Bayr.

The debate is closed.

May I gently remind you, the members, to leave your badge in the slot for electronic voting until I close each vote? If you remove your card before I close the vote, your vote may not be counted by the system.

We shall first consider the report titled: “The role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance”, Document 14845. The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination has presented a draft resolution to which one amendment has been tabled. I understand that the Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination wishes to propose to the Assembly that the amendment to the draft resolution, which was unanimously approved by the committee, should be declared as agreed by the Assembly. Is that so?

**Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD):** Yes.

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Does anyone object? That is not the case. As there is no objection, I declare that the amendment to the draft resolution has been agreed upon.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft resolution on “The role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance”, as amended.

*The vote is open.*

*The draft resolution in Document 14845, as amended, is adopted, with 105 votes for, 3 against and 1 abstention.*

We shall now consider the report titled “Stop hate speech and acts of hatred in sport”, Document 14842. The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination has presented a draft resolution, to which no amendments have been tabled. We will now proceed to vote on the draft resolution.

*The vote is open.*

*The draft resolution in Document 14842 is adopted with 107 votes for, 0 against and 2 abstentions.*

I think we can have applause for that.

## **Urgent debate: Role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly: main challenges for the future**

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Distinguished colleagues, the next item of business this afternoon is a debate under urgent procedure on “Role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly: main challenges for the future”, Document 14863, presented by Mr Tiny KOX on behalf of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, with an opinion presented by Mr Mart van de VEN on behalf of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, Document 14867.

I remind members that the Assembly has decided that speaking time in this debate will be limited to three minutes. In order to finish by 8.00 p.m., I will interrupt the list of speakers at about 7.05 p.m. to allow time for the reply from the committee and the vote.

Rapporteur, you have 13 minutes in total, which you may divide between presentation of the report and reply to the debate as you see fit. I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, Rapporteur):** This year, we will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe. In our June part-session, this Assembly will explicitly recall the important decision made seven decades ago to create a unique intergovernmental Organisation, with a serious inter-parliamentary dimension, to achieve greater unity in Europe by promoting and protecting the rule of law, human rights and democracy in its Member States. At the very moment when almost the whole of Europe was in ruins brave politicians took the decision to build, after the barbarous destruction of European civilisation, a new and better Europe by replacing brutal competition, confrontation and wars between European states with the thorough and peaceful in-depth co-operation of European states on the basis of a new treaty, the Statute of the Council of Europe, and another unique document, which was adopted one year after the foundation of the Council of Europe: the European Convention on Human Rights.

After the idea was born and the Organisation was created, it took another 40 years to realise a truly united Europe. At the end of the Cold War, East and West finally met and sent their representatives to the Committee of Ministers and this Parliamentary Assembly. For the first time in history, dear colleagues, Europe did unite itself in all its diversity. Now, 30 years later, European citizens in 47 Member States of the Council of Europe are under the protection of one Convention and one Court, which gives binding judgments in thousands and thousands of cases relating to the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Convention. More than 200 other conventions contribute largely to the development of one legal space for the whole of Europe – from Reykjavik to Vladivostok, and from the North Pole to the Mediterranean.

Europe is now a better place than it was 70 years ago, and that should give us reason to be proud. The Council of Europe's approach and construction have become a beacon to the rest of the world. More than 835 million citizens share the same rights and freedoms under the same protection of the Strasbourg Court. As the political engine of the Organisation, our Assembly played a most important role in this development towards one legal space for the whole of Europe. Many major conventions and actions started here in this Assembly, thanks to the wisdom of its members and its readiness to find reasonable compromises on issues considered of utmost importance to our citizens.

However, being proud is allowed only as long as we stay humble: there is still a huge gap between the idea of a united Europe with one common legal space and the reality in today's Europe. New divergences and dividing lines are appearing, threatening peace and security and democratic and social progress. Dangerous conflicts persist in and between states, instead of being solved, inter alia, by using the means of our Organisation. The multilateral implementation of international human rights standards, including through the Strasbourg Court, is increasingly being challenged in Member States.

The respect for the Organisation's Statute and the European Convention of Human Rights is weakening, and our Assembly has not yet been able to effectively assist in overcoming these problems. Our Council of Europe faces a deep political and financial crisis, related – among other things – to the Russian Federation's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, and to the ongoing harsh budgetary constraints caused by several of our Member States.

As an Assembly, we recognised the need to reaffirm European unity and to defend and promote democratic security in Europe. That is why the Bureau of this Assembly created an ad hoc committee in which all national parliaments of all 47 Member States participated, together with all the political groups in this Assembly. In a lengthy memorandum, the input in the process on the identity, role and mission of the Assembly was brought together. I used that input extensively when preparing this report on the future challenges for our Assembly, at the request of the Bureau and on behalf of our Political Affairs Committee.

Most useful to me were the in-depth discussions in the committee, in which the President of the Assembly and a representative of the Finnish presidency of the Committee of Ministers also took part. I also took great advantage of the most serious discussions of our Presidential Committee with the Chair of the Committee of Ministers, Finnish Foreign Affairs Minister Soini, whom I wish to thank very much for his inspiring and practical approach. I was also helped by the discussions I had with the Council of Europe's Secretary General and by the many pieces of advice from the Assembly's Secretary General.

I got a lot of important feedback from several ambassadors to the Council of Europe and many experts in our Organisation. I should also mention the very fruitful meetings that I had with the experts of that other major European treaty organisation, the European Union, and President Juncker of the European Commission. It was a pleasure to learn from all sides that they did support the general approach of my report as well as the concrete proposals I have formulated in the draft resolution and the draft recommendation.

These proposals deal with five main issues, as was requested by the Bureau, after the ad hoc committee had concluded its work: first, the identity, role and mission of the Assembly; secondly, the streamlining of the Assembly's work; thirdly, the improvement of the follow-up given to Assembly texts; fourthly, the enhancement of the dialogue between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers; and fifthly, the strengthening of the Assembly's relations with the European Union and other international organisations or parliamentary assemblies.

Please, colleagues, be aware that these proposals are not the end, but the beginning, of the work to be done. This report decides on the direction to be taken by the Assembly; when it is adopted, there will be a lot of concrete work for our Bureau, our committees and our members, as well as for the Committee of Ministers, if we are to meet our main challenges.

One of the proposals to which attention has been drawn deals with enhancing the dialogue between our Assembly and the Committee of Ministers. As the two statutory organs of the Council of Europe, their co-operation decides, in the end, the effectiveness of the whole Organisation. As the report states, it is to be welcomed that contacts and dialogue of our Assembly with the Committee of Ministers have recently significantly intensified.

It was noted in the ad hoc committee that there is an urgent need to develop synergies and provide for joint action by the two statutory organs in order to strengthen the Organisation's ability to react more effectively when a Member State violates its statutory obligations or does not respect the fundamental principles and values upheld by the Council of Europe. The existing unilateral tools of both statutory organs have proven not to be very effective. For that reason, the resolution and the recommendation propose to put into place, in such situations, a joint procedure of reaction, upon the initiative of one or the other statutory organ or the Secretary General. This new joint procedure would ensure enhanced legitimacy, credibility, impact, relevance and synergy of the measures taken, both on the Member State concerned and within the Organisation, without prejudice to each organ's separate powers and responsibilities.

I am very pleased that in recent days both the Secretary General and the Chair of the Committee of Ministers have made it clear that they agree with this approach and that action has to be taken as soon as possible to create such a new joint procedure, which will include our Assembly in the Committee of Ministers decision-making process with regard to Articles 7, 8 and 9 of the Statute of the Council of Europe. It is my firm conviction that this substantially strengthens the Assembly's position and helps the Committee of Ministers to become more active to meet serious challenges in the future.

Let me conclude by asking your support, colleagues, for the draft resolution and draft recommendation, which I consider to deliver a win-win, to both statutory organs, to our Member States' governments and parliaments, and to us, members of this esteemed Assembly. Adopting this resolution and recommendation today ensures that our Assembly's ideas on our role and mission, and our proposals on how best to meet future challenges, will play an important role in the ministerial conference, which will be held in Helsinki next month.

Last but not least, I thank the members of the Assembly's staff, who have been at my disposal almost day and night and without whom I would surely not have been able to present this report, resolution and recommendation to you. We have wonderful, dedicated and skilled people in this Organisation working for us with their hearts and minds. I thank them from the bottom of my heart. It is an honour to work with them.

I am looking forward to all your comments.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mister Kox. You have three minutes left. I call Mr Mart van de VEN, rapporteur of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs. You have three minutes.

**Mr Mart van de VEN (Netherlands, ALDE, Rapporteur):** On behalf of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, I thank the Rapporteur of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, Mr Tiny KOX, for his support.

The Rules Committee supports the proposed draft resolution and draft recommendation. Mr Tiny KOX's report is the follow-up to the work of the ad hoc committee on the role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly. There has been a lot of work for a lot people – members, but also staff, as Mr Tiny KOX said – in the past

year. We worked hard in the ad hoc committee. We did a lot of work, investigating new ways to improve the quality of our work and enhance the relationship not only among ourselves but also with the Committee of Ministers and other international institutions.

The purpose of the Kox report is to again confirm that we want to do so. In particular the report proposes to step up the political dialogue between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers, and that is necessary. Clarification is needed while we have to assess Member States' statutory commitments and obligations in terms of the relationship between the Committee of Ministers and also the Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. There was a lack of clarity about this in past years, and we in the Rules Committee think the most important aspect of the Kox report is to create a new instrument for this better dialogue. That is why the committee fully agrees that the new envisaged procedure brings a new impetus in the current procedure framework and provides a better tailored way of achieving the common objectives appropriately and efficiently, responding to the violation of the statute of the Council of Europe.

Our amendments suggest, apart from seeking clarification and other details, that the time frame for the activities and operations of that new body are a little too open. There is not a definite period, and we think there should be a proper time frame. We therefore propose to have a three-month period for the procedure once started, with a possible extension of three months. That corresponds for example with our rules for when we expect replies to letters we send to the Committee of Ministers.

I will leave it there, and I await the comments of my distinguished colleagues.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Thank you, Mister van de Ven.

I now open the discussion by giving the floor to Ms Ingjerd SCHOU.

**Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group):** I thank Mr Tiny KOX for his report and the work he has done on it.

For 70 years, the Council of Europe has been an arena for pan-European dialogue and a watchdog for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Today this position is both challenged and weakened. This is due to growing nationalistic and populist trends in Europe, but it is also a result of our own internal difficulties. These internal difficulties have for too long prevented us from focusing our time and energy on the mandate given to us to monitor and safeguard the human rights of the 800 million citizens in the Council of Europe Member States.

This is what we are equipped to do. We are not equipped to engage in conflict resolution between Member States. The situation is critical, particularly in a time when respect for the statutes of our Organisation and the European Convention on Human Rights is weakening. If we do not manage to overcome our internal difficulties, this will continue to damage our credibility and integrity, and more and more weaken the Council of Europe. The EPP group is therefore very pleased that we are finally discussing a report with concrete proposals for how to proceed and how to strengthen the efficiency and credibility of the Parliamentary Assembly.

This report sums up what we have been discussing and struggling with for a long time. It also allows us to take a step forward and try to achieve a solution to this difficult situation. The EPP strongly supports the rapporteur's suggestions in paragraph 14 for a joint procedure of reaction in situations where a Member State violates its obligations or does not respect our fundamental principles and values. With such a procedure, we allow for the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly to work together on how best to respond to Member States not fulfilling their obligations. This will strengthen the role of the Parliamentary Assembly, and it will allow us to find a way out of the current deep political crisis of the Council of Europe.

I hope for your strong support for this important resolution, and that we can join forces and be more united in our efforts to strengthen the Assembly's co-operation with the Committee of Ministers and the role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly.

**Mr Frank SCHWABE (Germany, SOC, Spokesperson for the group)\*:** As has been said, the three principles and key values of this lofty Organisation, the Council of Europe, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, are facing fundamental challenges. As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of our existence, Member States of the Council of Europe have put us in a difficult position; they are calling into question

fundamental rules, and unfortunately that concerns not only the Russian Federation but others working against the spirit of this Organisation. We have seen what is happening also in Azerbaijan, and across the board we see that the Council of Europe does not have the financial basis it requires.

We understand what has triggered all this: the Russian Federation has annexed part of Ukraine. Notwithstanding that, the Council of Europe can only afford to be successful if we concentrate on our core business or competence. We will not be in a position to resolve territorial conflicts that the United Nations and OECD have not been able to resolve, but we can tackle the human rights situation in the Crimea, in the Donbass and in Chechnya, and in Dagestan, Moscow and St Petersburg, and improve the human rights situation there, although we will have to rely on, and work with, civil society.

We face major challenges such as financial difficulties and the fight against corruption, but we cannot solve these problems alone; we can only do so with the Committee of Ministers. The May conference will be important and we must have an opportunity to put forward our proposals before that conference, but we need a common procedure that brings together the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers and this is a unique historical opportunity to get such a procedure. We need a common procedure so we can take single decisions on sanctions. If we were to act unilaterally we would get nowhere; we can only have an effective common ruling if we work together in sanctioning Member States. We therefore need to be a party to any procedure, and we must be in a position to trigger any procedure and need a robust mechanism and procedure with a clear timeframe.

We are at a turning point today and I believe we will have a broad majority for these proposals in the Council of Europe, so we will be in a stronger position. In conclusion, I thank our rapporteur, Mr Tiny KOX.

**Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC, Spokesperson for the group):** I wish to follow on immediately from what Mr Frank SCHWABE has said. Some imaginative proposals are coming forward, particularly on the future of our finances, and I believe we shall hear and feel a lot more about those in the autumn.

In the meantime we are debating a report that ought to have been debated in June, but which, at the behest of the Secretary General, was brought forward and put forward as an urgent debate very late on Sunday night. As a result, in my view it is going slightly off at half-cock. There should have been more consideration by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy and by the Rules Committee, but we have all worked extremely hard to try to come up with amendments that will improve the report. Some have already been accepted by the rapporteur, and for that I am grateful, and some have been accepted by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, and for that I am grateful too. But I want to particularly commend the work of Mart van de VEN and the Rules Committee; they have put a lot of effort into coming up with amendments that I hope this Assembly will later on this afternoon accept.

In particular, I want to address the issue that Mart van de VEN raised about timescales. We are in some danger of bringing forward in haste a recommendation that is designed mainly or solely to meet the demands of the Helsinki Committee of Ministers meeting, without including in the report a demand for a framework for the delivery of real results. I understand that the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy is not minded to accept Amendments 12 and 14, but I hope that the Assembly will take a different view. We must at least nail down a clear timescale of three months – with an extension to six months under exceptional circumstances, but only under exceptional circumstances – if the report is to go through this afternoon, as I very much hope it will, amended. If, however, the report is not amended, we will have to revisit it. That would be a shame, given the impetus that has already been generated and the apparent urgency felt by some in this Chamber about taking the matter forward. We will throw our weight behind the report, on the understanding that Amendments 12 and 14 go through.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I will not comment on the content of your speech, Sir Roger, but there is one point I would like to make. This debate under the urgent procedure was put on the agenda for this part-session by a Bureau decision. It was proposed last week to make it an urgent procedure debate, completely independently of any intervention from anybody outside the Assembly.

**Mr Hendrik DAEMS (Belgium, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group):** The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe welcomes the report, which introduces a new element into the relationship between the Secretary General, the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly. It is quite normal, after 70 years, for us to

reassess how we work. The most important thing for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe is the impact of those three elements of the Council of Europe, jointly or separately, in any given situation. If we are honest with each other, we have to admit that their impact has been less than optimal in recent years.

The report introduces a procedure proposed by Minister Soini – I welcome his creativity in doing so, on behalf of at least part of the Committee of Ministers – for common action when things that the Council of Europe simply cannot accept happen in a country. I am not throwing stones at anyone, but in recent years there has unfortunately not been enough action in some situations. The reasons why are not so important; what is important is that we do something to change the position. One proposal is for joint action, which means that if a situation arises that we should oppose, the Committee of Ministers will do so together with the Assembly and the Secretary General. At the same time, it is important that the Assembly is empowered to initiate such procedures itself.

Any procedure will consist of different steps, but a decision will have to be taken at the end of the procedure – be it after six months or in a fixed time frame – by the Committee of Ministers. I say that partly in response to Sir Roger GALE. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe welcomes the fact that the ambassador of each country will have a responsibility to explain why the Committee of Ministers has decided to take action or not, and we will be able to question our respective Foreign Affairs Ministers about the matter.

I thank Mr Tiny KOX for creating the report. It is good that we are having this urgent debate now, because in a few weeks the Committee of Ministers will meet to address the matter. On behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe and, I think, the whole Assembly, I invite the Committee of Ministers to look through the report and accept it. If they do, we will be able to take common action when we need to react, in an efficient and impactful way, to situations that we cannot accept. I thank the Committee of Ministers in advance for considering the new procedure.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Mr Petter EIDE is normally in seat No. 123, and it is difficult to find people if they are not in their places. As an exception, I will give you the floor, Mister Eide, but I would ask you to sit in your own seat.

**Mr Petter EIDE (Norway, UEL, Spokesperson for the group):** I apologise, Madam President; I was not aware of that.

I thank Mr Tiny KOX for this wonderful resolution, which is designed mainly to unite us. After several years of struggle following the Russian annexation of Crimea, we need to find a new way forward. The report's attempt is to focus on how we can keep the Council of Europe together despite conflicts between Member States.

The resolution sends a direct invitation to the Russian Federation to rejoin the Assembly if it resumes its obligatory payment, and it underlines that any failure by the Russian Federation to honour its obligations may lead to suspension. Several amendments attempt to turn the resolution into solely an anti-Russian one, but I strongly advise against that. The important thing now is to look forward and try to solve the problems that we face. If we in the Council of Europe want to stick to our mandate and our core values, we cannot punish the Russian people – the ordinary man and woman – for the failures of their leaders. Rather, we must do the opposite and protect the Russian people from the failures of their leaders. If the Russian Federation leaves the Council of Europe for whatever reason, the Russian Federation might suspend the Convention. As a result, 140 million Russians would lose the protection of the European Court, and the human rights situation in the country would deteriorate further. In our eagerness to punish the Russian leaders for their failures, we would mainly be punishing the Russian people.

The resolution reminds us that we are here to protect ordinary men, women and children, as well as human rights activists, journalists and NGOs. The resolution starts a very positive process of reuniting the Council of Europe. It gives backing to further diplomatic efforts, and it gives liberal forces and human rights activists in the Russian Federation hope that they will not be left alone. I do not know whether that is enough, however; the Russian leaders might already be fed up with our games. They are watching us now, and they might think that this is a silly game and they will not join in. Strong forces inside the Russian Federation are arguing for it to leave the Council of Europe. We need to be vigilant and maintain a strict focus on finding a way of keeping the Council of Europe together. I thank the rapporteur again for a very good resolution, and I hope that it will gain broad support.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Thank you, Mister Eide, and I must apologise to you. I have just been told that your seat is No. 123, and I was looking for you in the wrong place. That is because there is also a Mr Espen Barth EIDE; you both have the same surname.

**Mr Aleksandar ŠEŠELJ (Serbia, FDG, Spokesperson for the group)\*:** In a room of this building, there is a copy of one of the most important legal documents ever seen throughout history: the Magna Carta, which restricted the power of a king over his people and introduced the famous legal principle that there can be no taxation without representation. In the past five years, however, that principle has been trampled underfoot here. The Russian Federation is being asked to pay money but denied the right to vote. Have we forgotten the Magna Carta, or do we want to go back to the 13th century?

If the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is an all-European Organisation, the Russian Federation must be in it. We can have a discussion about the financial crisis that we face, and of course there are problems, but they have to be resolved through dialogue – that is how all international organisations should operate. The Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly must find a common mechanism that allows them to overcome their present and future challenges. The Council of Europe must also respect the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, which should include respecting Crimea and Sevastopol as parts of the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation is the largest country in the world. It freed Europe from fascism – that is a fact, but it seems to be a fact that the Council of Europe has forgotten. There are 150 million people in the Russian Federation and more than 17 million in the Russian diaspora. Europe is not Europe without the Russian Federation.

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

We now move on to the general debate.

**Mr Volodymyr ARIEV (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** I have a question. Many colleagues have tried to convince me to support the report because it is not about the Russian Federation – its title is “Role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly: main challenges for the future” – but now I see the hypocrisy. Are we debating the subject in the title of the report, or its real intentions, which we have just heard? That is the first question.

You know what the Russian Federation did, but I would like to focus on two connected matters. The first is upholding the role of parliamentarians in the Council of Europe. The second is the permanent elephant in the room: the State that is behind attempts to reduce that role through financial blackmail of this Organisation.

Let me remind you again that for the ad hoc committee last year, the Russian Federation’s clear condition for resuming its payments and returning to the full work of the Assembly was to kill the sanctioning procedure here. The report of Ms Petra De SUTTER, which followed the Nicoletti report, was discussed in this Chamber in the autumn, but it was returned to the committee because of the elephant in the room. We are now seeing another attempt from another angle.

From reading the first edition of the report, I understood that the proposal is sharply to reduce the independence of parliamentarians to adopt decisions about sanctioning and monitoring procedures. This is the first time that, while we talk about the importance of parliamentarians, someone is proposing that we cut our own independence and authority. Please, tell me – is there any Member State of this Organisation whose ministerial branch can have an impact on a decision of parliament? That is absolutely illogical, as we have said many times to underscore the importance of the role of parliamentarians.

It gives a very bad signal that when perpetrators of human rights violations, such as the Russian Federation, refuse and neglect the values of Council of Europe, budgetary matters have more impact than standing firm on our principles. The high role of parliamentarians, which has been spoken about here for many years, should be saved. We should take great care to reject any attempts to undermine it.

**Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR (Iceland, SOC):** I believe that the report’s fundamental content and its most important message is the call for enhanced co-operation with the Committee of Ministers. During my rather short stay here, I have experienced and witnessed a growing divide between two important bodies of

the Council of Europe – the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers – and their apparent inability to reach a common conclusion about the problem we face: how to tackle those states that appear not to respect our values, or that even transgress against them quite severely.

I believe that by adding a common mechanism, in addition to the mechanisms that we already have, in a spirit of co-operation and compromise, we will find a better future for the Council of Europe. It is very important for the Council of Europe and all its bodies to work together, enhance their co-operation and further strengthen their efforts to work systematically in tandem. In that way, we will also understand one another better.

Right now, as we stand at a crossroads for our Organisation, with its foundations shaking and human rights being increasingly undermined, it is detrimental to our cause and to the values of the Council of Europe that its two most important bodies of decision makers are at odds or in conflict. The report represents a hand extended between the two for a conversation about how we can work together better. I do not believe that it will constitute a commitment on our behalf until the two bodies have reached an agreeable conclusion together. It is my sincere view that trying to find a compromise and a way for the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers to work together is the best way forward for our Organisation and for the future of the protection of human rights in Europe.

**Mr Boryslav BEREZA (Ukraine, EPP/CD)\*:** In my country, Ukraine, we are approaching the second round of presidential elections. Apart from the first name, middle name and surname of the future president, there is another question that we have to ask: can we remain on the European path, or will the Russian Federation conquer us?

From listening to what has been said today, my understanding is that the Parliamentary Assembly is sending a very negative signal. In spite of what the majority of my colleagues have said, it is the Russian Federation that is being supported. In talking about Crimea, which has been annexed by the Russian Federation, some of them allowed themselves to talk about it as part of the Russian Federation, and the Parliamentary Assembly did not react in any way. It is as though it finds that quite normal, which I find outrageous.

A bad signal is being sent to other countries, too. They will have contempt for European values and human rights, because it is as if we are saying that you can torture people, violate the rights of LGBT people and do whatever you want to your citizens, but if you pay your dues to the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly will view what you do as the work of a country that we should not punish, because the government is bad, but the people are good. But who elected that government?

All this makes me think that the Russian narrative, which since 2014 has been that it is wrong for the Parliamentary Assembly to apply sanctions against the Russian Federation, has the upper hand. I am disappointed to see this situation emerging. Ukrainians in the Council of Europe will be disappointed. This Organisation will be discredited, and the very idea of European values will be discredited. The Ukrainians may look in another direction. We do not want to see a situation where Europe does everything possible to ensure that the Russian narrative triumphs. The Russian Federation has killed more than 10 000 people in my country. The Russian Federation annexed Crimea. The Russian Federation attacked the Donbass. What do we do with a country that does not apply and implement Parliamentary Assembly resolutions, that ignores and tramples on human rights and that has nothing but contempt for European values? We should not allow it.

**Mr Serhii KIRAL (Ukraine, EC):** The Russian Federation – that is what we hear today. I am surprised and embarrassed, because I was convinced by Madam President, the Secretary General and many leaders of the political groups, who said, “No, no, this report is not about the Russian Federation. It has nothing to do with the Russian Federation. It is about the great new idea of having enhanced dialogue between our statutory bodies.” I would be fine with that, although I strongly believe that you do not change the rules of the game during the game. We should not look into our rules and procedures and come up with new ideas and mechanisms until we have tackled the issue of the big payer – the big Member State – who is the big elephant in the room. That is critical if we do not want to take this political responsibility and look as if we are the appeasers and as if there are no alternatives; the only option is to take the Russian Federation back and have all we need, which is money. We have all learned history, and particularly as far as the Russian Federation is concerned, that never works.

I have no problem with this mechanism if members believe that it could work, but how many of you have actually read the report? How many of you understand the technicalities of this new procedure? What we are doing is voluntarily giving a signal to the Committee of Ministers that we are ready to give away part of our autonomy and control to the Executive, which has one principle of decision making: it is consensus-based.

What we have now is a perfect situation. I appreciate that some of the Committee of Ministers support that. We have a good policeman and a bad policeman. The Assembly has more flexibility. It has monitoring procedures and can respond to violations of human rights, democracy and the rule of law by imposing very minor sanctions, such as depriving voting rights, not depriving membership. The report tells us that we will have no powers to trigger Articles 7, 8 and 9. We know that we will not have control over the final decision, which will stay within the Committee of Ministers. We do not even know what the decision or the next roadmap will be.

If members believe that this is not about the Russian Federation and do not want to look like appeasers, they should support my Amendment 27, which states that any new mechanism would not apply to the current crisis, because a key principle of the rule of law is that you do not change the rules of the game during the game.

**Ms Marianne MIKKO (Estonia, SOC):** I would like to talk from the perspective of history. Before the birth of the Council of Europe, Sir Winston Churchill expressed his strong conviction that Europe should be stable and united like one big family. Rapporteur Mr Tiny KOX is right; the Council of Europe was formed in 1949 to achieve greater unity between its Member States for the purpose of safeguarding the common values and principles. What has become of that? In the 21st century, we have an enfant terrible who wants to divide us. We are dealing with one country in such a passionate way that we are not able to see the bigger picture. This is a crucial moment where we need to ask ourselves: are we not starting to slowly cut off the branches of a tall tree that we have been growing for so many years?

On the eve of the 70th anniversary, we have to be strategic rather than tactical. Creating a truly new procedure with representatives of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary General can only be complementary to the valuable heritage that the Parliamentary Assembly already has in its Statute. This Statute has many strengths, and for many decades it has helped to unite 47 Member States representing more than 800 million people. It is a waterproof document, and our Organisation is a good club that many countries wish to belong to.

The common principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law will not be ensured if we act tactically instead of strategically. Are we not enthusiastic about the process by simply not evaluating the outcome? We do not want to throw the baby out with the bath water. As the head of the Estonian delegation, I can confirm that our main goal is to stand up for European values. Which organisation in Europe would fight more for the rule of law, democracy and human rights if not the oldest international parliamentary assembly, at 70 years old – the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe? How would we be perceived by the founding fathers, who emphasised the need to stand up for common European values? Let me ask it another way: how will we, the members of the Parliamentary Assembly, be interpreted by future generations? Are we the creators or destroyers of Europe? That is the question we need to ask ourselves. After all, *noblesse oblige*.

**Ms Olena SOTNYK (Ukraine, ALDE):** I remember when I first entered this Chamber. It was six years ago, and I was not an MP at the time; I did not dream that I would become an MP or a delegate from my country. I sat where Ms Stella KYRIAKIDES is now sitting, and I was a participant in the World Forum for Democracy. It was hugely inspirational to come here and feel the energy of this Organisation. That is why I committed to follow everything that happens in the Assembly, and I am working hard to make it better and to follow its principles and values. That is why this report worried me a lot.

I would be glad if we could talk about the challenges facing this Organisation, such as how to implement the conventions and decisions; how to become stronger, well-known and more influential in our Member States; and how to cope better with our financial crisis and many other problems. But the report is not about that. Colleagues so far have all talked about only one country: the Russian Federation. It is a pity that the majority of us are being misused by a minority who are trying to cover important things, to change the rules, to limit our authority, to make us less influential over those who abuse their rights and less able to show them how they need to act. I remind the Assembly that we cannot push someone to follow the rules and principles if they do not want to. There is only one important thing: we should not change our principles to favour somebody who does not want to follow our principles and rules.

If the report is not about the Russian Federation or limiting our authority, I urge colleagues to follow that logic and support Amendment 3 or 5 – it does not matter which – and show everybody that the report is about strengthening the Assembly. If that is not the case, then please, colleagues, do not misuse the important issue of strengthening the Assembly. Tell everybody honestly, “We want to bring the Russian Federation back and are looking for the best opportunity to do so.”

**Mr Viktor IELENSKYI (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** When we discuss the role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly, we should keep in mind a crystal-clear fact: one Member State has tried to undermine our common values and the very foundation on which Europe stands. Each of us has his or her own political beliefs and allegiances, but no one is going to justify the violation of territorial integrity and attacks against human dignity, human rights and democracy. We all fully agree that strong and effective democracy is a pillar of the European community. Democracies must be able to protect themselves effectively from regimes that seek to use freedom and devotion to human rights for the destruction of democratic institutions and civil peace.

In the light of the mission and role of the Assembly, I draw colleagues’ attention to the value of every single nation in the European community. The unconditional recognition of the right of nations freely to choose their own way should be respected without any reservations. Europe must finally reject a world order designed exclusively by so-called great powers that claim to decide the fate of all others, as well as the dishonest deals behind the scenes at the expense of one country or another.

All nations are equal under God and under international law. Every single nation is unique in its contribution to world culture and human development. That is why we should avoid using words such as “biggest member” in our resolutions, now and in future. We also need to call spade a spade. If one state or another demands the privilege to violate the Assembly’s rules in return for money and its presence in the European community, that is blackmail according to all vocabularies. It is not that 46 Member States have to avoid a situation in which one Member State chooses to leave the Organisation, as the resolution says; on the contrary, it is that one Member State has to avoid being asked by the other states to do leave. There is only one way to strengthen the Assembly’s role: to stand firmly for European values.

**Mr Andrea ORLANDO (Italy, SOC)\*:** Those colleagues who say that we are not talking about the budget or the rules are right, but we are not even talking about the Russian Federation, so we should not be divided between those who are more or less friendly towards the Russian Federation. We are talking about the future of the Council of Europe, which was brought together as a result of the violence of war. During the Cold War, dialogue was achieved on the basis of similar stories or histories. We need to have dialogue when we are talking about the contrasting histories or stories of countries that would not naturally have been brought together. We have to decide today whether we are going to renounce trying to bring together differing stories or histories, or to remain true to the principles that are the cornerstone of the Council of Europe. That is what this debate is all about.

The president of my group was right to say that we should concentrate on things that the Council of Europe can do. We are not renouncing any ambition; rather, we are talking about trying to find solutions to conflicts that we can prevent. We cannot prevent conflicts that are determined elsewhere. We have to ensure that some 800 million citizens throughout Europe can file applications at the European Court of Human Rights. That is important for the prevention of conflict. We have to decide what action we need to take when countries move away from the fundamental principles enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights. Should we throw up our hands and decide to do nothing? These are the questions that we need to address.

Today, the situation relates to the Russian Federation, but it also concerns other countries. We cannot improve the situation if we deprive citizens in countries that are members of the Council of Europe of a fundamental instrument: the ability to invoke their rights directly before the Court. That is this Organisation’s unique feature. When it comes to the underpinning of reform processes in Council of Europe Member States, it is important to remember that without the Council of Europe’s assistance those states would not have been able to proceed on the path towards reform. We see that today.

When we write reports, we realise how important the instruments we use are to non-governmental organisations and civil society in countries where our rules and principles are not applied. It is true that we are not talking about rules; we are talking about the future of the Council of Europe. I believe that the report and Mr Tiny KOX’s proposals will give us new instruments as we move into a new epoch.

**Mr Serhiy SOBOLEV (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** How many times do we have to come back in a circle to the same point and try to decide political issues – very political issues – by procedural measures? And how many times will we avoid calling things by their real names?

The report concludes that the Council of Europe is in a deep political and financial crisis, and it proposes addressing this crisis by reducing the power of the Parliamentary Assembly. I believe that all of us represent countries with parliamentary systems, and we parliamentarians naturally support strong parliamentary representation, with effective powers to handle shortcomings or to achieve progress. Today we are discussing a document that suggests elected members of parliaments should weaken our sovereign rights.

In fact, the problem that we face today does not have a procedural solution. The real problem is that one Member State of the Council of Europe permanently breaches the fundamental principles of this Organisation and up to now we have not managed to reach a consensus on how to bring that State back to the principles of the Organisation. Instead, we are witnessing an attempt to adjust the principles and procedures of the Parliamentary Assembly to the demands of the Russian Federation. If every time that a particular Member State goes off the right track we try to bend our rules to accommodate such a breach, we will diminish the whole idea of this Organisation. And with that kind of attitude, the Russian Federation will remain the country that occupies the territory of its neighbours and the country that threatens European security. Of course, there will always be a space to improve co-ordination between the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe, but this co-ordination should be based on the assumption that the statutory bodies exercise their sovereign rights independently.

I believe that what we need now is a strong Parliamentary Assembly with strong powers to deal with challenges and to respond to them as efficiently as possible. Most importantly, when a Member State breaches the core principles of our Organisation, the statutory bodies should be vocal, without any reservations.

**Ms Nino GOGUADZE (Georgia, EC):** How many times do we have to come back in a circle to the same point and try to decide political issues – very political issues – by procedural measures? And how many times will we avoid calling things by their real names?

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**Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN (Romania, SOC):** Honestly, after listening to the colleagues who have spoken previously, I have decided to change my contribution slightly. The title of the report is “Role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly: main challenges for the future”. I think there is a slight mistake in that title. It should read, “main challenges for the present and the future”. That is because if we are honest about ourselves, this Organisation is not in the best shape, both within the Organisation itself and at the European level. The rapporteur was perfectly right to use in his report words and phrases such as “political crisis”, “budgetary crisis”, “values” and “challenges”. That is the reality.

For me, from the beginning this report was not mainly about the Russian Federation; it was mainly about ourselves, about our values, about Europe and about how to manage and try to find solutions when we face such huge challenges. I make these comments because I believe that I am peculiar in being the only guy in this room – I do not know if one of our Greek colleagues is here, too – who was present on 3 March 2014 in Brussels for the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union, which is the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the European Union Member States. Immediately after the illegal annexation by the Russian Federation of Crimea, which is the sovereign territory of Ukraine, they debated it. In that meeting, the Foreign Affairs Council said that it *condemns the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces*. I was one of the contributors to that statement, which was based on the first definition of such aggression in international law in the London Convention in 1933. So I have no inhibitions about discussing this subject here.

Please believe me when I say that I have full sympathy with and can understand the anger and frustration of our Ukrainian colleagues when we discuss this issue, and I also fully understand the anger and frustration of our Moldovan colleagues and our Georgian colleagues. We never gave up on the fundamental principles of international law with respect to territorial integrity and sovereignty. The report is about that, but it is also about much more.

That is why my message is very simple: when facing some huge challenges, the worst solution would be to stay and do nothing. This report is based on negotiations that have tried to increase political support, tried to define solutions, and tried to work with the Committee of Ministers to find solutions to these challenges. Nobody quoted conventions that are quoted here in the report and nobody spoke about the European Court or the European Union acceding to the European Convention on Human Rights. Those issues are part of this report, so I invite people to look at it and try to find solutions that are not perfect but represent a step forward in trying to find solutions to our challenges.

**Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Allow me to remind colleagues that speaking time is limited to three minutes.

**Mr Olivier BECHT (France, ALDE)\*:** To begin with, I thank Mr Tiny KOX for his report, because I think there is one thing on which we can all agree, as stated in his report – namely that at present we are experiencing the most serious crisis that this Organisation has ever experienced in the 70 years of its existence.

This is supposedly a crisis – a sort of ad hoc crisis – that is due to the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, but now it is a structural crisis: a crisis of our values, which are the values that underpin this Organisation and were present at its very birth, and the values that united Europe back in 1945 after the Second World War. This crisis has become more manifest because of the annexation of Crimea, but unfortunately there are many other states here that are moving away from respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

So how do we go beyond this crisis and how do we get out of it? Through dialogue, of course. That is why the report of Mr Tiny KOX is going in the right direction. We must strengthen dialogue among the various bodies of our Organisation, to promote closer co-operation and to sanction those countries that move away from our values, if that is appropriate. However, that will not be enough. Let us be more future-orientated. Let me remind you of the method applied by the founding fathers of modern Europe after 1945, because there have been crises – indeed, there have been crises over the last 2,000 years. The continent has been more frequently at war than at peace. So how could we go beyond the crisis of the Second World War? There was unity and harmony around shared values, and there was also a common project. We went beyond what divided us and we united around a vision or project for the future. The vision is still there in the European Union, but it must also be present in the larger Europe of the 47 Member States of this Organisation.

In the field of technology, we have to ensure our existence amidst the difficult relationship between China and the United States. We have to respond to the challenges of artificial intelligence and neuro-technology in a way that respects the individual's rights. There are the challenges of the planet's survival; we must combat climate change and preserve the environment for future generations. In our Assembly we must not forget the vision for a common project, because that was the methodology applied by the founding fathers whose portraits can be seen in the corridors of our Organisation. Let us vote in favour of the Tiny Kox report. Let us not forget that only common projects can succeed. They must be built and designed together with Turkey, the Russian Federation and everyone else in Europe.

**Mr Thomas PRINGLE (Ireland, UEL):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in this urgent debate on the role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly and the challenges for the future, as set out in the report approved by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy yesterday. I commend Mr Tiny KOX for his excellent work and dedication in presenting his report. On the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, we should all be conscious of our responsibility to preserve the benefits to citizens that this Organisation has brought through the convention system and the European Court of Human Rights.

There are two areas of concern for me in this report. The first is the removal of the Russian Federation from the Parliamentary Assembly and the future impact that will have on the work of the Council of Europe. The Russian Federation's decision to suspend its contributions to the Organisation's budget has led to a major budgetary crisis. It is a failure to respect the Council of Europe's membership obligations. Each Member State has obligations to pay its contribution to the budget. Against that context is the right of petition of 140 million Russian citizens to the European Court of Human Rights. Many Russian NGOs have called on the Council not to allow the Russian Federation to drift outside the fold, and have warned that we should not let the Council of Europe sleep walk into a situation that could result in new dividing lines around our continent.

I support the proposals in Mr Tiny KOX's report to put in place a joint reaction procedure that could be triggered by either the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers or the Secretary General, and in which all three would participate. That procedure would bring greater synergy, legitimacy and impact to any measures decided jointly, without prejudice to each body's existing powers and responsibilities. The current system only serves to undermine the credibility of the entire Council of Europe. It is time for constructive proposals and collective responsibility, so that this Organisation can engage in a united fashion with the challenges posed by the Russian Federation's occupation of part of eastern Ukraine, while still ensuring the protection of the Convention for all the citizens of our continent.

The second area of concern is the importance of ensuring that the European Union complements rather than undermines the role of the Council of Europe, which is vital for this process. There is a proposal from the European Union that will duplicate a lot of the roles of both organisations and that is not necessary. The Council of Europe provides for the protection of human rights obligations that all the members of the European Union are signed up to by their membership here. There is no need for the European Union to duplicate the work of the Council. That could undermine the legitimacy of the Council of Europe in future. That legitimacy needs to be protected.

**Mr Andreas NICK (Germany, EPP/CD)\*:** The German delegation specifically supports the efforts of the Committee of Ministers to avert the looming threat to the institution. That is why we welcome the intensive exchanges by the Committee of Ministers with the Parliamentary Assembly in recent months. I thank Mr Tiny KOX for producing the report we are debating; he has created a sound basis for us. The meeting of the Committee of Ministers in Helsinki will have a broad position from the Parliamentary Assembly that may influence their deliberations.

There are two priority issues: first, we must all ensure we have a new, effective sanctions mechanism. Secondly, it is important that we secure future funding for the Council of Europe in a way that makes us less vulnerable in future if Member States decide to scale back or withhold their funding for political reasons. In the case of a breach of our rules, we have to make sure we can respond effectively in accordance with our statutes. It has been said that the Parliamentary Assembly has been weakened. Quite the opposite – we have to work with the Committee of Ministers and involve the Member States in order to put in place a more robust, fit-for-purpose sanctions mechanism for the future. We want the Council of Europe to continue to safeguard democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Therefore, we need decidedly more robust machinery for the future. We have to make sure the Council of Europe's funding is on a more sustainable footing.

There are both short and long-term facets to the problem. In the present situation we are forced to talk about short-term cuts to the Council of Europe, which will weaken our position. We should not be forced to do that. We are here representing our national parliaments, and we pass the budgets there. Therefore, we should take the initiative and join together to try to harmonise contributions from certain Member States. I assure you that in the budget debate in my parliament last year for 2019, I pointed out that we needed to get to grips with Council of Europe funding. The German delegation has written to the speaker of the Bundestag, suggesting that the Council of Europe funding be the main focus of the conference of speakers of parliament to be held here in Strasbourg in October. We need a more robust sanctions mechanism, as well as more robust funding. If we have that, we have every reason to look ahead to the future with confidence, and perhaps not be so pessimistic, which has been the tone of the debate so far.

**Mr Axel SCHÄFER (Germany, SOC)\*:** We are talking about the future and even the existence of this Parliamentary Assembly. We need to be frank and open, not tactical. We are facing an unprecedented question: can we go on? How far can we go? I would like to speak to this issue not only as a socialist but as a German. I represent Bochum. Our partner city is Donetsk. I say this to the previous speakers from Ukraine: you have my sympathy. I was an election observer for the OSCE during the Maidan revolution. My heart bleeds because Bochum and Donetsk are unable to work together. We cannot be a partnership because of the civil war caused by illegal Russian occupation. I do not think any of the social democrats in this Chamber have defended that in any way, shape or form.

As a German, I have to say that we all know what is going on; we know that it was thanks only to the sacrifice of the Red Army that we were able to overcome fascism in Europe. We all know that for a fact. It is only by working in partnership with the Russian Federation that we can be successful. We have to find a middle way. We have to observe the principles and values that brought us together, but at the same time we have to realise that what is at stake is the very existence of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly.

The only way forward is through compromise. We cannot claim that there is only one truth; that will only fuel conflict. We of course understand that conflict is being waged by proxy here, but we cannot resolve that here. We need to think of our children and grandchildren. Will they be able to live in a Europe of parliamentary democracies, or will those who want to destroy this Europe gain the upper hand? We want to preserve Europe, and that is why we passionately advocate adopting the report.

**Mr Kęstutis MASIULIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD)\*:** The report's title is about the future mission of the Parliamentary Assembly, but the terminology could have been more precise, because the report's true objective remains in the shadows. There are attempts to return the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe fold. Why? Is Crimea returning to Ukraine? Is Abkhazia returning to Georgia any time soon? No. People are being murdered in Donetsk and Luhansk. There have already been more than 12 000 assassinations. Russians are killing civilians. The Russian Federation is waging a hybrid war, influencing elections everywhere – in the United States, and even here; be in no doubt about that. We even have the import of Russians working here. Be under no illusion; they are doing so absolutely everywhere – including Germany, I say to my colleagues from that country. That is why I am amazed by the report.

I am entirely opposed to these moves to return the Russian Federation to the fold. It must first do its homework and put its house in order. If we have the Russians here, we will, I suppose, have to applaud Putin. We can work without the Russians here; we are doing very well without them.

**Mr Jarosław OBREMSKI (Poland, EC):** I am afraid that we have fallen for the myth of the importance of efficiency and unity. In a democratic system, points of view often differ, and even create disorder, but the democratic system needs balance. The independence of this Chamber is what gives us the chance to avoid the Council of Europe committing a fault. I am afraid that the report could limit our independence.

We would like to adopt a new resolution. The Council of Europe needs money. It needs money from the Russian Federation, but we are not honest with ourselves; we say that this is a way for the Council of Europe to protect the citizens of the Russian Federation, and perhaps also Crimea. Yes, that is important, but in my opinion, not only will we not be able to protect them, but we may be sorry for doing this, because we will be responsible for the next victims if, five years after the annexation of Crimea, and after Ossetia, we indirectly send Moscow the message that the international rule of law is not so important, and if we softly accept the occupation of Donbass and Ossetia. Unfortunately, we then increase the probability of Moscow taking its next aggressive step.

**Ms Selin SAYEK BÖKE (Turkey, SOC):** I congratulate Mr Tiny KOX on a constructive report about our institution. We have to take a step back and note the precarious situation that the world is in. Authoritarian politics and neo-populism are on the rise. The title of Freedom House's 2019 report, "Democracy in Retreat", speaks millions of words. The report states that 2018 was the 13th consecutive year of decline in global freedom. It underlines the point that the decline was most prominent in respect of elections; polls were shaped by coercion, fraud, gerrymandering and manipulation.

Freedom of expression is under sustained attack. The politics of post-truth is overtaking the power of truth. The cult of leadership is the new trend. We have to identify what lies behind this scary trend. The attack on neo-liberalism has demolished the welfare state. Globalisation's institutional design has not benefited the masses. Rising inequalities have been channelled into fear and a loss of trust in mainstream politicians. Fear

has been directed at identities and our differences. Rather than being reminded of our equality and our unity, we have been polarised. A fear of the other dominates discourse, and authoritarian politicians feed xenophobia, isolationism and scapegoating, which they use as pretexts.

We stand at a junction. Will we cave in to these divisions, or will we unite around our core values? That is the question to be answered when discussing the role and mission of our institution. The response lies in our history, in this report, and in unity within diversity. It lies in democracy, and in dialogue – the key word of this report – between the bodies of the Council of Europe, and between the Assembly and our national parliaments.

The remedy is reviving mainstream politics based on our core values – universalism, peace, human rights, equality and justice, which are all mentioned in the report, and which form the basis for future work. We have to ensure that our revisiting our role and mission does not further divide and diminish us, but rather unites us and allows us to grow. We should hold on to our institution's uniqueness in being a direct bridge to national parliaments, including the opposition forces in those parliaments; those opposition forces' quest for democracy, and their politics, risk being muted as authoritarianism rises.

We need to reach out a hand. Now is the time to rise to this challenge while holding on to our core values, and this report does exactly that. It is a future path, and a step in the right direction. I congratulate the rapporteur.

**Mr Sylvain WASERMAN (France, ALDE)\*:** Colleagues, we are in political and financial crisis; if we do not change anything, we will be in stalemate. I thank Mr Tiny KOX for offering us a path to follow. We are at a crossroads. Will we sit back and watch things fall apart, or will we try to find a way out of the crisis? The report reaffirms our values and mission; at a time of crisis, it is essential to do so with conviction and determination. Mr Tiny KOX also offers us pragmatic, new and interesting solutions. His proposal opens up the right of our Parliamentary Assembly to initiate certain joint procedures when we think that a Member State has moved away from the political and ethical contract that binds us.

A right of initiative for a parliamentary assembly or a parliament, as we all know from our respective countries, is a new right. It is a new way of influencing a situation, which would be very important for our Assembly. The new report also states that it would be without undermining any of the prerogatives or powers specific to each body. What is new in this roadmap offered to us by Mr Tiny KOX is something that could improve our effectiveness and credibility if we go down that route. In October 2018, I considered that the proposal offered to us was a patchwork. It was only Band-Aids and not very promising, but today I would say the opposite with the same determination. I think that the right of initiative is an excellent innovation and I call upon you, dear colleagues, to support this report with the greatest possible number of votes.

If we are unified, we can go down that road more resolutely. There is a crisis, which means that we must be very responsible and pragmatic. We should reject the status quo and say yes, deliberately, to these new proposals.

**Mr Leonid YEMETS (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** Dear colleagues, let us talk frankly. The issue we are discussing today is not about improving the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's work and the effectiveness of the Council of Europe. It is all about the return of the Russian Federation's delegation. That is not a spoiler or a secret; everybody in this hall understands and knows this. Let me remind you that it was their own decision to refuse to work in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Russian Federation made this decision because it did not want to comply with the resolutions of the Parliamentary Assembly. The Russian Federation refused to stop human rights violations and violations of international law. The Parliamentary Assembly adopted the only possible decision in this situation, based on the values and principles of our Organisation such as the rule of law, respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, and collaboration for the sake of global security.

The systematic ignoring of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe resolutions by the Russian Federation was the reason for the sanctions and restrictions against the Russian delegation. This decision of the Parliamentary Assembly was not politically motivated; it was dictated by the same values and principles on which the very existence of our Organisation is based. This is why the issue we are discussing is not only about the return of the Russian Federation to the Parliamentary Assembly. It is not even about whether the Parliamentary Assembly can protect its own decisions. It is about whether we remain faithful to our values and whether principles are still more important than financial contributions. Is the task that we are setting ourselves still about reaching the stated goal, or just simulating boisterous activity with empty talk? Soon, everyone will be able to answer this question in the voting. I ask you to vote against.

**Mr José CEPEDA (Spain, SOC)\*:** This Organisation represents 70 years of work. It is a very important Organisation, which was born after 60 million died in the Second World War. It would be very interesting if we looked at the past so as to know exactly where we are going. We have people from 47 Member States and we represent their will. The work that Mr Tiny KOX has completed is perhaps not the best path, but it is a way to get greater stability. People now use very strong arguments and do not think of reasonable arguments, so we need to be reasonable today. It is absolutely fundamental that we should go into dialogue.

I have listened a great deal to what has been said. I do not necessarily share the views expressed by some, but democracy means that we can sit together and listen to one another, so as to come to an agreement. If we do not listen, we will not be able to have dialogue or come to an agreement. That is what politics is about. We know what happened in the past. Allow me to say what we do not want if we think about future generations; when there is no dialogue, you go towards war.

We need to be pragmatic, as some have said. We should not forget the values of the Organisation. I am not going to support Mr Putin but I do not like what President Trump says about stopping the financing of certain international co-operation projects. We have a great deal of responsibility. We need to defend our Organisation, which has been there for 70 years. I hope that it will last for another 70, so we need to have common sense.

**Ms Mariia IONOVA (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** The Council of Europe was set up 70 years ago to achieve greater unity among its Member States on the basis of its common values and principles. The biggest challenge that it faces these days is the undermining of those values. Long discussions were dedicated yesterday to the financial issues that the Organisation faces. Let us be clear about it: the Russian Federation is attempting to trade off money for the values of the Organisation, namely democracy, the rule of law and human rights. So please do not look on the truth with closed eyes. Ladies and gentlemen, blackmail is no tool of democracy. Blackmail does not lead to respect of the rule of law and human rights. Either we stand as one for peace and freedom or we surrender to money; we cannot have both at one time.

I would like to remind you of the numbers from the United Nations. A few years ago, when we were telling you about the number killed and wounded people it was a few thousand. Now, United Nations numbers are telling us that more than 13 000 have been killed and more than 30 000 injured. I can tell you that this month 10 people have already been killed by Russian weapons, including two children by a Russian mine. That number of people killed includes those on the MH17 flight. I also remind you that we have more than 100 hostages and prisoners of war, and 1.8 million IDPs.

We cannot give in to blackmailers because blackmailing can never lead to democracy. It can only lead to surrender and dictatorship. Besides, we cannot give up protecting parliamentary democracy. We have to unite in our efforts to resist initiatives coming from the governments of some countries, which seek to subordinate the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to the Committee of Ministers. This basic feature of democratic representation goes along with the values and principles of the Council of Europe. We cannot give up on that either.

Again, the truth is that the source of the current crisis is the Russian Federation and Russian aggression against Ukraine. All 46 countries are trying to find a solution without the contribution from the Russian Federation. Are we going to change the rules and procedures every time one of the Member States violates the principles and values of the Organisation? Do we really want to say that the Russian Federation was keeping this Organisation going financially all these years? I think that this report is the capitulation of parliamentarians in the Council of Europe to the Committee of Ministers. I urge you to vote against it.

**Mr Oleh LIASHKO (Ukraine, NR)\*:** Dear colleagues, let me tell you that there is a political and economic crisis in this Organisation. Watching this debate, I am starting to understand why in Europe the 80th anniversary of the Munich agreement went quite unnoticed. Today we are doing what the leaders of Europe did all those years ago. Our German colleague was talking about openness and there was talk about the Red Army liberating the world from the Nazis. I remind my German colleague that 10 million Ukrainians died in the Second World War. There were so many victims in our land, and among the Poles and Belarussians. They paid the highest possible price to liberate Europe from Hitler.

Today, dear colleagues, you seem to have forgotten the lessons of Munich about the appeasement of aggressors, although the consequences should be clear to us all. There are hypocritical reports in which you seem to be afraid of mentioning the Russian Federation. Let me tell you something else. While you were talking here, nine people in Ukraine died, including Roman Fedoryshyn, born in 1991, Dmytro Streknev, born in 1997, and Yana Chervona, a girl famous in Ukraine – a hero.

A lot of people – both civilian and military – are dying on a daily basis. Now you are trying to pretend that nothing special is going on. Please open your eyes. War is already on the threshold of Europe – Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Crimea, Donbass: how many more conflicts do there need to be for you to understand that your policies lack initiative and effectiveness? People, including Ukrainians, will have to pay for your mistakes with their lives. That is why I am addressing you – please stop. Mr Churchill would turn in his grave. Please stop talking about coming to an agreement with Putin. Budgetary problems can be resolved simply: cut 300 civil servants from this Organisation. No one will notice that in their world, but a betrayal of the principle for which this Organisation was formed will be seen everywhere.

**Mr José MONTILLA (Spain, SOC)\*:** I thank Mr Tiny KOX for his work in drawing up the report. This is excellent work. Our Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Europe are undergoing a crisis – the first such crisis since their foundation 70 years ago. It is affecting the mechanisms and bodies of our Organisation. Other multilateral organisations are also in crisis, but we are much needed because of our special role based on diversity. The Assembly is the only European forum where we can have real dialogue. We have to reassert the commitments to democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

On 5 May 1949, this Organisation was founded, soon after the Second World War. It was a different context. In 1977, we Spaniards joined the Organisation as we recovered from a terrible dictatorship. In the 1990s, our Organisation underwent a great enlargement following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Contradictions were involved when we brought into the fold societies affected by the crisis in 2008, the rise of populism and the growth of inequality. In the context of the past events that have affected our Organisation, we must look at what the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's mission is for the future.

We need to make changes, not only on ad hoc issues. We can deplore the fact that the Russian delegation is not here, but so many things affect the future of the Organisation. We are here to talk about what divides us, but there are territorial conflicts. Some of those who speak about these problems are right: our Organisation represents so many citizens. If there were fewer, I do not know whether we would be better but we would certainly be weaker. We need to change to be more effective, inclusive and co-operative. This report is a good basis for that.

**Mr Egidijus VAREIKIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD):** It is a pity that I did not participate in the debate about hate speech in sport, but I will use some sporting terminology now. I am a football fan. When we play football we like to follow the rules because they are simple and acceptable to us; I am even writing a book about how to introduce football rules into politics.

What has happened here? One player did not follow the rules and we showed them the yellow card – a totally legitimate punishment. There is nothing really wrong with receiving a yellow card; you can continue playing but try to play fair. The problem is when a player says that he will not play at all, or even pay the participation fee, because he has been shown the yellow card. We have that problem. Statutorily, we are right: we had the right to show the yellow card, and nobody objects. But how do we take the player back?

We have been working for many months on how to stop the card from being yellow or how to say that maybe there was no yellow card or that it was a mistake to show the yellow card. When I read the report, I do not believe that it is for facilitation of dialogue between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers. We are simply talking – no problem. Today we have problems or misunderstandings with the Committee of Ministers. The main aim of the report is to facilitate making the yellow card not yellow. When the card is not yellow, we will forget the report and say that we do not need such a complicated relationship with the Council of Ministers; we will speak with them in a simple way.

I have another proposal. It is time to say to that player that they have to come back, recognise that the yellow card is really yellow and continue with fair play. We know how to forgive; we have forgiven many things under Stalinism and in the Second World War. However, we need a confession and an understanding that fair play is much better than complicated solutions that make yellow cards not yellow.

**Mr Andrej HUNKO (Germany, UEL)\*:** We are having this debate because the Council of Europe is in an institutional crisis. On the one hand we have a business-as-usual approach by the Committee of Ministers while on the other here in the Parliamentary Assembly we are faced with a situation in which we can no longer talk to our Russian colleagues. This report is a way of trying to overcome this institutional crisis and is trying to align decisions of the Assembly with those of the Committee of Ministers. That is why I congratulate our rapporteur, Mr Tiny KOX, on the report and urge all to support it.

We had a debate in April 2014 when we decided on the sanctions, and I have taken a look at the minutes. On that occasion, I spoke on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left here in the chamber and said it would be nonsensical to bring about a situation in which governments were working together but parliaments could no longer work together. The opposite ought to be true in such situations; parliamentary exchanges and diplomacy ought to be possible even in times of crisis, not the reverse. The Council of Europe is the only Organisation where we have to contend with this crazy state of affairs. We can no longer have dialogue at parliamentary level, and that is why we need to find a way out of the crisis. So there is a crisis here and a crisis in the Organisation generally.

In June 1989 Mikhail Gorbachev addressed the Assembly. This was before the fall of the wall in Germany and before the demise of the iron curtain across Europe, and he spoke about the common European home; he painted a future of a common European perspective. Pan-European co-operation means co-operation with the Russian Federation notwithstanding all the present difficulties. That is why I support this report; it is an important and necessary step forward. Whether it is sufficient to solve the crisis does not depend on us, but as many of us as possible ought to support it.

**Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD):** It is great to see everyone here. I am probably one of the longest serving members of the Parliamentary Assembly, first coming here in 1993. I remember early on I met Miguel Ángel Martínez Martínez from Spain, a leftist former fighter from Latin America. He told us new members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe from middle Europe that he congratulated us as members of former left democratic struggle movements who fought to restore independence in the 1990s, which led to Poland, the Czech Republic and the Baltic states returning to membership of this Organisation. So from my point of view, in celebrating 70 years of our Organisation, I remember the huge contribution from people of all mindsets who have strengthened it.

Mr Andrej HUNKO is a good friend of ours and he just told us that there was a crisis in the Organisation, but I do not see any crisis in this Organisation. The crisis is artificially created. There was no crisis of finances; there is not a crisis in our Organisation.

In terms of dialogue with the Committee of Ministers, I see that some of my political friends put forward Amendments 12 and 14, which are concrete amendments about the obligation of the Committee of Ministers over periods of three and six months to implement some of our resolutions. It would be very useful to have that. Secondly, I regret that the Committee of Ministers has not allowed everyone to stand as candidates for Secretary General. That is extremely strange. One person was determined persona non grata in the Russian Federation and that was used as a legitimate argument; that is strange.

Other questions relate to our European Union issue and the east neighbourhood and southern neighbourhood. In the east neighbourhood we have association agreements with Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. We have no problems at all in the European Union; it is created from outside. There is not a Ukrainian crisis; it is a crisis created from outside. Similarly, we do not have a crisis here; it is a crisis created from outside towards us.

I have discussed the report outside the chamber and I am glad Mr Tiny KOX has reflected on some of my points, but I remain extremely critical of his report.

**Mr Andres HERKEL (Estonia, EPP/CD):** In this part-session we have three reports about our rules and our role, namely our role in co-operation with the European Union and the role of the Assembly within the framework of the Council of Europe. Self-reflection can be very important for organisations, but I think three such reports is too much. Meanwhile there are corruption cases and there are political assassinations, especially in the Russian Federation, which are not resolved. There are also problems with monitoring and how to proceed with the Magnitsky Act. There are a lot of fundamental problems, but we are indulging in self-reflection.

Please do not misunderstand me: I have nothing against co-operation between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers, but co-operation is possible without any big changes. There are some misconceptions here: the Russian Federation did not leave the Parliamentary Assembly because something was wrong in the co-operation between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers, and it did not leave because something is wrong with our rules. It was the Russian Federation's decision, but the aim seems to be that we will change our rules by our own hand and in the direction the Russian Federation wants. I do not like this aspect of the report, and would not like it in any report before us.

Fortunately, many colleagues have tabled very adequate amendments to the report. I did not table any, but there are many amendments to support. I think the best is Amendment 22, which was tabled by Mr John HOWELL and others. It states that the Council of Europe should prepare a balanced budget for 2019-20, based on our having no income from the Russian Federation. Yes, that would be difficult and probably painful, but I think it is the only realistic way forward. I call on colleagues to support that amendment.

**Mr Matern von MARSCHALL (Germany, EPP/CD)\*:** In 70 years, the Council of Europe has done a great deal to bolster the rule of law and human rights for 800 million citizens across 47 countries, and I hope that it will continue to do so. I hope that Mr Tiny KOX's report will help us to find a balance between the Committee of Ministers, the Secretary General and the Parliamentary Assembly. The report sets out a step-by-step approach to dealing with Member States that are in breach of their commitments, so it offers us a way to deal with countries such as the Russian Federation. I am certain that the vast majority of us find the Russian Federation's violation of international law intolerable, but the ball is in the Russian Federation's court. We should ask the Russian Federation whether it wants to belong to the Council of Europe and whether it is prepared to abide by the principles of international law. Only the Russian Federation can answer those questions, and it should be welcomed back only if it says yes. I am curious to know what it will say.

As we have seen with the Navalny case, we need to do all we can to remedy the shortcomings in the Russian Federation. We will watch carefully to see whether the Russian Federation respects that judgment and pays the penalty. The proposals in the report offer us a way forward, and I am grateful for them. They are not set in stone; they are simply pointers. We stand shoulder to shoulder with all colleagues – especially those from Georgia – who have seen the sovereignty of their states destroyed by the Russian Federation. We will not cave in to blackmail from the Russian Federation. I am sure that, together with the Secretary General, we will find a way to proceed independently of the Russian Federation.

**Mr Giorgi KANDELAKI (Georgia, EPP/CD):** Colleagues, you know me. I represent the opposition in Georgia, and I have many disagreements with my government and prime minister. Today, however, they made a move that I support, namely to make a voluntary contribution of €500 000 to the Council of Europe. The resolution of the financial question was not that difficult. It simply required some high-level diplomacy with Member States to redistribute the sum in question among them all. Even for a poor country like Georgia, that sum was possible. For rich countries, it is peanuts.

What happened today shows that the financial issue was used as a weapon and a tool to pressure the Assembly into doing what we are doing this afternoon. Who is responsible for the wasted two years – it is more than two years – during which the Council of Europe's ability to scrutinise Member States and problems of democracy dramatically fell, including in my country? The main reason why the European Union is developing all these democracy-monitoring mechanisms is the dramatic inflation of standards in the Council of Europe.

Who is responsible for this? Many people are responsible, but I hold the Secretary General of this Organisation responsible, first and foremost. Why was he unable, for two years, to do some high-level diplomacy to ensure that Member States could plan their budgets in advance? Half a million euros is really nothing for big, rich countries, and this could have been solved long ago. I hear that the Secretary General has asked the Committee of Ministers to double his financial departure allowance when hundreds of employees of this Organisation are going to lose their jobs. I hope that that does not happen, but it is raising eyebrows. To be honest, it is shocking.

Finally, what happened in the Committee of Ministers in the selection of the Secretary General must be reflected upon; it cannot simply be allowed to pass. The mandate of the Committee of Ministers is to assess whether candidates correspond to the official criteria – former prime minister, former foreign minister or person of good international standing – and not more. But the Committee of Ministers did more. Why? Because one Member State, the Russian Federation, declared one candidate, who was twice former Prime Minister of

Lithuania, to be undesired. Everybody knows, and there were public reports, that highest-level diplomacy was in place and some European Union Member States conspired against an ally, Lithuania, to leave Mr Kubilius out. Can it just go down like that? A prominent figure with good anti-corruption credentials and good democracy credentials was vetoed by the Russian Federation. Are you really ready to accept that?

**Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** I give the floor to the Secretary General, Mr Thorbjørn JAGLAND.

**Thorbjørn Jagland (Council of Europe Secretary General):** I am used to a lot from Mr Giorgi KANDELAKI, but now he has gone beyond the limits. What he said just now is simply not true. There is a rumour that somebody is spreading. Please, let this Assembly be the house of democracy, not the house of rumour.

**Mr Frank HEINRICH (Germany, EPP/CD):** Now that I have heard the arguments – I will not go into many of them – allow me to make some general and personal remarks. Yes, we are in a critical situation, and we have all felt it. We have faced several challenges, but walking these halls with you over the last few days, I have felt how terrible the situation really is. We seem to have imported into this Assembly the fracturing caused by the big elephant in the room, as some have called it, and started to play the well-known game of “Your friend is my friend, and your enemy must be my enemy.” I refuse to play that game.

Many of us have been feeling the way while we have discussed the issue in groups, maybe in restaurants or in other talks. We have heard insults from both sides – “hypocrisy” was one of the nicer ones. The way I heard it, some of the interviews were like that. I was not really proud of us for our way of dealing with the subject. It is really a terrible situation, besides the challenges that we face.

Our job is to evaluate and consider the best arguments from all sides. Yes, some of us are suffering more, as we have heard from several colleagues, but we are not here primarily to represent our parties, groups and countries – or our common enemies. We stand here for the common values of this body that we proudly represent: democracy, the rule of law and human rights. If we consider what is at stake, let us remember one other value that as parliamentarians we all experience: compromise.

Great colleagues, wonderful people with great passions and great values – I am proud to be one of us, but I want to stay proud after this week. Let us find the way back to reasonable dialogue. Two words that we have heard very often this afternoon are “together” and “unity”. We all know that compromise can be harmful, but it is worth it.

Having evaluated and considered the issue in the past hours, I have come to two conclusions. First, maybe one party or the other has to say sorry. Secondly, I fully support the compromise that our colleague Mr Tiny KOX has laid before us. I urge other colleagues to follow it, as a first step back to reasonable and necessary solutions and to the bigger picture, concentrating on what is possible. One of our first steps could and should be a signal of unity to our countries, and maybe even to the elephant in the room.

**Mr George LOUCAIDES (Cyprus, UEL)\*:** I congratulate Mr Tiny KOX on the very high quality of his report and on his excellent work. The report really must have required a huge effort – it is a tremendous amount of work, and we are very grateful to him for it.

As other colleagues have pointed out, we now confront – for the first time in the 70 years since this Organisation was founded – a very severe and important crisis. We are at a crossroads, and we need to make a choice. That choice will be decisive and will have huge consequences for the present and future of our Organisation. Every time we take such an important decision, we have to be very aware of the possible consequences. Each measure that we might take today has to be examined in the light of its potential consequences.

If we vote against the report today, the Russian Federation will not have been subject to sanctions. A lot of people have talked about the importance of imposing sanctions on the Russian Federation, but who will end up being punished? It will be the Russian people and the Council of Europe, not the Russian Federation as a State. Our Organisation will suffer, the Russian people will lose certain forms of protection, and we will be limiting our possibilities of protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Before we vote, before we express ourselves, let us sit back, cogitate and really think about this. I hope that we will all rise to the occasion and vote in favour of the report and its recommendations.

**Ms Nicole TRISSE (France, NR)\*:** Madam President, rapporteur, rapporteur for opinion, dear colleagues: since I joined the Parliamentary Assembly in October 2017, I have never known the Council of Europe to be other than in crisis. It is an institutional and moral crisis that has become a budgetary crisis. One has to ask oneself a lot of questions about the future of this Organisation.

Out of conviction and a sense of responsibility, I have been involved in all the initiatives taken by our Assembly to try to find a way out of the situation, which has lasted for too long. We had the ad hoc committee of our Bureau, which was chaired by Mr Michele NICOLETTI and which set out some very interesting ideas in June 2018. Our Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs and our Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy then started to work on the issue; I welcome the huge commitment of our colleagues Ms Petra De SUTTER and Mr Tiny KOX, who have worked hard to offer us innovative solutions.

This debate under urgent procedure was not dictated by a desire to rush out of a crisis because we are short of money. Rather, it is a question of being fully aware of the urgency of the situation. We have to get beyond it, because our institutional, moral and budgetary crisis could easily become an existential one if we allow the principles and rules that are the very foundation of the Council of Europe to be ignored.

I, too, am scandalised by the violation of international law by the Russian Federation in its annexation of Crimea, but I am also in favour of saving the Council of Europe, this extraordinary pan-European forum for dialogue. The one is not exclusive of the other, so I am in favour of taking this first step and setting up a joint procedure of reaction that could be triggered on the initiative of the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers or the Secretary General. That seems to me the right procedure; it would not change the respective powers of the Council of Europe's statutory bodies, but it would allow continuation of dialogue, which is so important in this forum. It is not a panacea or a miraculous solution, but it could help or contribute.

Finally, dear colleagues, let us not attribute to the Council of Europe a mission that it does not have. Our Organisation is not the United Nations Security Council and it was not set up to make sure that public international law is respected. Our responsibility is to make sure that everyone living on the European continent is able to have their rights protected, starting with protection under the European Convention on Human Rights. An opportunity is open to us today; let us take advantage of it.

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL):** I thank Mr Tiny KOX for putting forward his report as a means to solve the ongoing crisis that we have struggled with for the past two years. We certainly stand at a crossroads here today, as the report's title suggests. We cannot emphasise enough the importance of the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly to protecting human rights, the rule of law and democracy. This institution, with all its glorious history and achievement, is worth fighting for and preserving. The future of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is and should always be in our hands.

As adults, we all know that every crisis creates some kind of opportunity. The report suggests that we step down and try to solve our crisis and focus on the unique opportunity to improve co-operation and co-ordinate actions with "a joint procedure of reaction which could be triggered by either the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers or the Secretary General and in which all three of them would participate; this joint procedure could consist of a step-by-step process, starting from the notification of the Member State concerned". There are many good initiatives in the report, such as the joint procedure in reaction and the special monitoring procedure enhanced by a joint taskforce.

The report looks long term and proposes a way forward. As members, we know that it is important to have a follow-up to the Assembly's decisions and to resolutions taken by the Committee of Ministers. Since we have come all this way with the Committee of Ministers, it would not be clever not to use this chance to enhance the relevance of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. It is easy to criticise the people who actually do something and try to find solutions to existing problems, but I hope that the majority of Assembly members are solution-oriented, instead of continuing further in the crisis, with no benefits for anyone.

If we take all the elements together, this report envisions an Organisation where the Council of Europe and the Russian Federation are under one roof, with benefits for the citizens of the Russian Federation and Europe. This crisis of our institution has been absorbing all our oxygen, energy and time, while we have so many urgent matters to combat when it comes to human rights and democracy. If the road proposed in the report is taken, more can be accomplished, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will have more perspective and can come out of this crisis stronger. If the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly are stronger, the inhabitants of Member States will enjoy the benefits; it is for their own good and for their rights.

**Mr Paul GAVAN (Ireland, UEL):** I commend Mr Tiny KOX for this report. Above all, it speaks to our shared values. It gives us a roadmap to a better future and realistic steps to get there. At the heart of the report is a call for increased dialogue among our members and between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers. As an Irish republican, I know the value of dialogue. We cannot begin to solve a political crisis without dialogue. We have heard talk of the elephant in the room. The elephant in the room is not the Russian State; it is the 140 million Russian people, and they deserve the support and protection of this institution.

I want to briefly refer to the amendments. I accept that they are all well-intentioned. We have heard genuine and passionate debate, but the key criteria in considering the amendments is: do they help or hinder the process of dialogue, which we know must be at the heart of rebuilding and renewing this institution? I ask members to look at the amendments in that light. That is why I respectfully suggest to my colleague Sir Roger GALE that Amendments 12 and 14 are not helpful in terms of the bigger project and the bigger picture that we need to solve together. I commend Mr Tiny KOX. This report has broad support across the Chamber. Let us build a better future for all of us in Europe.

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

That concludes the list of speakers. I call the rapporteur, Mr Tiny KOX, to reply to the debate. You have three minutes.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, Rapporteur):** I thank all colleagues who have participated in the debate. Many colleagues think, like me, that as we are at a crossroads, we need to find the way towards a better future and new ways to deal with the Assembly's main challenges. I listened with great respect to those who are worried that this is not a way towards better solutions. There are no guarantees. This proposal does not guarantee that we will solve our problems. It is a roadmap that could help our Assembly to overcome problems and become more relevant and effective.

This report does not propose the Assembly giving anything away – not at all. We are attempting to get new rights to strengthen the power of the Assembly. For the first time ever, we will be able to be part of a process to invoke Articles 7, 8 and 9 of the Convention. That has been the right of the Committee of Ministers, and it does not function; we have seen that with the Russian Federation, for example. We will get a new right. As many colleagues said, we will also get the right to initiate such a procedure, so we do not have to wait. If we think there is a blatant violation by a Member State of the Statute or Convention, we can act; we can do something. What will that lead to? Let us see.

I hope there is broad support for the report, even from those who have worries and doubts. The more united we are today, the stronger our proposals will be on the table of the Helsinki ministerial conference, where the Committee of Ministers has to speak out about what it thinks of this roadmap from the Assembly. We heard very positive sounds from Minister Soini, who explained here that he is on the same track as us. The Secretary General shows in his report that he is on the same track. The Assembly, the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General now want to walk in the same direction. I thank colleagues who are enthusiastic about the proposals, and to those who have worries, I say: let us take this unique opportunity to give the Committee of Ministers, the Secretary General and this Assembly new means to overcome our problems. I hope we have broad support for this proposal.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Thank you. Does the Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy wish to respond?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Yes. I admire the passionate way in which this report has been discussed. It has been very lively, but there was also a broad fantasy in the debate. As chair of the committee, I say once again – I said it to Sir Roger GALE last Monday – that we have been discussing this since September last year. We had two memorandums. We had a hearing; you were present, Madam President. We then discussed it in the Presidential Committee last Sunday, and it was agreed that we would hold this debate, because it has to play a role in the ministerial conference. That is important, and that is why

we are having the debate this week. I hope that today's positive votes will have a positive input in the conference in May, and I hope there will be a way out of the deadlock that we find ourselves in. I hope everybody will vote in a positive way.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Thank you, Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN.

The Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy has presented a draft resolution to which 23 amendments have been tabled. The committee has also presented a draft recommendation, to which seven amendments have been tabled. We will start with the amendments to the draft resolution.

I understand that the Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendments 10 and 30 to the draft resolution, which were unanimously approved by the committee, should be declared as agreed by the Assembly. The committee also unanimously agreed Amendment 28. However, because that amendment has consequences for other amendments or is subject to proposals for sub-amendment, it must be considered separately. Is that so, Madam Chairperson?

### **Vote: Role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly: main challenges for the future**

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Yes.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone object? That is not the case.

Amendments 10 and 30 are adopted.

I call Mr John HOWELL to support Amendment 16.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC):** I do not wish to press the amendment.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Amendment 16 is not moved.

I call Mr John HOWELL to support Amendment 17.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC):** The Russian Federation's activities are described in the resolution as merely an administrative mistake, but they are a fundamental attack on our common values and we should say that in the resolution.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Thank you. Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** As I said in committee, the resolution is structured to mention what the Assembly has done in a positive way and then come back to the problems. The content of the amendment is mentioned in the resolution, but the amendment would put it into the wrong place, so I advise the Assembly not to adopt it.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Against.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

*The vote is open.*

*Amendment 17 is rejected.*

I call Mr John HOWELL to support Amendment 18.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC):** I do not wish to press the amendment.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Amendment 18 is not moved.

We come to Amendment 1. If the amendment is agreed to, Amendment 19 will fall. I call Ms Mariia IONOVA to support the amendment.

**Ms Mariia IONOVA (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** The Organisation is in financial crisis, and Mr Tiny KOX clearly defined the sources of the crisis in his resolution, which states that “the Russian Government’s decision, in reaction to this situation, to suspend payment of its contribution to the budget of the Organisation has led to a major budgetary crisis threatening the Council of Europe’s key activities.” There are other reasons, but Russian blackmail is the key to this crisis, so I strongly believe that this important element should be reflected in the resolution.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** As was stated by the mover of the amendment, the content of the amendment is already in the resolution. She quoted from the resolution. It is no use to put it in a second time; it would not strengthen the resolution but weaken it. I recommend that the Assembly rejects it.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Against.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

*The vote is open.*

*Amendment 1 is rejected.*

I call Mr John HOWELL to support Amendment 19.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC):** I wish to press the amendment because we ought to say in the resolution that the situation has been caused principally by the Russian Federation’s conduct.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** It is completely clear that the Russian Federation is doing wrong by not paying its contribution, but we have more financial problems and should not think that the Russian financial problem is the only one. We have far more problems and that is the essence of the resolution. We are talking about the whole Council of Europe, not only one Member State, even though that Member State does not behave.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Against.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

*The vote is open.*

*Amendment 19 is rejected.*

I call Mr John HOWELL to support Amendment 20.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC):** Amendment 20 reaffirms previous resolutions of the Council of Europe and states the purpose envisaged for the whole resolution.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** The resolution states that the Russian Federation violated international law by illegally annexing Crimea. It is already in the resolution. It would be better if the movers of some amendments read the report before pressing their amendments. It is already in the resolution, so I reject the amendment.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Against.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

*The vote is open.*

*Amendment 20 is rejected.*

I call Mr John HOWELL to support Amendment 21.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC):** The amendment speaks for itself. It would make the resolution clearer.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** The resolution states what has factually happened, so it would not make sense to delete those words from the text. We should not deny facts.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Against.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

*The vote is open.*

*Amendment 21 is rejected.*

I call Mr John HOWELL to support Amendment 22.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC):** The amendment is important, for reasons described by one of the speakers in the debate. It is a sensible proposal to set out a budget proposition that reflects the absence of the money from the Russian Federation.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** We have already decided that we will talk about all the budget and all the consequences of the Russian Federation's non-payment in our June part-session. That is the moment when we should debate such elements, not in the case of this resolution. I advise the Assembly to reject the amendment.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Against.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

*The vote is open.*

*Amendment 22 is rejected.*

I call Mr John HOWELL to support Amendment 23.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC):** The amendment merely repeats the position taken in previous resolutions and sets out precisely what we want the Russian Federation to do. It is important to include that in the resolution.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** The resolution deals with the main challenges for the future and the role and mission of the Assembly. It calls for all 47 Member States to live up to their obligations. It does not make sense to mention one, two or three states in particular, so I propose that the Assembly rejects the amendment.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Against.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

*The vote is open.*

*Amendment 23 is rejected.*

I call Ms Mariia IONOVA to support Amendment 2.

**Ms Mariia IONOVA (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** I am convinced that Member States' primary obligation is to respect the principles and values of the Council of Europe, as prescribed by Article 3 of the Statute. That is not true in the Russia Federation's case, as I am sure no person in the Chamber would deny, so our main appeal to the Russian Federation should be that it complies with Article 3 and the resolutions and recommendations of the Assembly in this regard. Otherwise, it will seem that the presence of a delegation in the Chamber is the main thing of value for the Assembly.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** Article 25 of the Statute obliges each Member State, including the Russian Federation, to send a delegation to the Assembly. We are not a cafeteria where you can pick and choose what you do; a Member State is obliged to send a delegation. To remove those words from the resolution would not only go against the Statute but weaken the resolution.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Against.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

*The vote is open.*

*Amendment 2 is rejected.*

We come to Amendment 3. If it is adopted, Amendment 5 falls.

I call Ms Olena SOTNYK to support Amendment 3.

**Ms Olena SOTNYK (Ukraine, ALDE):** For me, this amendment is the cornerstone of all voting in this Assembly on this resolution, because if people support my amendment it means that they think that all Member States deserve dialogue in difficult situations. If people do not support my amendment, then they agree with the rapporteur that just the Russian Federation has the privilege to have this dialogue, and all other Member States do not have this right to have dialogue in a difficult situation. So, be careful about this amendment.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** If we accept this amendment, we would skip over our worries about 140 million Russian citizens who now are under the protection of the European Convention. So I strongly advise not adopting this amendment, because it would skip over a very important obligation that we have to our citizens – not to our governments or our parliaments, but to our citizens.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** The committee is against.

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

*Amendment 3 is rejected.*

I call Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS to support Amendment 5.

**Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD):** Dear Tiny, you were just speaking about organisations and the biggest Member State, which means the Russian Federation. If they leave the Organisation, there are all the geopolitical implications. So, we all just spoke, especially you, as if the Russian Federation does not exist at all in this report, and here you are talking about geopolitical implications. I ask you to be more humble with any Member State that chooses to leave the Organisation and use a more humble expression.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** The argument is the same as with the amendment that we just rejected. We care for 140 million citizens. They all belong under the umbrella of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Council of Europe. That should count; we should not forget them.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** The committee is against.

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

*Amendment 5 is rejected.*

I call Mr John HOWELL to support Amendment 24.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC):** This amendment is to restate the purpose of why we are here and why this Organisation is here. That should not be forgotten in this report.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** There is nothing wrong with human rights, the rule of law and democracy, but as they are mentioned several times already in the report, to add it here once again is unnecessary. That is the reason that the Committee voted against the Amendment and I urge people here to reject it.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the Committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD)\*:** The committee is against.

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

*Amendment 24 is rejected.*

I call Mr John HOWELL to support Amendment 25.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC):** I withdraw Amendment 25.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Amendment 25 is withdrawn.

I call Mr John HOWELL to support Amendment 26.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC):** This is an important amendment. We have a prohibition on countries joining us that still have capital punishment, but that is judicial capital punishment. Where countries try to kill people, whether members of their own community or others, as the Russians did in Salisbury in the United Kingdom, we should include that in here as well.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** This Assembly and this whole Organisation rejects capital punishment, but to add it all of a sudden here in this report, on how to deal with our main challenges, is not the right place to mention it. So, I propose not accepting this Amendment.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** The committee is against.

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

*Amendment 26 is rejected.*

I call Mr Mart van de VEN to support Amendment 11 on behalf of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs. You have 30 seconds.

**Mr Mart van de VEN (Netherlands, ALDE):** The amendment is proposed with the purpose to investigate the current practice of consultation and co-operation with the congress of local and regional authorities.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I have been informed that Mr Piero FASSINO wishes to propose an oral sub-amendment, as follows: in Amendment 11, replace the words “Concerned by” with the words “In order to enhance”.

In my opinion, the oral sub-amendment is in order under our rules. However, do 10 or more members object to the oral sub-amendment being debated?

Fewer than 10 members object to the oral sub-amendment being debated. Therefore, I call Mr Piero FASSINO to support his oral sub-amendment.

He is not here.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** I would like to move it, because it was the result of a discussion and negotiation between the mover of the original amendment and the Political Affairs Committee.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the oral sub-amendment?

That is not the case. What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** The committee is in favour.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I will now put the oral sub-amendment to the vote.

*The vote is open.*

*The oral sub-amendment is adopted.*

We will now consider the main amendment, as amended.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment, as amended? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee on the amendment, as amended?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** The committee is in favour.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** I shall now put Amendment 11, as amended, to the vote.

*The vote is open.*

*Amendment 11, as amended, is adopted.*

I call Mr Boriss CILEVIČS to support Amendment 6.

**Mr Boriss CILEVIČS (Latvia, SOC):** This amendment aims to demonstrate that the newly proposed procedure is being viewed as supplementary to the already existing procedures, thus ensuring that the Parliamentary Assembly is maintaining its authority and decision-making powers.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** It is already in the text, so we should not repeat ourselves. It is already there that we maintain the existing powers, so this amendment does not make any sense. I propose not adopting it.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** The committee is against

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

*Amendment 6 is rejected.*

We now come to Amendment 7. I call Mr Boriss CILEVIČS to support the amendment.

**Mr Boriss CILEVIČS (Latvia, SOC):** With full respect Mr Tiny KOX, I believe this is an extremely important point and it will not be harmful to stress once again that we will not abandon our authority and decision-making powers.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** The contents of the amendment are already in the text, so we should not repeat it. You get what you want, because it is already in the text. I reject this amendment.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Against.

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

*Amendment 7 is rejected.*

We now come to Amendment 12. If the amendment is adopted, Amendment 28 will fall. I call Mr Mart van de VEN to support the amendment on behalf of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs.

**Mr Mart van de VEN (Netherlands, ALDE):** The Kox report contains the joint procedure that can be triggered by either the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers or the Secretary General. However, it is too open ended as concerns the fixed time. Therefore, I propose a three-month period that could be extended. After the meeting of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, I started to work with the staff to work on the comments of colleagues. When I came to the Political Affairs Committee this afternoon, I was confronted with Amendment 28, and I could conclude only that it was based on the same idea that the original text was too open ended. On the other hand, the text was better. If you outstretch your hands as the Parliamentary Assembly to the Committee of Ministers, you should not have fixed terms. I concede that the text of Amendment 28 is the better one, and I advise the Assembly to vote against Amendment 12.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** You have fulfilled two tasks: you spoke to Amendment 12 and against it. What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Against.

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

I cannot give the floor to someone who wants to speak against the amendment, because Mr Mart van de VEN has already done that. We had an opinion in favour and one against, from the same person. I do not see why we should have another speaker, so I suggest we carry on with the vote that has started. Please vote on Amendment 12.

*Amendment 12 is rejected.*

We now come to Amendment 28. Mr Mart van de VEN has already spoken in favour of the amendment. Would someone like to speak against it? I call Ms Olena SOTNYK.

**Ms Olena SOTNYK (Ukraine, ALDE):** Mister van de Ven, you have the decision of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, which supported Amendment 12. It was not right to tell everyone that you supported Amendment 28 against Amendment 12. The committee knows which amendment we should support.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Mr Mart van de VEN spoke in favour of Amendment 12 on behalf of the committee. What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD)\*:** In favour.

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

*Amendment 28 is adopted.*

We now come to Amendment 27. I call Mr Serhii KIRAL to support the amendment.

**Mr Serhii KIRAL (Ukraine, EC):** This report is not about the role and mission of the Assembly or about Russian citizens. Most court decisions have been sabotaged in the Russian Federation. Let us not be hyper-critical here. It is about accommodating the blackmail of one Member State. If you do not think it is about that, my amendment proposes that any new mechanism – we do not know what it will be – is not applied to the Russian Federation. Please support the amendment.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** Considering we have voted in favour, this amendment does not make sense, so I ask colleagues not to adopt it.

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

*Amendment 27 is rejected.*

We will now proceed to the vote on the whole of the draft resolution contained in Document 14863, as amended. A simple majority is required.

*The vote is open.*

*The draft resolution in Document 14863, as amended, is adopted, with 105 votes for, 30 against and 16 abstentions.*

We now come to consideration of the draft recommendation, to which seven amendments have been tabled. They will be taken in order.

I understand that the Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendment 15 to the draft recommendation, which was unanimously approved by the committee, should be declared as agreed by the Assembly. Is that so Miss Oomen-Ruijten?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** Yes.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone object? As there is no objection, I declare that Amendment 15 to the draft recommendation has been agreed.

*Amendment 15 is adopted.*

We come to Amendment 4. I call Ms Olena SOTNYK to support the amendment.

**Ms Olena SOTNYK (Ukraine, ALDE):** This is very easy logic. I ask you which is more important: sticking to the rules and principles of this Organisation, or appointing a delegation? I think it is the former.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** We just rejected the same amendment when we were dealing with the resolution. It does not make sense to make the amendment here. Once again, it is an obligation under Article 25 of the Statute to present a delegation, so I urge colleagues to reject the amendment.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** The committee is against.

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

*Amendment 4 is rejected.*

I understand that Mr Mart van de VEN wishes to move his Amendment 13 in a modified form, so that the new paragraph would be inserted before paragraph 5.3, rather than after it. Is there any opposition to the amendment being moved in this form? That is not the case.

I call Mr Mart van de VEN to support Amendment 13 on behalf of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs.

**Mr Mart van de VEN (Netherlands, ALDE):** The amendment concerns enhanced dialogue with the Committee of Ministers to anticipate possible solutions, and stems from Recommendation 1999 (2012).

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD)\*:** The committee is in favour.

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

*Amendment 13 is adopted.*

We come to Amendment 8. I call Mr Boriss CILEVIČS to support the amendment.

**Mr Boriss CILEVIČS (Latvia, SOC):** The aim of the amendment is to avoid any possible ambiguity, and to make it completely clear that the Assembly will not abandon any existing procedures.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** The amendment is similar to the one that we just rejected because its provisions were already in effect, so it would not make sense to adopt this amendment. Let us vote against it.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** The committee is against.

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

*Amendment 8 is rejected.*

We come to Amendment 9. I call Mr Boriss CILEVIČS to support the amendment.

**Mr Boriss CILEVIČS (Latvia, SOC):** This is along the same lines. We believe that it would be better to make the language stronger and clearer. It is nothing radical; the idea is the same, but in our view, the amendment's wording is stronger and better.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Mr Tiny KOX.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL):** The amendment is similar to an amendment to the resolution that we rejected. What Mr Boriss CILEVIČS proposes is already in the text. That is our reason for not adopting the amendment.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** The committee is against.

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

*Amendment 9 is rejected.*

We come to Amendment 14. I call Mr Mart van de VEN to support the amendment on behalf of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs.

**Mr Mart van de VEN (Netherlands, ALDE):** The reason for voting against this amendment is the same as for voting against Amendment 12, so I refer to my earlier comments.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Mr Mart van de VEN spoke against the amendment; does anyone wish to speak in favour of it?

**Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC):** On a point of order, Madam President. It absolutely is not proper for the rapporteur of a committee to overturn its decisions unilaterally. The Rules Committee voted in favour of the amendment, and that should be stated clearly.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Sir Roger, you spoke in favour of the amendment. We have already heard someone speak against. If the amendment is adopted, Amendment 29 falls.

What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** The committee is in against, but conciliation is always good in parliaments.

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

*Amendment 14 is rejected.*

We come to Amendment 29. I call Mr Andreas NICK to support the amendment.

**Mr Andreas NICK (Germany, EPP/CD):** This basically mirrors what we in the Committee on Legal Affairs decided after deliberation with the rapporteur of the Rules Committee.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I call Ms Olena SOTNYK.

**Ms Olena SOTNYK (Ukraine, ALDE):** I want to draw attention one more time to the fact that the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs decided in favour of the last amendment. This amendment is different from that one; the first gave us the terms, and the second gives us the principles. The amendment would mean that if three parties did not agree on fixed time frames, they would never agree on any procedures, so there would be a worse deadlock than under what was proposed before. I urge colleagues to vote against it.

**Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly)\*:** What is the opinion of the committee?

**Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD):** The committee is in favour.

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

*Amendment 29 is adopted.*

We will now proceed to vote on the draft recommendation contained in Document 14863, as amended. A two-thirds majority is required.

*The vote is open.*

*The draft recommendation in Document 14863, as amended, is adopted, with 108 votes for, 37 against and 12 abstentions.*

Colleagues, thank you for your active participation. The Assembly will hold its next public sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. I wish you a very pleasant evening.

The sitting is closed.