



Provisional edition

Wednesday 23 June 2021, afternoon

Official report of debates

Opening of the sitting No. 20

Debate: Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision-making

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Good afternoon, dear colleagues.

The sitting is open.

The next item of business this afternoon is the debate on the report titled Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision-making, Document 15301, presented by Ms Eglantina GJERMENI on behalf of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

In order to finish this item by 5:25 p.m. I will interrupt the list of speakers at about 5:20 p.m. to allow time for the reply and the vote.

Now I call Ms Eglantina GJERMENI, our rapporteur.

Madam, you have 10 minutes in total of which 7 minutes is for your opening remarks and 3 minutes for your reply.

The floor is yours, please.

Ms Eglantina GJERMENI (Albania, SOC, Rapporteur): Thank you Madam Chair.

Dear colleagues, it's high time to address the participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision-making.

I am pleased that this topic was the focus of United Nations' 65th Commission on the Status of Women, March 2021, and one of the priorities of UN Generation Equality Forum that will take place in France next week.

There has been, undeniably, progress with regard to general participation of women in political and public decision making in the past years. However, the European political landscape remains quite homogeneous. Politics and decision making seems out of reach to many women of various backgrounds. Young women,

In this report:

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

Roma women, women with disabilities, women from rural areas, well LGBTI women, women from minorities, women of colour or within immigration backgrounds are still not represented in the political sphere and decision making. There are too many obstacles to their participation. Multiple discrimination, the weight of prejudice, risk of violence, fear of stigmatisation, barriers within political parties, social pressure, unequal sharing of caring responsibilities, lack of accessibility, as well as poor consideration of the skills and expertise on women. Sometimes even self-censorship prevents brilliant women from being more active in public life.

Public and political space must be more open to diversity. Change will happen only if there is political will and commitment to make it happen. This is something that we as parliamentarians can call and push for.

With this report I've tried to analyse why it's important for women from under-represented groups to participate in political and public decision-making and what specific measures can be taken to support their participation. I've looked for good practices which could be promoted either at the local or national level, including by political parties. I have also reviewed the different challenges preventing women from under-represented groups to participate and look for innovative projects to tackle them.

Work on this report has been a great process. Meeting, exchanging, learning, reflecting on who are the under-represented groups, and what could be done to enhance their engagement and participation in public life. Really an enriching experience.

I am thankful to all the people who shared the inspiring stories with me and allowed me to relay their concerns and experience in the report.

The committee held a hearing on 2 February, and I had a series of virtual bilateral consultations as well as carried out two virtual fact-finding visits to the Netherlands and to Finland. I have tried to be as inclusive as possible in the preparation of the report.

I believe that the world of politics needs to open up more to women from under-represented groups and provide all citizens with the tools to participate effectively in politics and exercise their rights. It's important to have an intersectional approach and to work towards ensuring that the European political landscape starts better reflecting the diversity of European societies.

Let me share two testimonies. Lilian Haak, a transgender woman from the Netherlands underlined during our meeting that LGBTI women had two battles to fight. They had to fight for their status and for the cause they defended. These made participation in public and political decision making even more challenging for LGBTI women.

I had a fascinating conversation with Samira Rafaela, Member of the European Parliament. She regretted the lack of women of colour in Dutch politics and said that she was not the norm at the European Parliament. She explained regularly being the target of racist attacks which are obviously discouraging the women of colour with political ambitions.

Positive experiences in several countries of increasing women's participation in the decision-making levels may serve as an excellent model for enhancing the participation of women from under-represented groups in politics and public decision-making.

I did not intend to be exhaustive with my report. I could only analyse in detail the situation of every under-represented groups of women. I focused on Roma women, women with disabilities, LGBTI women, women of colour or with an immigration background and young women. Each of the groups would in fact deserve a specific report to address their specific challenges.

I'm of the opinion that more research on disaggregated data are needed in the field of inclusive democracies on intersectionality and its relationship to an impact on women's leadership roles, on the role of men in supporting women's participation, and socioeconomic backgrounds of women in politics. It would also be relevant to carry out research on the impact of Covid-19 on the political participation and representation of women in the long term.

Because of time, I will present only a few of my report's recommendations.

We need to take further action to prevent and combat discrimination in order to increase women's participation in public decision making. Strong anti-discrimination legislation should be implemented if it's not yet the case. Discriminatory legislation against an under-represented group such as LGBTI people must be repealed so as to pave the way for participation.

Enhancing participation of women in politics and decision making can be done with the implementation of quotas, mentorship and leadership programmes, formal and informal training, investing in accessibility measures for the selection of candidates, promotion of culture, gender equality and diversity, strategic communication, encouraging to vote for women, sensitive policies and the promotion of role models.

Clear and strong actions to tackle hate speech, online harassment and violence against women in politics will really contribute significantly, positively as well.

Gender action plans for political parties could be a useful instrument to assure their accountability for gender equality as well.

Focusing on under-represented groups of women did not mean I left men aside. This report deals with the participation of women in politics and public decision making but also emphasises the role and contribution of men is important to ensure systemic change.

I would like to stress that women do not bear the burden of reaching gender equality alone. It's a common responsibility and can be beneficial to all. In my view, it's essential involve men from a young age in the promotion of gender equality.

I look forward to hearing your views on this important topic and to our debate.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Miss GJERMENI for your opening remarks.

Now we start the debate and in the debate I call first on the representatives of the political groups.

The speaking time limit for them is three minutes and our first speaker is Ms Nicole TRISSE.

Please.

Ms Nicole TRISSE (France, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

Madam Rapporteur,

Dear colleagues,

All of us in this Chamber have the honour of representing our respective peoples. As such, we are supposed to reflect their diversity, but we know that there is still a lot of progress to be made.

It is undeniable that women's participation in political and public decision-making has made significant progress over the past two decades, thanks in particular to the intervention of national parliaments, but we still have a long way to go to achieve true equality. This is also true for our Assembly, which is why I am currently working on an amendment to the Rules of Procedure, the conclusions of which I hope to be able to submit to the next plenary session or to the Standing Committee by the end of the year.

The diversity of elected representatives is a real asset. It is also a powerful antidote to the crisis of legitimacy that sometimes affects our institutions and parliaments.

Many of us can testify that it is an opportunity to sit alongside colleagues of immigrant, lesbian or very young origin. Their concerns are manifold but nonetheless fundamental: they range from the fight against conversion therapy to the promotion of childcare or the defence of vulnerable families, especially migrants. Believe me, this plurality is a great opening to today's society and for us, ALDE, society must be inclusive and accept all diversities.

For all these reasons, we agree with many of the rapporteur's conclusions, particularly on the role that political parties should play in promoting greater diversity in candidacies. We also agree with the issues of educating the younger generation and involving men in this inclusive approach.

However, we are opposed to sub-paragraph 8.2.4 of the draft resolution, which proposes quotas, with penalties for non-compliance, for each category of women mentioned. The report lists no fewer than nine such categories: women with disabilities, women from minority or immigrant backgrounds, women of modest social origin, LGBTI women, young women, women from Traveller or Roma backgrounds and women from rural areas.

If we want an inclusive society, we should not highlight this or that difference, make more sub-groups and more sub-groups. That seems to me to be counterproductive. The difficulty of being disabled or LGBTBI, coloured or poor, is the same whether you are a man or a woman. On the other hand, the lack of access to political and public decision-making is the problem of women, whoever they may be.

In summary, we in the ALDE Group welcome the signal for plural and inclusive democracies. However, under cover of good intentions, we do not want to fragment society by encouraging the emergence of all kinds of communitarianism.

This is why paragraph 8.2.4 obliges us to vote against this resolution.

Thank you.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Madam TRISSE.

And our next speaker on behalf of the EC/DA political group is Ms Mónika BARTOS. Please.

Ms Mónika BARTOS (Hungary, EC/DA, Spokesperson for the group): Madam Chair, thank you for the floor.

Women are the soul of families and engines of society.

The path to success is to reshape public thinking according to society benefits from women playing a leading role either in local or national public life. Women can take a different approach, either to their individual work or to leading an organisation. The main challenge today is to reconcile work and private life. Women need to be helped to work alongside family life because improving the situation of women, in most cases, is inseparable from supporting families and having children.

The right to education is a fundamental right. We need to see all the tools that we have to achieve this. It is important to motivate and train women and to enhance their self-confidence so that they may participate in public and political life in greater numbers. But when we want to help women play different roles, it is important to take historical background, special characteristics of development of society and traditions into account. Without these circumstances in mind, our help will not be effective.

It is of great importance that women should be able to receive senior or leadership positions with fair chances and opportunities, as well as that they should be able to participate in public life, including legislation. There are various ways of furthering equal opportunities between women and men, such as forming strong, supportive, mentoring communities who show positive role models for women; encourage them towards public engagement, motivating them to apply for leadership positions. It is crucial to give all opportunities to women from under-represented groups to participate in political and public decision-making.

When we talk about respecting women, we must not forget their tremendous efforts during the pandemic. Women have played a very important role in overcoming the difficulties in all areas of life and I would like to thank it on behalf of all of us. I would like to share with you one example from the list of good practices of respecting women.

The Women for Hungary Club, which was founded in 2018, gave awards to women who were coping with the difficulties during the first wave of Covid-19 crisis in honour of their outstanding performance and endurance in areas where their work was crucial in order to slow down the spread of the pandemic. The main prize was gross €14 000 and the work of women was acknowledged in four categories. In each category five women were rewarded.

Women are the soul of families and engines of society. They must be supported by the best means. I believe two very effective tools are education and giving opportunities.

Thank you.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Miss BARTOS.

Our next speaker on behalf of the UEL political group is Ms Feleknas UCA.

The floors is yours. Please.

Ms Felekñas UCA (Turkey, UEL, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you very much Madam President, Distinguished colleagues,

First of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague, Mrs Eglantina GJERMENI, for putting together such an important report and to stress that our group fully supports this report and views it with great importance.

The basic machinery which causes inequality is the patriarchal system and the social inequalities that it brings about.

Politics, where decisions about basic rights are taken, has a direct impact on society, but the same hierarchy is reproduced there.

Although the representation of women has increased in European politics, in some countries the situation lags far behind.

To go by the statement of some politicians, the situation is still akin to that of the Middle Ages – where the patriarchy prevails; women are not equal to men; where women are still regarded as second-class citizens; and in which there is a mindset in which women still have to fight for their right to exist.

Now, if that is to change – if women are to have a right of co-decision in all facts of their lives, and if the ongoing exploitation of women is to be ended – it is crucial that women have equal representation in politics, as migrants, as persons with disabilities, as politicians and as housewives. We remain united in solidarity in our fight against this outmoded mindset.

The most significant achievement of the Kurdish women's movement is that at all levels of our party in the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), we practise a system of dual leadership which transforms and strengthens both women and men.

This system is not designed to divide power between men and women; rather, it is conceived as a productive and shared responsibility. This is the way that we can make good the disadvantages of women.

The women's revolution in Rojava in the Middle East is one of the most prominent examples of equal representation. This is a structure which means that women are present in all areas, and it has transformed a centuries-old system of male supremacy.

We will continue to make our voices heard. Women will continue to battle for their right to exist.

We will continue to fight to preserve the achievement of women.

Thank you.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Madam Felekñas UCA.

Our next speaker is Ms Margreet De BOER. Excuse me if my pronunciation of your name is not correct.

You are not in the hemicycle, but you are ready to connect to us online.

Please, the floor is yours.

Ms Margreet De BOER (Netherlands, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you. On behalf of the group of socialists and greens, I very much welcome the report of Ms Eglantina GJERMENI on enhancing the participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision-making. For all women face high barriers to participate in politics, the barriers for women of under-represented groups are even higher, much higher I would say.

As the report states, that goes for, amongst others, young women, women of colour, women with an immigration background, LGBTI women, women with disabilities and Roma women. They face double or even triple discrimination. They face harassment and are discouraged to become politically active.

As the report shows, the rapporteur spoke to a lot of women from under-represented groups and asked them about their experiences and their lessons learned. She also just told us about it.

Their experiences contributed to the recommendations, as expressed in the resolution we are voting on.

Dear colleagues, as the report states, the role of political parties in enhancing the political participation of women of under-represented groups is crucial. Political parties remain gatekeepers for participation. They are part of the problem and must therefore become part of the solution. I, therefore, ask you, colleagues, to take this report and resolution not only back to your governments and parliaments, but also to your own political party.

In the report we can read that most women of under-represented groups that are active in politics profited from a form of mentorship. Mentoring programs really can enhance the confidence, knowledge, and skills of women who want to become active and give them access to relevant networks.

As a member of the Dutch Senate, I was asked to act as a mentor in a Dutch mentoring program for women who want to become politically active or who want to make their next step in politics. I did so and it was a great pleasure. Me myself also learned from this mentorship.

In the Council of Europe, we have to think big and address our governments with our resolutions. But in this case, we also have to think what we ourselves can do. Therefore, I appeal to all of you to see what your party you can do, but also to become a mentor for someone of an under-represented group who wants to become politically active, to share your story and personal experiences, including on how to overcome barriers to open your network. If we all manage to support one person, our separate small contributions can lead to substantial changes.

Again, I want to congratulate the rapporteur on the report.

Thank you.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, dear colleague.

Now, on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party, Ms Elvira KOVÁCS.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

At the very beginning, I would like to stress that different electoral systems regulations, should allow for political participation of people belonging to minorities. Thresholds and other measures that could disadvantage minority parties from accessing elected bodies should be changed.

The right of each and every citizen to be represented in the political decision-making process is one of the basic principles of democracy. An elected body should reflect the political composition of an electorate, as well as other important aspects such as gender, ethnicity, age, etc. We must, therefore, secure equal access to elected bodies for women belonging to under-represented groups such as young, ethnic, disabled women, etc.

The electoral systems are important, but not the only factor influencing women's position in politics. Reality as such has an impact upon other variables such as the number of parties, party competition. We are of the view, that the electoral systems should be reformed to be more women-friendly, since changing electoral systems in particular by adopting gender quotas can lead to a more gender-balanced political and public decision making.

Unfortunately, our societies remain characterised by attitudes, customs and behaviour disempowering women in public life. Our political systems mostly exclude women and discriminate them. For men, politics is and has always been, on whole, a largely accessible profession while for women, it's still not. This situation must be changed. Women face obstacles at several levels: from domestic responsibilities, family obligations, to prevailing cultural attitudes.

One of the messages that should be sent with this report, titled "Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision-making" needs to encompass an important term: gender democracy. Believing that democracy is supposed to transform power relations between men and women by promoting the equal distribution of power and influence between women and men. With its two strongholds, inclusion, and we may interpret it in various contexts, as an inclusion and a meaningful participation.

Democracy cannot truly deliver for all of its citizens if half of the population remains excluded from the political arena. We are certain that it is necessary to increase the level of inclusion and meaningful participation of different minorities, not only in electoral, but also in wider political processes.

We must not neglect the importance of inclusiveness: it is the level of inclusiveness — or exclusiveness —, the level of meaningful participation that strengthens a political community, enhances social cohesion and horizontal ties between various minorities and social groups.

Thank you.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Madam.

All those who were supposed to speak on behalf of the political groups have spoken. Now we come to our speakers' list.

Again, the time limit is 3 minutes. Our first speaker is Ms Inka HOPSU. Please.

Ms Inka HOPSU (Finland, SOC): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

Let me start by congratulating Ms Eglantina GJERMENI for this excellent report on enhancing participation of women for under-represented groups in political and public decision-making.

I had the honour to participate in her virtual fact-finding visit to Finland last year and I was impressed by the program and the discussions. The group of women discussed in this report face a double hurdle to participation. Not only do they belong to a minority or an under-represented group, but they are also women who, unfortunately, still today must fight for the equal rights in society.

I would like to focus my intervention especially on young women as this is a group that is often overlooked when it comes to active involvement in decision making. Young women are not a homogeneous group. In addition to being young and female, they can also belong to ethnic, sexual, and linguistic minorities. Yet the spark for participation is often born at the young age. However, without proper structures and opportunities, this spark may fade and their voice is lost in our pluralistic democracies.

I agree with the rapporteur that society at large and political parties need to make space for women's active participation and engagement.

In the last few years Finland has been lauded for its young female leadership. It would not have been possible without the hard work and strong dedication of these young women, but it has also required effort by men and women to remove the hurdles to participation and to build an equal society where it is safe for women to be in visible positions without fear of harassment, sexist remarks, and hate speech.

This means a responsible meeting culture with local and national councils and parliaments, with chairpersons and structures that intervene immediately against hateful and discriminatory acts to give young people the strength to go on.

Building equal societies starts at home and in schools. I believe that if we foster a tolerant and inclusive atmosphere from an early age, we will gain a lot in the future. "Women are the largest untapped reservoir of talent in the world", said Hillary Clinton. What a waste of talent, competence, and money it is to close the doors on women to let prejudice prevail over reason and to give room for intimidation and hate speech.

Young women need female role models so that they can achieve whatever they want.

Let us judge our leaders on their ability to lead and the decisions they make.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam HOPSU. Now Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA. 3 minutes, please.

Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA (Ukraine, EPP/CD): Thank you, dear President.

First of all, I thank the rapporteur for working on this extremely important subject.

I would like to express my views on Paragraph 4 which I am sure will comply with the views of the Assembly, namely as regards hate speech and online harassment attacking women in politics or public life.

Women's interest in politics has grown significantly in our time, thanks in part to the efforts that have been done by the Member States to revise their own policies on non-discrimination against women politicians.

The study on sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe, carried out in 2018 in the parliaments of Europe by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Assembly, demonstrated that violence against women was widespread in the world of politics. Hate speech and online harassment attacking women in politics or public life are hindering women's engagement in politics, in particular from under-represented groups who face disproportionately higher levels of violence and may choose not to participate whatsoever for fear of being specifically and personally targeted.

We use, for example, as a good practice the increase in the number of women in the Ukrainian parliament. Now there are more than 20% of us there, and in the Netherlands – the largest number of female candidates in history. Recently for elections there were more than 37%. That's a great number.

At the same time, this percentage would be higher if not for the factors that force women to take steps to not participate in politics whatsoever.

Women are receiving less and less airtime in elections, unequal access to the media due to prejudices about the ability to comment on certain socio-political issues and problems and their own attitude to them.

These black PR campaigns based on ridiculing the role of women in politics, bullying on social networks against themselves and their families. This is a systematic problem we can't ignore.

Recent events linked to Covid-19, the pandemic and the campaigns that were held across Europe of course demonstrated that most of them were conducted online where all of these instruments were used.

PACE Resolution 2111 from 2016 on assessing the impact of measures to improve the political representation of women, unfortunately, does not take into account the current context of increasing cases of disinformation and artificial barriers for women's participation.

The Assembly has to examine these cases and increase its attention to them.

I highly salute your efforts that have been covered in this report.

I hope the pandemic will decline and the participation of women will increase.

Many thanks.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, dear colleague, for your contribution to this debate.

And our next speaker is Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN.

The floor is yours. Please.

Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN (Ireland, ALDE): Thank you, Madam President, and good afternoon from a wet Dublin. I look forward to being with you in Strasbourg next September.

I would like to congratulate the rapporteur on her excellent report and on the recommendations that she makes. My own party, that of Fianna Fáil, within the ALDE group has a long history of supporting equality policies but it is clear we have a lot of work to do in this area. If we are true to our values that we want to represent, the diverse views and the lived experience of all of our citizens and our women, there are many barriers indeed to women participating in politics anyway, without coming from a vulnerable group or having other challenges.

Last year, Taoiseach, our Prime Minister, appointed a woman from the Travelling community to our Senate for the very first time and she is a terrific role model for those from diverse communities. My own parliament is currently looking at policies to make our parliament more inclusive. We have established a family forum in order to ensure that our parliament is inclusive and we are looking at all of the barriers and we are having very particular and specific engagement with those with disabilities, from different ethnic backgrounds, from the LGBTI community, as well as with women's groups and we intend making recommendations next October. I look forward to sharing those with you at that point.

We are also the first parliament in the world to have introduced an internship for people with disabilities within our own workplace and we ensured that 50 per cent of these were women with disabilities. And, indeed, that has lent itself to some full-time employment.

I want to just talk maybe a little bit about our national Traveller and Roma inclusion strategy, which was published in 2007. Basically, that contained 149 actions, grouped under 10 themes, and particularly looking at the whole area of voter registration and voter engagement. Because, as well as supporting women from different backgrounds to get involved in the political process, we also want to see them playing a leadership role within their own groups and within our own communities. It is very clear that national, international and local government has a lot of work to do but I think that our political parties, that we represent, have to do a lot of work in relation to this. As Sheryl Sandberg said, "we must raise both the ceiling and the floor". The conversation has begun and I look forward word to continuing it.

Thank you.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much. Now I call on Ms María Luisa BUSTINDUY. The floor is yours. Please.

Ms María Luisa BUSTINDUY (Spain, SOC)*: Thank you very much, Madam President.

This is an opportunity for me to offer my congratulations to our rapporteur, Ms Eglantina GJERMENI.

Including women in the political, social, and economic arena is probably the most transformative fact of recent decades. We have managed to allow women to play much more important roles in society and politics as well as in business.

However, I do agree with our colleague that an awful lot remains to be done.

Now, talking about women's participation in politics generally, regardless of political groups, I think this regards a lot of what has been achieved in recent decades. I think this chamber is a good example of that. I think that we have managed to overcome prejudices, perhaps certain negative perceptions. We have to deal, obviously, with our daily business but also have to do our political work as people who have a family as well as many other responsibilities.

It is not reasonable that that is the situation because that puts off highly able women who are unable to overcome the obstacles to pursue such a career. The situation is even worse when there are other facets to women which may give rise to negative perceptions. Therefore, involvement in politics becomes virtually impossible.

We need to face up to the reality of women who have the most difficulty engaging in politics and who are therefore under-represented. We need, therefore, to be very clear about the fact that women and men need to be determined in bringing about a change because we're not talking about a problem that affects just women, rather a problem that affects society as a whole, each and everyone of us. That is the only way in which we will bring about a better society.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Our next speaker is Mr Aleksandar NIKOLOSKI.

The floor is yours. Please.

Mr Aleksandar NIKOLOSKI (North Macedonia, EPP/CD): Thank you very much. I would like first to congratulate the rapporteurs for the excellent report. I think it is a very, very important issue, not only in general representation of women, but as well as it says of under-represented groups, such as the different ethnic groups, minor groups, women of colour, woman from immigration background, minorities, women in danger, with disabilities and so on.

One of the facts that we should speak more on this issue is that, as I can see from the speakers list, I am one of the few males that is speaking on this issue, which I think is speaking a lot about whether we need to or we do not need this kind of reports. We absolutely do need them, but as well we need to implement these reports. I can say about my parliament that I am proud that we have implemented a law that is not specifying women or men but saying that 40 per cent of all MPs must be from an under- or less-represented sex in the

parliament. As well, we are building mechanisms –inter-party mechanisms– to involve more under-represented groups, not only that the parliament is ethnically diverse. Besides Macedonians, we have Albanian MPs, Roma, Turkish Serbs. As well, we have this kind of political communication between us to enhance more and more presence in the parliament because that is key to represent the citizens. Because the citizens are neither one political opinion, nor one group but the need for more democracy, is the need for more representation of the groups.

I would like to support the campaign "Not In My Parliament" that was part of the campaign in our parliament. I think that, as I said, I will not be long, we should very, very much go into the report and implement it because that is key. The best answer to all these problems will be when we will not need this kind of reports and when everybody will feel equal.

Thank you very much and support for the report. Thank you.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister NIKOLOSKI.

Our next speaker is Ms Marietta KARAMANLI.

The floor is open, please.

She is not present. Ms Marietta KARAMANLI is not here.

Our next speaker is Ms Danuta JAZŁOWIECKA. Please.

Ms Danuta JAZŁOWIECKA (Poland, EPP/CD): Dear colleagues,

First of all let me thank the rapporteur and her team for this very important report.

Gender equality is a fundamental value already expressed in the Treaty of Rome of 1957.

However, to date, women are still under-represented in final decision positions. My country, Poland, in terms of political equality ranks in the fifth place with a 29% share of women in Parliament. We are still far behind countries such as Spain, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Norway, where the percentage of women among parliamentarians is over 40%.

Among female candidates for the Polish Sejm two years ago, only 6% obtained a seat. In the case of men, almost 12%. This significant difference results mainly from the fact that too few women got one of the top five positions on the election lists which translated into as much as 81% of parliamentary seats.

How can we change it?

First of all, implementing national policies and treating the issue of equality between women and men as a cross-sectional issue important for all spheres of social and political life. Introducing social education to increase awareness and sensitivity to the issue of equality of people regardless of gender. Encouraging political parties to introduce internal provisions and regulation promoting the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities for women and men. The organisation of training lectures strengthening the fight in women's strength, supporting those women who already perform important functions and building models and model figures from the world of politics. Changing the image of women while rejecting the anachronistic stereotypical or narrow perception of sexuality. Intervening and counteracting the most significant structural obstacles in order to increase the presence of women in the political sphere. For example preventing long and night meetings that collide with family life and introducing care institutions at political offices. Last but not least, resolving the issue of financial resources for election campaigns. Women earn less, and it is more difficult for them to get the appropriate amount from campaigning.

We must do as much as we can. It is time to roll up your sleeves and do more for equality.

Thank you.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Miss JAZŁOWIECKA.

Our next speaker is Mr Fazil MUSTAFA.

I see that he appeared on the screen so the floor is yours, please.

Our next speaker is Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW.

Please, the floor is yours.

Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW (Sweden, UEL): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

This is a very important topic, and I would first of all just like to take this opportunity to thank the rapporteur for writing a very very important report.

Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making is extremely important. There are lots of barriers as we know for women in politics, in a patriarchal society that we live in. If you are a woman of colour, if you are a woman of colour and a Muslim woman, if you are a Muslim woman of colour with a disability, then life itself becomes unlivable because it becomes a struggle every single day.

This intersection of different identities makes it impossible because it create barriers to life itself. Women's participation in political and public decision making has increased, as many people have mentioned here today. When we look at those women that we are talking about: how many of them are women of colour? How many of them are women of colour that are Muslim women? How many of them are women of colour that have disabilities? How many of them are Roma women?

That's the question we should ask. We should not be happy just because we have 40% women. We have to ask ourselves who are these women representing this 40% that we are talking about. Are they a fair representation of the societies that we represent in this parliament or not? And quite often not.

You can only look around. You look around this hemicycle. It says everything we need to know. We need to make sure that every part of society is represented in the political decision making. That is what democracy is about: it's governing by the people for the people.

When we say "by the people" we mean by all the people. We mean by all different forms of women. That is exactly what this report is highlighting. That is worth reflecting on. We are very happy in beating our chests. I'm from Sweden; Sweden is always seen as an example. We have a long way to go, because if you look at our parliament in Sweden, we have a lot of women. But you can still ask the question: are these women representative of demography in Sweden? No. And that is the question this particular report is highlighting. That's what we need to discuss. That's what we need to agree on and work tirelessly on to make sure that people are represented.

In fact, when we succeed in doing that, then we succeed in formulating legislation that is effective because we have perspectives that we would never have had if he just had a homogeneous group of women. It's important to have perspectives because it helps us bring in gender-sensitive and intersectional level legislation. When we are able to do that, then we are able to cover the realities of many people that live in a society in their different identities.

Thank you very much.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister JALLOW.

Now as promised I would like to go back to, and give the floor to Mr Fazil MUSTAFA.

Please try to connect. I hope this time we will be successful. We are ready to listen to you.

The floor is yours.

Yes, you are here. Please.

Mr Fazil MUSTAFA (Azerbaijan, ALDE): Thank you very much Ms Chairman, dear colleagues,

This report comprehensively touched upon the problem of increasing the role of women in political and public decision-making. But the main thing is to develop this idea in accordance with the reality of each country.

Because of this, our first priority is to ensure that woman have more access to education and active citizenship in society.

We see that in countries where women have a high level of education they have progressed into important positions both in parliament and in civil society institutions.

As is noted here, seven out of ten members of the European Parliament are men. This is also a measure of the lower representation of women in most countries.

The fact that a woman is vice-president in Azerbaijan plays a serious role in ensuring women's representation at the state level. There are currently 120 representatives in 125 seats in the Azerbaijani parliament, and 22 of them are women.

It is interesting what such an example can be for many European countries. The speaker of parliament elected a woman with the support of a majority of men. Two regular parliamentary committees are chaired by women. There is a separate state committee for women, family and children's problems which is also headed by women.

The institute of the ombudsman which protects human rights in our country is also headed by women. More than 50 non-governmental organisations are also headed by women.

In the sphere of research and pedagogical activity, the vast majority are women.

All of this is a reality directly related to the activity of educated women. However, women who don't pass a required level of education are far from being represented, and in many cases aren't able to realise their rights properly.

Also, in recent years, the numbers of women entrepreneurs have increased their opportunities to influence the economic sphere, which are otherwise still limited.

First of all, women's economic freedom must be ensured in order to create incentives for their activism. Gaining leadership experience in more civil society organisations creates a favourable environment for women to work in other fields. We see that women who deal with the social problems of society protect the social rights of citizens in relation to government agencies and officials, and later became spokespersons in public and political decision-making.

Thank you very much.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister MUSTAFA.

Now I give the floor to Ms Konul NURULLAYEVA, who will also connect online.

Please, the floor is yours.

Ms Konul NURULLAYEVA (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Madam President, thank you dear Ms Eglantina GJERMENI. I cannot emphasise enough the significance of your report, especially in the post-pandemic era we are transitioning to.

As a female parliamentarian, I am inspired to observe the positive developments in our member States on economic, social and political aspects of women's empowerment. Not all women, however, have the same opportunities and rights to choose. Young women, women with disabilities, refugees or immigrants status, rural backgrounds and women of colour, frequently, face societal pressure, which prevents them from engaging in political life and decision making. Such experience is no stranger to us, as my country Azerbaijan is home to more than one million refugees and IDPs, of which women constitute a majority. The 30 years of occupation has robbed their otherwise bright futures and desire of active engagement in the public and political decision-making.

Now, with the bright victory of the 44-day Patriotic War work those aspiring group of vulnerable women have gained back their hopes for being able to be represented in the political and public arena. These hopes are not in vain. As the first ever country in the East to provide women with the right to vote, Azerbaijan has always advocated equal rights to vote and created equal opportunities for both women and men. With the appointment of women in pivotal positions such as first vice president and speaker of the national assembly of the country, we can claim that empowerment of women in Azerbaijan has reached the common developed level.

Overall, to enhance women's participation in political and public decision making, I believe we, as member States, should first empower effective implementation mechanisms by designing targeted policies to address the violence and stereotyping under-represented groups of women are generally facing. States and across sectors should also work on the elimination of legal and structural barriers, so imposing gender quotas on marginalised women and promote female personas that are demand influential in wider public. It is the right of every woman to experience a discrimination-free political environment to feel empowered enough to engage in public and political decision making.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much. Now I invite Ms Kate OSAMOR.

The floor is yours, please.

Ms Kate OSAMOR (United Kingdom, SOC): Thank you, Madam President, for calling me to speak today.

Colleagues, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur Ms Eglantina GJERMENI on this important report.

I would like to focus on participation of women of colour and of women with an immigration background.

Let me start by echoing what has been said by other speakers: that political parties need to be part of the change. Political parties must ensure that in all parts of their parties all members are represented and empowered both locally and nationally. Ultimately, what is your respective party's policy on how to get more women of colour members elected, selected, and supported to become leaders?

The credibility of any social democratic party or any party that stands for equality hangs in the balance. If these fundamental questions are not being addressed and solutions found.

In the 2015 UK general election, research by *The Guardian* newspaper revealed, about half of my own party candidates selected to fight in marginal unwinnable seats had links to Westminster. As former special advisors, party workers, researchers, lobbyist, or returning MPS. This is a mechanism which by default disproportionately excludes women of colour.

Social media is another barrier for elected women, especially women of colour. During the 2017 election, female MPS received 25,688 abusive tweets during the election. 45% of those were aimed at Diane Abbott, the first black female MP who celebrated 34 years in Parliament only last week.

Currently, 5.7% of MPS in the House of Commons are ethnic minority women. Parliament can do more to stand up and to protect women, especially women of colour, by taking abuse online more seriously. Today Mister Speaker of the House of Commons launched a campaign with the Parliamentary Scrutiny Department called "report it to sort it". Mister Speaker has recognised a disproportionate number of members face horrific and unsettling abuse online. He's acknowledged female MPS have an essential democratic role to carry out, and online abuse should not be tolerated or accepted as part of the job.

I will end by saying this report raises many good points which some I was unable to raise, but I suggest that all elected members should use this report as a tool to look deeper at the diversity within their own party.

Thank you, Madam President.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Madam OSAMOR.

Now we give the floor to Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, please.

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

There are no doubts that political participation of women is a necessary precondition for a well-functioning democracy.

Since we're representing the various countries: both mature and young democracies, we have to differentiate the stage and what can be considered as an achievement.

I'm here representing the national parliament of Ukraine with almost 21% of women. This is the highest percentage of any year since the 30 years of Ukraine's independence.

This result was partially brought by the imposed gender quotas, which our convocation repeated in the Electoral Code of Ukraine, adopted on December 19, 2019. The provisions were introduced in order to achieve a balanced representation of women and men in the electoral process both at the local level and in Parliament: when forming electoral lists of candidates, the party organisation must ensure the presence of both men and women (at least two candidates of each gender) in each of the five (places from the first to the fifth, from the sixth to the tenth, etc.); when forming the list of candidates for the relevant council (territorial community with up to 10,000 voters), the party organisation must ensure the representation of at least 30% of persons of the same gender in the total number of candidates for the relevant council.

This significant step has been taken towards equal representation of women and men at the decision-making level.

The next steps will be for sure the enhancing of political participation of even less advantaged groups.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

And now the floor goes to Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI.

The floor is yours. Please.

Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI (Estonia, ALDE): Honourable President, dear colleagues,

There is no doubt that the topic of this report is an important one. Despite the fact that [there are] plenty of programmes to help women from under-represented groups to be more active in societies, there is a lot to be done.

I am happy to see that there are governments that can be proud of their progress. Finland is an excellent example with 10 ministers out of 19 being women.

This topic is important for me because of my personal experience that I have had, and unfortunately, still have in my professional life.

Growing up in Estonia with a Russian-minority background, I am an example of the struggle a woman faces trying to break through.

It is not easy for native Estonian women to be taken seriously in politics, but it is far tougher for women from minorities.

I can see the need to include more women in the decision-making process even in my own parliament. There are only 26 women out of 101 members. That is approximately 25% and only three women with a Russian-minority background. In our government, the situation is better. The government is led by a female prime minister. Out of 15 ministers, seven are women. Only women themselves can give suggestions for shaping appropriate family policies; seeing the problems from an insider's perspective is a much-needed method of making a difference for the next generation.

The report confirms that women find it difficult to have both a family and a career. If society and family do not join forces and give active support, women have little chance of getting out of the kitchen for good.

One good example is Sweden: with their well-balanced parental leave programme that helps women continue with their work life, not miss out on opportunities or lose their professional skills. But I got to know that Sweden also has a long way to go. I would like to acknowledge the report which reflects the deep issues in our everyday lives which usually go unnoticed.

Actually, I do not support the creation of quotas. All people regardless of their gender must be recognised for their competence and knowledge.

I would like to conclude with the Rapporteur's own words: "Women's equal participation in parliaments at national and local levels is crucial for improving the representative nature, accountability and quality of democracies."

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, dear colleague.

Our next speaker is Ms Maryna BARDINA.

Please.

Ms Maryna BARDINA (Ukraine, ALDE): Dear colleagues, I would like to commend Madam rapporteur's extraordinary work for the report's preparation, so thank you, Miss GJERMENI.

This report covers the crucial issue, how can we promote and support women from under-represented groups in the political and public life. During report preparation, we had effective communication with the Madam rapporteur on the situation of women's participation in Ukraine. Originally, the idea of the motion that preceded the report came from Ukrainian civil society organisation "Harmony of Equals" in co-operation with the Council of Europe office in Ukraine. They prepared a practical tool kit on enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public life.

In my opinion, it is crucial to pay attention particularly to young women and girls, to support and encourage them from the very beginning of their public life. A number of measures are needed to strengthen the opportunities for young women and girls to participate in public and political processes. This includes carrying out systematic work with the local branches of political parties to involve as many women as possible and promoting the success stories of their participation. The widespread implementation of awareness-raising measures to overcome existent gender stereotypes in society. To enhance political representation of these girls and women in elected bodies both legislative and practical measures should be taken.

As my colleague from Ukraine mentioned, we have already introduced a mandatory 40 per cent gender quota for national and local elections. As a result, the number of women has dramatically increased. Roma women actively participated in the local elections in Ukraine also, and some of them became deputies. It was possible due to the mandatory quota and different affirmative action, such as political schools conducted by Roma NGOs, the Ukrainian parliament and the Council of Europe office in Ukraine.

Transparent and effective rules to contrast sexism and discrimination of women also play a prominent role. Political parties should pay special attention to the representation of women from under-represented groups in their decision-making process. I really hope that we will be able to make changes discussed today on the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and support the report.

Thank you.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Madam BARDINA.

Now I give the floor to Ms Lesia ZABURANNA.

Please.

Ms Lesia ZABURANNA (Ukraine, ALDE): First of all I would like to say that we highly appreciate such a fluent report and the huge work of the rapporteur.

In 2017, the government of Ukraine repealed the Decree of the Ministry of Health of 1997, which recognised more than 400 professions forbidden for women. Three years after, 2020, and women make up only 33% within the national parliaments of EU countries.

This topic has a particular role for me as a woman – Member of Parliament – elected through the first-past-the-post voting system in Ukraine. In Kiev, the capital city, out of 13 elected MPs, 5 are women. We observe notably positive dynamics in women's engagement in politics, which certainly provides for hope.

Although the seat share taken by women in parliaments varies upon the country, no EU state has more women representatives than men. If we proceed at the current pace, with a lack of relevant legislation to safeguard equality and insufficient power of social institutions, we will achieve gender equality only by 2070.

Now, what can we say as regards the situation of women from under-represented groups – young women, women from rural areas, women with disabilities, women in the military?

While significant progress is observed in enhancing equality in Member States, different forms of violence against women remain at our disposal, especially important in times of major crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

For seven years, Ukraine has been fighting for its territorial integrity. The illegal occupation of Crimea and parts of Donbas marked the beginning of various women rights' violation cases.

Women are often a subject of physical and sexual violence and deprived of legal remedy or other forms of support, including psychological. Their rights should be respected and safeguarded, and their voices must never be muted.

Gender equality is not just about quotas but about free choice and equal access to opportunities and decision making. We set up rules for gender policies, define the selection of candidates for local, regional, and national levels to ensure the issue of gender equality is addressed. However, a great concern remains that in the many Member States there is no recognised approach to sanction if these rules are not complied with.

It is of utmost importance that we as political leaders have a political will to find consensus and act upon our shared goal, protecting core values of the Council of Europe, the universal respect of human rights.

Thank you very much.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Miss ZABURANNA.

Our last, but not least, speaker Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA.

Please.

Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA (Ukraine, ALDE): Dear Madam Chair,

Dear colleagues,

Firstly, thank you very much to the rapporteur for really important and excellent work.

Effective gender equality policies and women's improvements have led to an increase of women's participation in political life, in leadership positions, in business, as well as in research and innovation.

We are all delighted to have several female presidents in European countries.

Nevertheless, as the report underlined, there is still a lack of participation of under-represented groups in political and public decision-making.

"Under-represented" really means women with disabilities, young women, women with an immigration background, women belonging to minorities, rural women and women with rare social and economic backgrounds, and others. In fact each of these groups have different social and cultural situations, different stereotypes, but experience the same results. Discrimination, cultural or foreign barriers, high levels of judgments thanks to their under-represented features, but no assessment of their skills, knowledge or expertise.

Fear of hate speech and harassment, especially in the open media space, may push them always from social and political engagement. There is always a stereotype first.

The rapporteur stressed that the participation of women and girls in their diversity in political and public decision-making will send a powerful message of recognition of the importance of inclusive societies, increase representatives, and strengthen the legitimacy and relevance of decisions.

It's high time to change the game.

We welcome this report, as well as numerous gender equality efforts, regulations and recommendations adopted by the Assembly.

The report recommends a number of good practices to ensure increased participation in the under-represented groups. But to my mind, three of them are of high priority: education, accessibility and policies.

Education first: More inclusive education and training mentorship programmes for under-represented groups, as well as the promotion of women's contribution to history and policies as role models, by including relevant information to curricula. The norm of male-only leadership needs to be questioned, also in education programmes and education policies.

Investing in accessibility and creating proper conditions is highly important and quite often underestimated.

Women, especially those who are under-represented, need strong supportive measures.

Policies: It's quotas, gender sensitive anti-violence, and anti-discrimination policies.

These policies and actions should be implemented across all levels of social and political stratification, starting from the institutional levels.

We should also use our political and financial instruments to implement them in the Council of Europe.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA for your contribution.

Dear colleagues, that concludes the list of speakers.

Now I call on our Rapporteur Ms Eglantina GJERMENI to reply.

You have 3 minutes. Please.

Ms Eglantina GJERMENI (Albania, SOC, Rapporteur): Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Dear colleagues, thank you so much for your contribution here in the hemicycle as well as online.

It was very much appreciated from me, your support, your messages. And I think the report will be a tool that we can all use in our respective countries to change the situation and to make our countries more democratic.

Women and men from under-represented groups participating in political and public decision-making do not only represent their respective groups. They bring a new vision, a new perspective, and their expertise in various fields. We do not have the luxury to lose any of them. Diversity should also make political decision-making more flexible and capable of change at national and international levels. Their participation also contributes to increase trust from the general public in decision-making and reduce real or/and perceived gaps between decision-makers and citizens.

At a time when our political systems are being contested, making our democracies more inclusive is essential to strengthen them. A profound change of both mindsets and political culture are essential to ensure that political and public decision-making will be more inclusive and accessible for people from various backgrounds.

Transforming politics and the whole society is a long and challenging process because we are changing power relations and we all have to take responsibility for ensuring that we bring it in our personal lives. Whatever our progress, we must commit to move the process forward in order that women and men to have equal power to shape our societies.

I would like to express my appreciation to all the members of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination for their great feedback and support during the preparation of the report, useful contribution during our meetings held virtually as well. I would like to thank you, the Secretariat of the Committee as well, in particular Elodie Fischer for all her commitment and hard work on helping me with this report.

I really believe that this report will become a tool, I'm so proud that we work together and, as the Council of Europe acts big, thinks big, I think this will be a very useful tool for all of us in the future.

I hope you will support and vote in favour of the proposed resolution.

Thank you so much for your attention.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much Madam Rapporteur.

Thank you.

Does the Chairperson of the Committee wish to speak?

Please. 3 minutes.

Ms Petra BAYR (Austria, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination): Yes.

Thank you very much.

The report includes a lot of important recommendations. Among others it focuses on role models and on the visibility of people from under-represented and marginalised groups.

If you can see that people from such groups have success, if you can see that they really have a say and they really can make a difference, that might encourage other persons from these groups also to get active, to get involved, to have their voices heard and to participate actively in all political processes which affect them. Role models are crucial.

I want to end by saying that our Rapporteur too is a huge role model for young women I think in Albania, in her home country. As it is her very last attendance at a meeting of a plenary of the Parliamentary Assembly, I really would like to thank Ms Eglantina GJERMENI very much. She did not only good work on this report, she also did a very good job as Chair of the Subcommittee for Gender Equality of our Committee. Whatever you plan to do now, I really hope that you will have success. I really hope that you have all the energy you need for all your new personal tasks and goals. I'm sure we'll stay in contact. I'm sure that women's issues will still stay very close to your heart. We already debated that yesterday in our Subcommittee.

Ms Eglantina GJERMENI, thank you very much for your work. All the best for you, and the report, and everything.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Ms Petra BAYR. With this intervention the debate is closed.

Now we come to the issue of the adoption of the draft resolution. The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination has presented a draft resolution Document 15301 to which no amendments have been tabled, but I was informed that Ms Nicole TRISSE would like to introduce an oral amendment.

Please.

Ms Nicole TRISSE (France, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

I would simply like to table an oral amendment. I am sorry to do it so late, but we would like to delete a sub-paragraph. An amendment to delete sub-paragraph 8.2.4. of the draft resolution, because we have problems with this sub-paragraph. We think that it is difficult to apply and that, as a result, it would be counterproductive for the categories, the people concerned.

If the rapporteur agreed to accept this deletion of the paragraph, even if it is an oral amendment, the ALDE Group would of course gladly vote for this draft resolution. So there you have it, rapporteur or Commission President, if they agree and if you accept this amendment.

Thank you.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much for your proposal, Madam Nicole TRISSE.

Now we have an oral amendment, worded as follows: in the draft resolution delete paragraph 8.2.4.

I remind the Assembly of rule 34.7 and rule 67.4d, which enabled the President to accept an oral amendment or sub amendment on the grounds of promoting clarity, accuracy or conciliation and if there is not opposition from 10 or more members to it being debated.

In my opinion, the oral amendment meets the criteria of rule 34.7.

If there is any opposition to the amendment being debated, I have to ask this question. Who is against this oral amendment to be debated? I do not see anyone against, so that is not the case. Then I call who would like to speak and to support this oral amendment.

One minute, Madam Petra BAYR, please.

Ms Petra BAYR (Austria, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination):

Yes, as we got to know about the problems some members had already this morning, we took the same approach in our Committee, and also debated this option to take off this one paragraph. Nobody in the Committee was against it, so I think it is a good solution to go this way and have broad support for the whole report.

Vote: Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision-making

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Anyone to speak against?

No.

So the view of the Committee on the oral amendment?

In favour I understand?

Yes.

So I will now put the oral amendment to the vote.

So members present in the chamber should use the hemicycle voting system as usual.

Members participating remotely should vote using the remote voting system.

The vote in the hemicycle and via remote voting is now open. Please vote.

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

64 in favour, 1 against, 14 abstentions.

The oral amendment is agreed, adopted.

Now we will proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in the document mentioned.

Can we start voting immediately?

The vote is open. Please vote.

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

74 in favour, 3 against, 18 abstentions.

The total number of those who voted is 95.

Congratulations to our Rapporteur. This is a very good result.

So the draft resolution and Document 15301 is adopted.

Debate: The situation of Crimean Tatars

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Dear colleagues, the next item of business this afternoon is a debate on report entitled "The situation of Crimean Tatars". The document is presented by Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR. She knows that I always have difficulties to pronounce her name correctly, so I say "Sunna". She has made a report on behalf of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

In order, and in warning already, to finish by 7:30 p.m., I will interrupt the list of speakers at about 6:55 p.m. to allow time for the reply and also for the vote.

I call if I may Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR, the rapporteur. You have 10 minutes in total, of which 7 minutes is for the opening remarks, and you have 3 minutes for your reply.

You have the floor.

Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR (Iceland, SOC, Rapporteur): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Dear colleagues,

The report we are discussing today concerns the situation of Crimean Tatars since the events in the autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol in February and March 2014.

Our Assembly has discussed those events many times already so I will stick to the key points. In late February 2014, during a period of political unrest in Ukraine, armed men including members of the Russian armed forces took control of strategic sites in Crimea and installed a new leader of Crimea. Within three weeks, an illegal referendum on the status of Crimea had been held. Russia proceeded to illegally annex Crimea.

Our Assembly, the Committee of Ministers, the UN General Assembly and many others have repeatedly condemned these actions of the Russian authorities. The referendum and the purported annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation were clearly illegal. They cannot form any basis for any alteration of the status of Crimea. Crimea remains part of Ukraine. Yet the Russian Federation also has clear obligations under international law as a temporary occupying power. Russia is responsible for human rights violations committed in Crimea since early 2014.

The European Court of Human Rights has also confirmed that Russia can be considered to have jurisdiction over Crimea within the meaning of the Convention in the form of its effective control over the territory.

Colleagues, this is the legal background but let us now turn to the heart of the issue. The human rights situation of Crimean Tatars was not perfect before 2014, especially with regards to their economic and social rights. I have outlined the issues identified before 2014 in chapter two of my report.

Nevertheless, Crimean Tatars were largely opposed to the occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia. Many protested publicly and visibly.

My report shows that the situation of Crimean Tatars has dramatically worsened since 2014. The human rights violations that Crimean Tatars have faced since the illegal annexation of Crimea include extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances and acts of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, allegedly committed by members of the security forces. These are described in chapter four of my report. These cases have not been effectively investigated.

The violations also include threats, assaults, illegal searches and arbitrary arrests. My report describes many cases involving the abusive and even retroactive application of Russian law to Crimean Tatars, especially on charges of terrorism or extremism, simply for their supposed membership of organisations that are not banned in Ukraine and without any evidence that the accused have planned or carried out any violent attacks.

Dozens of Crimean Tatars, like the founder of Crimean Solidarity, Server Mustafayev, have been sentenced to heavy sentences under these laws, often facing trial in Russian courts and imprisonment and harsh conditions in the territory of the Russian Federation, which is in breach of international humanitarian law. They are being kept far from their families and their lawyers.

Dear colleagues, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatars has not been able to resume work. Its former leader Mr Mustafa Dzhemiliev, our former colleague in the Assembly, has been banned from returning to Crimea until 2034, when he will be over 90 years old. Its current leader Mr Refat Chubarov, who spoke at our Committee's hearing last October, was sentenced *in absentia* this month to six years of imprisonment.

Furthermore, the work of journalists and the freedom of expression and assembly have also been unjustifiably restricted in Crimea. Crimean Tatars have been prosecuted for holding one-person pickets. Hardly any independent Crimean Tatar language media have survived. Recognition of the Crimean Tatar language has not been followed by better access to education in this language in practice. Religious minorities that fall outside religious structures set up in 2014, including many Crimean Tatar Muslims, face prosecution.

Crimean Tatars and others have faced forced "passportisation", deportation and forced conscription, all in breach of international humanitarian law.

Dear colleagues, whether it is because of their ethnic origin, their religion, their political opinion or for other reasons, the constant disproportionate pressure placed on Crimean Tatars and human rights defenders working on their behalf, creates a climate of fear and hostility.

Even the figures provided to us by the Russian delegation show that 50,000 Crimean Tatars have left Crimea since 2014 or no longer feel safe to express their identity. No international human rights monitoring bodies have been able to visit Crimea since our previous Commissioner for Human Rights in September 2014.

The Russian Federation must be held accountable for the human rights violations, for the international crimes, for the possible war crimes committed against Crimean Tatars in Crimea. It must put an immediate end to these violations. It must provide reparation to victims. Russia must prevent any similar violations in the future.

That is what my draft report and resolutions seek to achieve.

I hope and I encourage you to strongly and emphatically support them. Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you dear Rapporteur.

I call now the group speakers.

The first speaker of the group is Mr John HOWELL for the European Conservatives Group.

He's connected online.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam Chair, I am here and it's a pleasure to follow my colleague from Iceland and to agree with almost everything that she has said.

I think this is an excellent report, because we should not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia. Crimea is Ukrainian territory and the thing that we need to keep our focus on is the Ukrainian political prisoner.

For me the concern revolves around the human rights abuses that have been taking place on the Crimean Tatars.

Crimean Tatars have had their right of worship, education in their own native language, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression consistently violated. They have been disproportionately targeted in arbitrary arrests and arbitrary detention. An example of that is Refat Chubarov, the chairman of a Crimean Tatar assembly, who was sentenced as we have heard to 6 years in a maximum security prison in absentia.

Russia is restricting freedom of expression. It is persecuting journalists, it is persecuting bloggers and social media users. And in 2021, the courts found Bekir Mamutov, if I got his name right, the chief editor of the Crimean newspaper guilty for publication of a UN report.

Earlier this week we passed a resolution on media freedom. If this is to mean anything it needs to be looked at in the context of the Crimean Tatars. And for us to exercise what we said that we would exercise in upholding the media freedom of journalists in that country.

In the courts, for example, defendants cannot currently use their native language for personal defence. And this leads to enormous problems. So of the 231 political prisoners that I've counted there, 158 are Crimean Tatars. 25 out of 55 people have been killed there, and those are Crimean Tatars. And 15 Crimean Tatars out of 21 have had their disappearance enforced as a result of this.

It is quite right that we should call for international law to apply. It is quite right that we should stand up for the human rights of Crimean Tatars. And it is quite right that we should stand up for the media freedoms that this place should enjoy.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Exactly on time.

I have a second speaker on behalf of political groups.

That is Mr George KATROUGALOS on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left.

You have the floor.

Mr George KATROUGALOS (Greece, UEL, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

First of all, I would like to thank the rapporteur.

Second, I have some preliminary remarks. Not so much on the report, but also for the content of what we should investigate in this case.

My first remark, is almost obvious that, of course, territorial integrity and sovereignty are cornerstones of the international law and, therefore, the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation is against these cornerstones and cannot be accepted. However, I think that the report is not about that. It is about the rights of the Tatars, and very consciously, the rapporteur has accepted that also before 2014 we had problems regarding the protection of social rights, as she has said, and I would say also, regarding land rights of those Tatars that have come back from Uzbekistan or other places they have been forcibly, during the Soviet period, transported.

And I would suggest also, that some other issues not examined by the report, as for instance, the right to water, should be an issue for further investigation. I do not know if you are familiar, but 85 per cent of the fresh water was coming to Crimea through the north Crimean canal and now the supply has been interrupted by Ukraine, not by Russia. That creates problems regarding this fundamental human, social right. The rapporteur is not to be blamed for this as she had an obvious impediment: she did not have access to the ground.

I have a suggestion by which I am going to close my remarks, but I think the big issue is how we can engage the Russian Federation in a meaningful dialogue about all these things. And the dialogue, of course, could not be in void. It presupposes by our Russian colleagues and the Russian Federation acceptance of the international law. It has also a prerequisite regarding the rest of us that Russia is part of Europe, politically and culturally, and that should be taken into account in all our positions vis-à-vis this country.

My final proposal is that I could not propose an amendment, so as not to give the impression of antagonising the report, but I think that the General Secretary should nominate a special representative who would be able to visit Crimea and fully investigate this issue and also other issues of the violation of human rights.

Many thanks, Madam Chair.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr George KATROUGALOS.

I now have Mr Ahmet Ünal ÇEVİKÖZ from Turkey, Socialist Group.

You have the floor.

Mr Ahmet Ünal ÇEVİKÖZ (Turkey, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

Distinguished members of the Assembly, what we have in front of us at this session is a report about the people who have suffered for several tens of years in their history. It's about the Tatars of Crimea. They have suffered because of a deportation from their homeland, where they lived for hundreds of years, under the repressive regime of Stalin's Soviet Union.

They began to return to their homeland in 1989 but their sufferings did not end even after the disintegration of the former Soviet Union because the resettlement process under the independent Ukraine also faced problems and many returning Tatars faced the risk of statelessness.

Then finally, their homeland was torn off from the country they lived in after the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014.

The report gives an accurate account of this historic sequence with ample information and evidence with references to resolutions of this Assembly since 2014, and with references to resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly since the same year.

The report also, very accurately, underlies the failure of the Russian Federation to implement all these resolutions.

I would therefore like to comment the valuable effort invested by the rapporteur in her work to finalise this report and the draft resolution thereof.

This report is about the violation of our values. It is about violation of sovereignty and the territorial integrity of a member country. It is about the illegal annexation of Crimea which we resolutely denounce. It is about the subsequent violation of human rights of a people based on false accusations or allegations for political reasons. It is about the right of Crimean Tatars to live in their homeland of which they are deprived as a result of the application of an alien legislation in their country contrary to international law.

The draft resolution very accurately identifies the fact that Crimea is systematically being isolated by denial of entry of journalists.

We cannot accept such activities and we cannot accept any attempt by the Russian Federation to justify this unlawful annexation.

Crimean Tatars' children need to have their freedom of receiving instruction in their mother tongue. These people who have suffered from historic discrimination and oppression have the right to have freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and they have the right to have freedom of assembly and association. But they do not, because the activities of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people is prohibited. Their leaders Mustafa Dzhemilev and Refat Chubarov are banned to return to their homeland, to their country, to Crimea.

The fact that all our values are being undermined by a member country which is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council is a gross violation of international law, of the Charter of the United Nations and also the European Convention on Human Rights.

I strongly recommend a full commitment by all the members of our Assembly to own our values which are the causes of our own existence and to vote for the adoption of the draft resolution. It is our obligation and responsibility in front of younger generations to follow us.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I invite now to take the floor Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA on behalf of the EPP group, Ukraine.

Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA (Ukraine, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, dear Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

I am extremely glad and grateful to everyone and especially the Rapporteur who has conducted a tremendous work throughout these three years of striving to finalise the report.

The issue of the Crimean Tatars living on the Crimean Peninsula and with their rights being oppressed, firstly, is not a political issue. This is an issue of protecting the rights of people, a national minority, which is now living under conditions of racial discrimination and oppression that causes concern throughout Europe.

More than three-quarters of a century have passed since, very famously, Mr Stalin forcibly deported more than 230,000 Crimean Tatars – men, women, and children – from Crimea. May 18th is marked as the 77th anniversary of this shameful moment of history that led to the deaths of nearly half those removed from their historical homeland.

Today, Crimean Tatars suffer under Russia's occupation of the peninsula. Crimean Tatars are subject to harassment, intimidation, arrest, imprisonment, and severe abuses at the hands of the occupant authorities. Russia has banned the Crimean Tatar Mejlis – the independent, legally recognised voice of the Tatar people – and closed, unfortunately, Tatar language media outlets and Tatar-language schools.

Crimean Tatars are systematically persecuted by the occupying authorities. They are the subject to frequent intimidation, house raids, as has been said by my fellow colleagues. There are at least 133 Ukrainian citizens who are political prisoners detained by the occupying authorities (within whom 94 are Crimean Tatars).

On January 14th 2021 the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) delivered a ruling in the case *Ukraine v. Russia*, in which it declared Ukraine's application partly admissible. In its ruling, the Grand Chamber found that the facts complained of by the Ukrainian government did fall within the "jurisdiction" of Russia on the basis of effective control that it exercised over Crimea as from February 27th 2014.

So we are definitely not talking about the March referendum conducted in Crimea.

We also consider such a ruling of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights as an important step forward in holding a country which is also a member of this assembly responsible for human rights violations in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

The human rights situation in the temporarily occupied territories has deteriorated. While talking about human rights violations we start with the systematic persecution of Crimean Tatars and pro-Ukrainian activists. Such persecution results in the illegal detentions of our citizens.

Citing the report, the following should be noted:

The grave human rights violations set out above - forced disappearances, torture and inhuman treatment, as well as violations of personal security, unjustified searches, excessive use of force, and many others - occurred only after the occupation.

Thank you, dear President.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Perfect time management.

I invite now Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, on behalf of ALDE, also from Ukraine.

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

First of all I would like to express my gratitude to the rapporteur on her having elaborated on this very important topic under the unprecedented pressure from the Russian delegation.

I'm using this opportunity to highlight several conclusions from this outstanding report. The main conclusion is that we, as an international political institution, have to prevent the Russian Federation from legitimising the discriminatory rules and the breaches of the rule of law.

The rapporteur emphasises the brutal application of Russian law in Crimea. This in particular leads to the illegal transfer of Crimean Tatars to continental Russia. The work of journalists, freedom of expression and assembly were and are also restricted with unjustified severity. Constant and disproportionate pressure on Crimean Tatars and human rights activists acting on their behalf, creates an atmosphere of fear and hostility.

The rapporteur believes that Russia should be held accountable for human rights violations committed in this area, which is under its effective control. Russia must immediately stop the relevant violations and take all necessary measures to prevent new, similar violations.

The document also highlights the issue of Russia's disregard for resolutions on related issues, adopted through 2014-2019, as well as several United Nations resolutions. Relevant documents have repeatedly called on the Russian Federation to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity, apply Ukrainian legislation in Crimea and end discrimination against the local Crimean Tatar population.

The author refers to the findings of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which indicates that the use of Russian law directly discriminates against the Muslim Crimean Tatar community. In addition, Russian criminal law is applied retroactively, which violates the principles of international law.

Thank you Sunna, for your outstanding and tremendously challenging work.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thanks a lot.

I have now finished with the list of speakers on behalf of the groups.

I come now to the normal speaker's list.

I will first give the floor to Mr Boriss CILEVIČS from the Socialist Group.

Mr Boriss CILEVIČS (Latvia, SOC): Thank you, Madam President.

Many years ago, in the 1990s, when I was a young activist I took part in international projects aimed at facilitating the repatriation of Crimean Tatars.

Crimean Tatars were only among three peoples who were deported by Stalin in the mid 1940s and were not allowed to return under Khrushchev's rule in the mid-1950s. So Crimean Tatars started returning back only on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Other researchers predicted serious bloody conflicts because people could not return to their homes since other people were living in their houses.

Very serious conflicts were anticipated, but a miracle happened. So when, many years later, exactly 20 years ago when I was already a member of this Assembly, I was appointed chair of the ad-hoc subcommittee on repatriation and the reintegration of Crimean Tatars. We went to Crimea, we met many people, and we made sure that, indeed, Crimean Tatars managed somehow to settle all these issues.

They returned and built new villages, they legalised... indeed, the Ukrainian government was not perfect at all, to put it diplomatically, but nevertheless all serious legal, political, and other issues were resolved by the people of Crimea themselves, with some assistance of the international community. It was a great achievement. Then the ad hoc subcommittee was simply liquidated because the job was done, there was not this problem at all.

I don't want to say that the situation was roses – there were a lot of tensions, disagreements in Crimea. But Crimean Tatars have become an integral part of the people of Crimea. They live together with Russians, Ukrainians, and other people. This was not a paradise, but this was normal coexistence and that was destroyed by the Russian annexation in 2014.

Now Russian colleagues tell us how Russia takes care of Crimean Tatars. For example, Russia gave them their own TV, but this is not true because Crimean Tatar TV has existed since the 1990s. It worked in Crimean Tatar and Russian and other languages. They interviewed me several times. Russia banned this television, they destroyed it and created another one, loyal to the politics of Russia instead.

Dear colleagues, I would like to address our Russian colleagues.

Russia is a great country indeed and I really can't understand why you are again turning it into a small Soviet Union, which bankrupted already once.

With all this endless propaganda, hypocrisy, and repressions of people who disagree with the power and deportation, because a substantial part of Crimean Tatars actually have been deported once again.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister CILEVIČS.

I give now the floor to Mr Sergiy VLASENKO, Ukraine, on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party.

Mr Sergiy VLASENKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all I would like to sincerely thank the rapporteur for her tremendous job because that report is very very important for dozens of thousands of people, of Crimean Tatars who suffered from the violation of their basic human rights.

I have a rhetorical question to the Assembly. What are the similarities among the Navalny case, the Russian political prisoners, the LGBT people of the North Caucasus, on the war in Georgia or illegal annexation of Crimea and the Crimean Tatars?

I find two similarities at least.

The first one is that the Russian authorities don't want to have any discussion on those issues. They don't want to hear any arguments. They are ready to deny facts absolutely understandable to every normal person. They are not going to discuss anything.

Today we will hear the representatives of the Russian Federation. They will tell you that everything is okay with the Crimean Tatars, that they are happy, that everything is good and nothing should be done.

The second thing which unites all those examples that I mentioned is that all these people and countries have no umbrella of the European Court of Human Rights because the Russian Federation is not going to implement any decision on those cases. No discussion and no umbrella of the ECHR and no implementation of the decisions of the ECHR. That unites all these cases.

Maybe as an Assembly, as the Council of Europe as a whole, we should find another way how to influence the Russian Federation, how to stick with the main principles of our organisation.

Talking about the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, I would say also two things.

The first, that we should understand here in the Parliamentary Assembly that the situation with the Crimean Tatars is a consequence of the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. These two things are tightly connected.

We should also understand that on 14 January this year the European Court of Human Rights established a fact, a legal fact that the Russian Federation started an effective control over the Crimea just before the so-called referendum. They did that on the night from the 26th to the 27th of February 2014.

We should understand that talking about the Crimean Tatars issue because without understanding that we will find no possibility of how to influence that and how to help these people.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Now I will give the floor to Ms Irina RUKAVISHNIKOVA from the Russian Federation.

Ms Irina RUKAVISHNIKOVA (Russian Federation, NR)*: Thank you, Madam President.

We, of course, very much desire that the rights of Tatars in Crimea be respected. However, this report does not, in our view, give an objective picture of the situation. It does not give objective information about the life of Crimean Tatars, nor of changes that might have taken place after unification with Crimea. The report says nothing about the fact that major changes took place after the reunification with Russia. For example, we re-instated traditional judicial systems, historical, social and cultural rights for Crimean Tatars. Their language has become a recognised language for the first time in the territory. Do you know what this means, my friends? This means that for the very first time, all official documents in Crimea are now written in Russian, Ukrainian, and their Tatar language. This means that 400 media outlets publish information in their language every day. For the first time in history, a public broadcaster in Crimea broadcasts in Crimean Tatar. Also, hundreds of classes are taught in their language, and this only started when Crimea reunified with Russia and more than 600 libraries, kindergartens and so on where the language is used. Six hundred mosques are being built. One 4,000-place mosque is being built. Every year, the state budget devotes more than \$30 million to education and culture for Crimean Tatars. I think it is very important for us to help in every way that we can people who are members of this ethnic group.

If the rapporteur had contacted the Russian Federation about this, we could have told her all of that. Apparently, the rapporteur is not interested in the situation on the ground. The report is based on information provided by extremist organisations, which are outlawed in Russia. In 2015, the representatives of this organisation organised a blockade of Crimea. They destroyed powerlines and endangered lives.

The rapporteur did not take the time or the effort to read international documents. The report from Mr Stoudmann, for example, in 2016, who went to Crimea and who identified no evidence of a repressive policy towards Crimean Tatars. Similarly, a 2017 report from the United Nations court did not see any instances of discrimination by the Russian state against Crimean Tatars. Moreover, the rapporteur made an inexcusable and a very unprofessional mistake. She did not meet representatives of the Crimean Tatars living in Crimea.

She wrote a completely one-sided report. The question is, why did she do that? I think this translates as a deliberate intent to discredit the events that have been taking place in Crimea since 2014. This is the idea underpinning this report. It is not a good report, and we simply cannot support it.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I now give the floor to Mr Andrii LOPUSHANSKYI from Ukraine, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe group.

Could you ask for the floor?

I will go on with Mr Oleksandr MERZHYNSKYI also from Ukraine. He is also in the room.

Mr Oleksandr MERZHYNSKYI (Ukraine, SOC): Thank you Madam President.

The occupying authorities in Crimea again directed their repressive machine at the Crimean Tatars: conducting searches, illegal detentions, imprisoning representatives of the Crimean Tatar people for political reasons, constant intimidation and forcing them to forget their rights - just like before, 77 years ago, when a criminal deportation of the Crimean Tatar people was carried out by the Soviet government, which was ethnic cleansing and genocide.

In May 2021, in relation to Crimean Tatars, according to the reports of human rights NGOs: [there were] three searches, four cases of interrogations, interviews and conversations recorded; [there were] six known cases of violations of the right to access health care; 20 cases of violation of the rights to a fair trial were registered. In May alone.

All these searches, arrests and detentions are politically motivated and fabricated. The detainees are tortured and illegally transported outside Crimea to the Russian courts and places of detention.

In this light, human rights and rules of international humanitarian law are systematically violated by the representatives of the Russian occupying authorities. Anybody can face charges of extremism or terrorism without committing any offence whatsoever. The right to a fair trial is not secured in the temporarily occupied Crimea. The Russian Federation is exerting systemic pressure in order to deprive people of their powers and as a consequence to make the Indigenous People of Crimea leave their land.

The internationally recognised principal self-governing body of the Crimean Tatar People, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, is proclaimed as an extremist organisation in the Russian Federation. Its activity is deemed to be illegal. The ban of the Mejlis and the systematic persecution of Crimean Tatar structures destroyed the entire system of institutions and representation of the Crimean Tatars in the occupied Crimea.

The Mejlis of Crimean Tatar People and its leaders demonstrated their unequivocal opposition to Russian occupation from the outset. Its ban is a gross violation of international humanitarian and human rights law, a manifestation of racial discrimination, and an element of a large-scale campaign of intimidation and harassment of those who disagree with the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

On June 1st, the Russian-controlled so-called Supreme Court of Crimea has found in absentia Mr Refat Chubarov, Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, guilty so to speak of "organising mass civil unrest", and sentenced him to six years in a standard regime penal colony, a fine of 200,000 Roubles and 200 hours of correctional labour.

The Ukrainian and international position is clear: the persecution of the Mejlis representatives constitutes a violation of laws and customs of war.

Court hearings are still taking place in the case of the national leader of the Crimean Tatars, Mr Mustafa Dzhebekov on absolutely fabricated cases.

Violations of human rights by the occupying authorities of Crimea and the Russian security forces on the peninsula are systematic in nature under the guise of combating extremism, and have a constant tendency towards the Crimean Tatars.

We call on the international community to increase pressure on the Russian Federation, to accelerate the de-occupation of Crimea and the release of political prisoners.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

We will give once again a try to have now Mr Andrii LOPUSHANSKYI on board.

Could you ask to speak?

So then I go on with Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS, Lithuania, Group of the European People's Party.

You have the floor.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD): Thank you, Madam President and dear friends,

I would like to congratulate our dear friend on the rapporteurship on the Crimean Tatar issue. I would like to say that Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR's contribution was scrupulous and absolutely crystal clear.

So from our point of view, I just experienced in my old capacities one of the sessions of Crimea Tatar parliament in exile in the Lithuanian Parliament. We decided to give an official status, Madam Rapporteur, to Crimean parliamentarians as real parliamentarians. We accept them as a parliament of Crimean Tatars. So in our parliament, they have rights just like foreign parliamentarians do, and we are just encouraging other parliaments to accept those parliamentarians now captive by Russia Federation.

Crimean captives are tortured there for not agreeing. They do not agree to be loyal to the Kremlin. For that reason, they are banished, politically banished, in the same way Belarusian dissident Roman Protasevich was banished and kidnapped on the Athens-Vilnius flight. Now he is being tortured in jail in Minsk after his airplane was attacked.

So we have to do this terrorist regime now; it is in Crimea against all ethnicity and it is under all conventions [sic], which would be used for the protection of indigenous people, against torture and pressure, taking them like conscripts to the Russian foreign army, trying to remove their voice from a Crimean environment and actually pressuring them like ethnic Tatar people.

So in this case, their ethnicity is under threat. That's against all international conventions signed by the Russian Federation. The violation included that Crimea is not recognised as the number one state in the world as a part of Russia.

So in this case, focusing on Mr Mustafa Dzhemilev, we should support the Mejlis and Mr Mustafa Dzhemilev, who openly said no to Mr Vladimir Putin, no to Crimean occupation, no to the captivity of Crimean Tatar people, being for the second time under pressure after Joseph Stalin deported them to remote places in Kazakhstan and other places.

So in this case, we should be in solidarity with them.

It is crystal clear that they are now endangered. We should be in solidarity with their parliament. Their voice should be strengthened by us.

Really thank you Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR. Congratulations with the events in your family. You are a brave member of our parliamentary democratic society.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister Zingeris.

And now I give the floor to Mr Bernard FOURNIER.

You have the floor.

Mr Bernard FOURNIER (France, EPP/CD): Madam President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Crimean Tatars were deported en masse to Uzbekistan on Stalin's orders in May 1944. Following the collapse of the USSR, they sought to resettle in Crimea. Despite administrative or financial difficulties, in 2014 there were over 280,000 Tatars in Crimea.

Many of them expressed their opposition to the referendum of 16 March 2014, the result of which enshrined the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. Since that referendum, which the Committee of Ministers and our Organisation have declared illegal, the Crimean Tatars have been persecuted. The question today is: are the Crimean Tatars once again condemned to leave the region?

Since the invasion of Crimea by Russian troops, the Tatars have been subjected to reprisals for their opposition to the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. The number of searches was increasing and any Tatar who questioned the Russian occupation was accused of terrorism or separatism.

Human rights defender Emir Hussein Kuku and five co-defendants were sentenced to prison terms of between 7 and 19 years on terrorism charges after trials deemed unfair. They are serving this sentence in the Russian Federation in particularly undignified conditions. In this context, Tatars denouncing the illegal annexation of Crimea have no choice but to go into exile if they do not want to end up in prison. The Russian Federation, which is illegally occupying Crimea, must be held responsible for the human rights violations taking place there. I recall that the situation of Ukrainian nationals detained in Crimea on false charges is not much better.

The reason why we are calling Russia to account today is that it is a member of our Organisation and has therefore chosen to respect the European Convention on Human Rights. It is therefore obliged to respect the rights of the Crimean Tatars, as it is obliged to respect the rights of any other individual living in the territory over which it exercises *de facto* sovereignty, even though the annexation of Crimea remains illegal.

It is therefore time to have a demanding dialogue with the Russian Federation on this issue. The participation of Russian parliamentarians in the work of our Assembly should make this possible. I therefore call on the Russian Federation to implement the recommendations contained in the draft resolution before us, which I support. It is time for Russia to re-affirm the meaning of its membership of our Organisation, which was recently revitalised following the return of Russian parliamentarians to our Assembly.

I thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister Bernard FOURNIER.

Now I will give the floor to Mr Yury OLEINIKOV on behalf of the Russian Federation.

He has to ask for the floor.

Mr Yury OLEINIKOV (Russian Federation, NR)*: Thank you very much, Madam President. I would very much like to thank the rapporteur and my colleagues who are paying such considerable attention to this issue. But I would like to perhaps throw a different light on this issue.

I would like to recall a major figure, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who I think is appreciated by many of you, who in the 1970s and 1980s, spoke in 1978 before Harvard University and addressed a certain number of reproaches to the West. And one was a protest devised by a certain number of groups who rather than the common weal, the common good, choose the absolute good of individualism. Solzhenitsyn was critical of that, that led, he believed to extremes where it was no longer possible to defend society. The wishes of all these individuals imposed itself on the common weal, the common good, he felt, and that could lead to rather extremist situations.

Ignat, the son of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who was brought up and lived in the United States, published the memoirs of his father in the years that he lived in the West and he said that to an extent, he felt that his father was right and he felt that the West is judging Russia on the basis of a distorted historic view or vision and that stood in the way of any true co-operation with the Russian Federation.

Ladies and gentlemen, adopting reports of this kind today, this is exactly what you will be doing. Upholding a position, which is a traditional one, you give the floor to a handful of dissidents but you are completely ignorant of the real situation in Crimea. You are adopting a position where you cannot see the wood for the trees, as we say, and you are ignorant of the need to forge a positive relationship with the Russian Federation. One

could say that the report would be slightly more objective were it to deal with the fate of individual dissidents, but all societies, and the Russian Federation is no exception, has an interest in ensuring that facts are presented objectively.

It goes without saying that there are cases of human rights violations that should be condemned and which should be studied or examined, but what you prefer to do is to talk about the fate of Crimean Tatars in general, basing yourselves on conclusions which are absurd. As my colleague has already said, earlier today, you are basing yourselves on hearsay, on statements of émigrés, who are fasting for violence as Alexander Solzhenitsyn would have put it. Nobody is subject of persecution because of their membership of this or that given national or ethnic group. I can say that without any form of hesitation, so this report has no foundation.

Just very quickly on the words of occupation and annexation that you are applying to the situation in Crimea, in February 2014, Ukrainian nationalists trampled underfoot the Constitution of Ukraine. The president who was legitimately elected had to flee the country under threat of violence so, basing yourself on the Ukrainian Constitution, is absurd. You are basing yourselves on a document that was trampled underfoot and also an international law, there was a notion.

I am concluding Madam President, cessation, there is a very similar situation to that of Crimea and that is Kosovo. I would appeal to you not to adopt the report and appeal to the rapporteur to revise the report. And we would certainly be prepared to work with her on revising this report.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

But instead of three minutes you had more than four minutes.

I'm in a good mood so I didn't close you.

Now I would like to give the floor to Ms Maryna BARDINA from the Ukrain, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe group.

You have the floor.

Ms Maryna BARDINA (Ukraine, ALDE): Dear colleagues,

Dear Madam Rapporteur,

I would like to commend your extraordinary work for the report's preparation. Thank you. The draft report is comprehensive and covers multiple human rights violations committed against Crimean Tatars by the Russian Federation in the temporarily occupied part of the Ukrainian territory, autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol.

Dear colleagues, eight years have already passed since the Russian Federation occupied Ukraine's Crimea. The Russian Federation further tightens its grip over the occupied peninsula and promotes suppression of dissent as well as the oppression of the minorities in Crimea.

The situation in the occupied territories deteriorates in all areas, especially human rights.

Russia continues to apply its law in Crimea, including in the fields of terrorism and extremism at a time when, in accordance with international law, Ukrainian laws should apply. Russia has conducted 11 illegal conscription campaigns in the peninsula.

Since the beginning of the occupation, the number of people conscripted into the Russian Armed Forces has already reached about 28,000. While turning Crimea into a large military base, the Russian occupation administration destroys the natural and cultural heritage of the peninsula.

The autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation want to remain an integral part of the territory of Ukraine. Our state will never recognise this occupation. We'll take all legal measures to restore its sovereign right in the territory of the peninsula.

Ukraine has approved a strategy for de-occupation and the reintegration of the temporarily occupied territory of the autonomous Republic of Crimea and the national strategy for human rights to protect Crimean Tatars from numerous violations.

We also announced the establishment of an international platform entitled Crimean Platform, to consolidate the efforts for de-occupying Crimea and invite you to participate in the platform summit in August this year.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the upcoming parliamentary elections in Russia.

It is obvious that, according to international law, no elections to Russian Duma might take place in Crimea.

In case PACE delegates participate in an election observation mission, we have to prevent any potential provocations on the Russian side and make sure no visits by observers are paid to occupied Crimea.

Once again, it is obvious that these elections have nothing in common with the rule of law. The Parliamentary Assembly cannot become a part of the international crime committed by Russia.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I now give the floor to Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ, Swiss Socialist Group.

Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ (Switzerland, SOC): Thank you, Madam President.

I have just heard our Russian colleague, Mr Yury OLEINIKOV, explain to us that there is no problem: move along, there is nothing to see. That the Russian Federation was a country that respected human rights.

I got to know this issue in a modest way about three years ago with my Swiss colleague, Mr Manuel TORNARE, who was in charge of this issue before Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR, and he explained the situation to me a little. I'm fairly sure I can believe what he told me.

I would like to congratulate Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR on a report that is accurate, committed and very informative. It is instructive because it puts the context into perspective and reminds us of the complicated and painful past of this people, a minority group that has suffered a lot. In particular, we have already talked about the mass deportations at the end of the Second World War, the stigmatization of this people, their destitution, their recurrent poverty and all that they had to endure. However, we are talking today about what has happened since 2014, the de facto annexation of Crimea by Russia.

The report contains a lot of very worrying information, and I cannot imagine that it is all fabricated. It is clear that there have been serious human rights violations, extrajudicial executions, systematic discrimination, harassment — particularly administrative harassment — physical violence, arbitrary detentions, torture, ill-treatment of detainees, for example, with an attack on freedom of expression, freedom of religion and so on.

The various human rights abuses cited in the report are more than allegations, but real facts that are well documented in the report. Most of these facts date back to the beginning of the Russian occupation, when things must have been worse, but they continue to this day. This is totally unacceptable: it is in clear violation of the democratic values and human rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights, a text that Russia has initialled.

All this must stop, and the report and the resolution are relevant. The Crimean Tatars, like all the peoples of the world, are entitled to respect and to all the individual and collective rights and freedoms that our common values impose in compliance with the intangible values of the European Convention on Human Rights.

I am the first to say that we must continue to talk to the Russians in order to try to bring about change.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): A big thank you.

Now I would like to ask for Mr Aleksandr BASHKIN. Afterwards I have Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ.

Mister BASHKIN, could you ask for the floor?

Mr Aleksandr BASHKIN (Russian Federation, NR)*: Thank you very much, Madam President.

I would like to start by saying that I have enormous sympathy for all the people in Crimea and I can assure you that the authorities have been doing everything they can to help them.

Unfortunately, Ukraine has not made the slightest effort to help the people we are talking about. We understand why. They only defend the rights of people living in the Crimea with words.

If we look back over the years, films and books dating back to the Soviet times, we see similar allegations being made here again now, here in this report. The report is full of lies being made by people who do not live in the area. The allegations made are by people who have never been to Crimea. People who know what is actually happening in Crimea were not invited to participate in the report.

According to the Constitution of Crimea, Tatar Crimean is an official language, together with Ukrainian and Russian. Under Ukrainian occupation, Crimean Tatars suffered enormously and there is now a Russian president's decree on the rehabilitation of the Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian, Crimean Tatar and German peoples to allow their renaissance and development.

So as you can see, back in the Soviet days, other people suffered as well. But apparently, the rapporteur did not look into that.

So there are 16 schools teaching the language and 22 special classes teaching Crimean Tatar. In more than 130 other schools it is possible to study the language and thousands of children are following classes in this language. The number of people being taught in the language of Crimean Tatars has increased to 1 775 people. In the next few years, 13 new mosques will be built. A theatre operating in the language of Crimean Tatar is also being built.

So clearly, there has been a blockade, for example, of water deliveries to Crimea. I am not sure you are aware of that, honourable members, but five years ago, Ukraine blocked the water distribution channel, which was the only source of drinking water for the whole of the peninsula. Why do you not mention this in your report? There have also been attacks against electricity lines, that is something else that you do not mention.

I am not suggesting that you should just believe me, but do come to the Ukrainian Republic and the Crimean Republic and see what is going on. And go to Ukraine and see what they are doing. The authorities of Ukraine will not be happy because you will see through their lies if you go and look yourself. So I would call on members not to vote for this report, which is an instrument of political manipulation.

Our delegation is unanimously opposed to this report. We have not put forward any amendments because it is so bad, it cannot be improved.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I now give the floor to Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ and afterwards I have Mr Stéphane BERGERON.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD): First of all, I would like to thank our Rapporteur for her work.

Secondly, I would like to express my strong support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within the borders recognised by the international community, Crimea being an integral part of Ukraine.

I condemn in the strongest possible terms the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, as well as the illegal annexation of Crimea, the brutal violation of international treaties by the Russian Federation, and serious violations of the human rights of the Crimean Tatars.

Thirdly, I would like to underline Resolution 68/262 of the United Nations General Assembly on the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

I think that we at PACE should once again call on the Russian Federation to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the neighbouring country.

Since Russia annexed Crimea in the spring of 2014 we have been witnessing a serious deterioration of the human rights of the Crimean Tatar people in the peninsula. Persecutions, disappearances, searches, detentions, the banning of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, and other harmful actions against them indicate the violation of the United Nations Racial Discrimination Convention.

It should be stopped immediately and unconditionally.

Finally, there are amendments tabled by our Ukrainian colleagues. I support them.

First of all, there is an amendment with regard to the title of the resolutions. I kindly ask you to support it. I am ready to do the same.

Thank you very much.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Madam Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ.

I have now Mr Stéphane BERGERON, Canada, observer.

Afterwards I have Mr Halil ÖZŞAVLI.

I give the floor now to Mr Stéphane BERGERON.

Mr Stéphane BERGERON (Canada): Thank you very much.

Fellow parliamentarians,

As we do every year, on May 18, we honoured the memory of the hundreds of thousands of Crimean Tatars, children, women and men deported by the Soviet authorities in 1944.

In 2016, the Canadian Parliament considered a bill to recognize the Sürgünlik as a genocide, following the lead of the Ukrainian Parliament. My political party, the Bloc Québécois, spoke in favour of this bill at the time of the debate on it. The sponsor who sits with me on the foreign affairs and international development committee said, and I quote, "We cannot separate the deportation of 1944 from the theft of Crimea from Ukraine by Russia 70 years later. The same sinister ideology and the same disregard for people's fundamental rights and freedoms is involved." I totally agree. In fact, that's why I started my remarks by referring to the past. To paraphrase Faulkner, I would say that the past is not dead: it has not even passed.

The detailed report prepared by the rapporteur, Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR, which is at the heart of our debate today, does indeed allow us to realise that the horrors of the past, which we thought were over, are now being transposed into new violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, which take different forms. These include extrajudicial killings, the imposition of Russian citizenship, the Russian ban on the Mejlis—the Crimean Tatar autonomous body—and the imprisonment of some of its leaders, and forced conscription.

I am afraid that, in the limited time available to me today, I cannot go into detail about each of these new abuses to which the Crimean Tatars are once again being subjected. The situation of the Crimean Tatars is very serious, and I would like to conclude by echoing the report's findings. The situation of the Crimean Tatars was certainly not perfect before 2014, and they had not managed, since their gradual return to the peninsula from 1989, to fully regain their historical status in their homeland. But it is also true that since the illegal annexation of Crimea over seven years ago, the conditions they face have worsened considerably.

Many constructive recommendations through multiple Council of Europe resolutions have been made to the Russian Federation to give it the opportunity to try to improve these conditions. Above all, there is one which, clearly, if implemented, would go a long way to reversing this worrying and shameful trend: an end to the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I now give the floor to Mr Halil ÖZŞAVLI, followed by Mr François CALVET.

Mister ÖZŞAVLI.

Mr Halil ÖZŞAVLI (Turkey, NR): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dear Colleagues,

I firstly want to say that I strongly support this report.

The Crimean Peninsula has been annexed illegally for seven years and so far no progress to change the status quo on the region has been achieved yet. It is not acceptable that a country should violate the sovereign rights of another country and not receive enough attention from the international community.

Apart from the infringement of international law by the Russian Federation, serious violations of human rights reached a peak in Crimea with unbearable consequences. Russia continues to keep the ban of the Mejlis of Crimean Tatars. Tatar leaders Jemilev and Refat Çubarov are still not allowed to be in Crimea, which is their motherland. Tatars are not able to exercise their political rights in any manner. Their right to be represented in decision-making procedures is extorted by Russian authorities.

Missing Tatars and human rights advocates continue to be a major source of concern about the situation of Crimean Tatars. Especially unlawful detentions which took place on 18 February 2021 were among the alarming examples of harassments targeting Tatars. Acts silencing Tatars are becoming more common day by day. Such actions should be encountered by impartial international institutions as soon as possible.

Crimea and the well-being of Crimean Tatars are vital issues for Turkey, as a country that hosts more than three million citizens of Crimean Tatar descent. We have unbreakable ties with Crimean Tatar Turks. We will try our best to voice that issue at a higher tone in order to make it known by the whole international community.

Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty has to be respected and protected. We will continue to support Ukraine and encourage the Russian Federation towards a peaceful and permanent resolution. Lastly, I would like to thank Madam Rapporteur and express my support for this significant report.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I now give the floor to Mr François CALVET, who will be followed by Mr Rustem UMEROV.

Mister CALVET, you have the floor.

Mr François CALVET (France, EPP/CD): Madam President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The situation of the Crimean Tatars requires our utmost attention today, as this community is facing persecution.

The Committee of Ministers has condemned Russia's military action to take illegal possession of Crimea. However, it is now de facto Russian law that applies in that part of Ukraine and it is Russia that is organising the repression of the Tatars under the guise of the fight against terrorism. The Tatars are paying for their refusal to submit to Russian domination in Crimea.

The Mejlis, a representative assembly of Crimean Tatars recognised by Ukrainian law, has been declared illegal by the Russian authorities. The Russian authorities have not only abolished this institution, but have also sentenced in absentia, retroactively, on the basis of Russian law, the leaders of this institution, who can no longer return to Ukraine under threat of arrest. This is a clear violation of Article 7 of our Convention, which provides that "No one shall be held guilty of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence under national law at the time when it was committed".

The Mejlis is thus paying for its opposition to the annexation of Crimea. The Russian authorities want to brutally impose a Russian identity on Crimea. As of March 18, 2014, all persons domiciled in Crimea were granted Russian citizenship, unless they expressly objected within one month. Those who refused are subject to a great deal of discrimination in access to employment, education and health care in particular. Among them, hundreds of individuals considered as foreigners have been expelled, whether to Ukraine or Uzbekistan.

The Tatars were forcibly conscripted into the Russian army to perform their military service on the territory of the Russian Federation. Finally, as far as language is concerned, parents are discouraged from enrolling children in schools where teaching is in the Tatar language and only 0.2% of Crimean students reportedly attended classes in Ukrainian in the 2018-2019 year.

The Russian Federation's desire to eradicate all traces of a culture other than its own was clear. The means used to achieve this are clearly contrary to the rules of our Convention.

The draft resolution is therefore necessary to remind the Russian Federation that its membership of the Council of Europe entails duties. The Committee of Ministers must support the Assembly's action, not only to defend the Crimean Tatars but to remind the Russian Federation of its obligations.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much Mr François CALVET.

I've been informed that Mr Rustem UMEROV is online.

Could you please ask for the floor?

Mr Rustem UMEROV (Ukraine, ALDE): Distinguished colleagues,

I'm glad to welcome all of you today as a representative of the Crimean Tatars from temporary occupied Ukrainian Crimea.

I thank Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR for her tremendous work on this resolution.

I thank all my colleagues who worked on this document. I also want to thank everyone who is supporting the Ukrainian agenda on an international level.

Unfortunately, the situation with the violation of human rights in Crimea is getting worse.

In the first quarter of 2021, Russian security forces in Crimea detained 146 people; most of them are Crimean Tatars.

They conducted 22 illegal searches in the homes of Crimean Tatars.

There were 113 violations of the right to fair trial, mostly against Crimean Tatar people, including a journalist from Ukraine, Mr Vladyslav Yesypenko.

More than 100 citizens of Ukraine remain illegally imprisoned; most of them are Crimean Tatars, with their sentences going up to 19 years in prison.

With this resolution, we urge Russia to free all political prisoners and to conduct a transparent investigation into the deaths and disappearances of political activists in Crimea since 2014.

Russia spreads propaganda and stereotyping about Crimean Tatars, making them extremists and terrorists. It bans media, it bans religious activities, and persecutes the independent media.

A few days ago a political prisoner, Servet Gaziev, was removed from the courtroom just for speaking in Crimean Tatar language.

Crimean Tatar children in the occupation are bullied by teachers with false, untrue, biased propaganda.

A Crimean Tatar child in the Sudak region was told that her grandparents, and other Crimean Tatars, were deported in 1944 *en masse* because they were traitors and collaborators of the Nazi regime.

In this resolution, we call on Russia to ensure respect for the rights of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians in Crimea.

Russia prohibits the carrying out of religious activities for all Muslim communities except those that are loyal to them. If you disobey recommendations, you will be under the repression of the regime. The constant raids on mosques on Friday prayers happen often, searches of personal belongings and taking pictures of every person after prayers happens often.

We call on Russia to stop this religious oppression and violation of a person's right to the freedom of religion.

The rights of Crimean Tatars and their institutions are being forbidden.

The Mejlis, the highest representative body of Crimean Tatar people, is declared extremist and banned by Russia. On June 1st, it sentenced the chairman of Mejlis, Mr Refat Chubarov, to six years imprisonment.

We urge an annulment of the ban on the Mejlis and repression against its members, and to allow its leaders to return to Crimea.

Dear colleagues, this resolution is critically important for Crimean Tatars, and Ukraine, and the whole of Europe.

For seven years we have been using every method to tell the world the truth about Russia's aggressive policy in Crimea.

Therefore I urge you to adopt this resolution, to once again condemn Russia's aggression and occupation of sovereign territory of Ukraine, and constant repression and violation against Crimean Tatars.

We call on Russia to stop the attempt of the illegal annexation of Crimea, and eventually to sit down at the negotiating table about the occupation.

I kindly invite you to join the first summit of Crimean Platform in Kiev on August 23rd, to join Ukraine in its sovereign right to end the temporary occupation.

Thank you very much.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now I would like to give the floor to Mr Ahmet YILDIZ, Turkey, and afterwards to Mr Jacques LE NAY.

Mr Ahmet YILDIZ.

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

Ladies and gentlemen,

The subject of today's debate is the situation of the Tatars of Crimea, a region annexed by the Russian Federation.

If the situation of the Tatars was difficult before 2014, particularly in economic terms, it has become particularly alarming since they demonstrated their opposition to the annexation of Crimea. While it is true that all opponents of the annexation are victims of repression in Crimea, Tatars seem to be disproportionately affected by unjustified repressive measures: attacks and discrimination are indeed the daily lot of Tatars.

Illegal searches and arbitrary arrests are accompanied by forced displacement to other states, including the Russian Federation. The conditions of detention of the Tatars were of particular concern, as was the arbitrary and unfair application of Russian anti-terrorism laws. Tatar organisations were dissolved and the media closed.

No international organizations have been allowed access to Crimea since 2014. The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights last visited in September 2014. Is she not supposed to be able to visit any member State of our Organisation? Ukraine is a member of our Assembly, as is the Russian Federation, which has de facto authority over Crimea.

This situation cannot continue, as the NGOs on the ground are reporting increasingly alarming situations. The Russian Federation is now at a crossroads. Being a member of our Organisation entails duties and respect for values. I hope that the Russian Federation will act in accordance with these values and its commitments. I hope that today's debate will contribute to this process.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Mr Ahmet YILDIZ was before you, but it is not a real problem.

Mister Ahmet YILDIZ, could I give you the floor?

Turkey.

Mr Ahmet YILDIZ (Turkey, NR): Madam Chair, thank you very much.

Indeed the picture is very clear in light of the statements by Mr Rustem UMEROV, an MP in the Ukrainian parliament of Crimean Tatar.

Nothing to add, thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Let's give chances for the next speakers.

I would like to give the floor now to Mr Yuriy KAMELCHUK, Ukraine, Group of the European People's Party.

Mr Yuriy KAMELCHUK (Ukraine, EPP/CD): Thank you, dear Chairman,

Dear colleagues,

I was in Ukraine and Crimea when Russia started the annexation in 2014. I remember the fear in the eyes of Crimean people. They thought that the war was starting, maybe somebody thinks that they were wrong, but the war started later in the Ukrainian Donbas.

Ukrainian and Crimean Tatars living in the temporarily occupied Crimean peninsula experience systematic repression, serious human rights violations and discrimination. The occupation authorities denied Crimeans the right to education in their mother tongue. The Russian Federation as an occupying power uses education in the temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as a mean of assimilating the population. They erase Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar national identity in particular by limiting education in the Crimean Tatar language and leaving Crimea without schools with Ukrainian as the language of education.

By this, the occupying authorities seek to erase the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar national and cultural identity and identity of children and youth as citizens of Ukraine. The statistics issued by the so-called Ministry of Education and Science in the Republic of Crimea indicates an increase in number of children studying in Crimean Tatar. In fact, education in Crimean Tatar language is allowed only up to ninth grade, not 10th nor 11th, and at the request of parents. School administrations under various pretexts create obstacles of the feeling of such applications. They either force parents to refuse to study in the Crimean Tatar or reduce the number of hours of Crimean Tatar language and literature.

Militarisation as a main focus of the state educational policy of the Russian Federation, which has been actively implemented by the occupying authorities, just from the moment of the attempt annexation of the peninsula. Crimean Tatars of minority age are specifically targeted by the so-called military patriotic education combined with the propaganda of hatred and hate speech. Children are studying the basics of military training as a part of the school programme, they get enrolled in the militarised movements Yunarmia Kazakh schools and Kazakh classes.

Our Crimean children are taught how to be prepared to battle and to fight. Crimean Tatars, the indigenous people of Crimea, are among those who are subjected to forced conscription to the armed forces of the occupying power. Since 2015 about 28 000 Ukrainian citizens have been forcibly conscripted to serve in the Russian armed forces included the numerous ones who were sent to serve outside. Such forced conscription to the armed forces for the occupying power is regarded as a war crime by international humanitarian and international criminal law and is one of the most systematic war crimes committed by the representatives of the Russian occupying authorities in the temporary occupied Crimea.

Once again, I want to remind you that the Russian Federation is bound by the international law and obliged to ensure the protection of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I now give the floor to Mr Leonid SLUTSKIY, and afterwards I give the floor to Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA, and then I have to close the list.

So Mr Leonid SLUTSKIY could you ask for the floor please?

Okay.

I now give the floor to Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA, Ukraine, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe group.

Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA (Ukraine, ALDE): Dear Madam,

Dear colleagues,

First, thank you very much for the really great work by the rapporteur.

The resolution and debates about the situation of Crimean Tatars is one of the most important documents in the Parliamentary Assembly, in my opinion.

It rose the historical and political context of the situation of Crimean and Tatars and the repression, deportation and violation of rights of the indigenous people. It shows that the contemporary occupier just continues with totalitarian governance by eliminating all the opponents of dissenters by distorting the idea of civil society and democracy and implementing the aggressive policy of war.

Despite the efforts of the international community the situation in the temporarily occupied by Russia Crimea deteriorates in all aspects. Most notably in the spheres of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The document also highlights the issues of occupiers' ignorance and desecration of international law, particularly the Parliamentary Assembly and United Nations resolutions as well as the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe.

The resolution refers to findings of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, which indicates that the use of Russian war directly discriminates against the Crimean Tatar community.

Crimean Tatar people have been facing human rights violations, persecution for their beliefs, political views, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, culture and language, harassment and discrimination.

These actions are unacceptable in a democratic Europe in the 21st century.

I believe that adopting the resolution on the situation with the Crimean Tatars is an important step in bringing Russia to justice for a violation of human rights and freedoms in the occupied territories of Ukraine as well as the future de-occupation strategy.

Ukraine has established a new consultation and co-ordination, diplomatic and political platform, the Crimean Platform. It is aimed at the elaboration of a practical approach to achieve the de-occupation of Crimea and its return to Ukraine.

The Crimea Platform is a flexible international format to provide the strategic long-term vision of the de-occupation of Crimea and consolidate international efforts and available financial resources on the Crimean track and enhance our synergy of related processes and efforts at the intergovernmental and interparliamentary and expert levels.

I do believe that the Council of Europe will play an important role in the Crimea de-occupation strategy. We will push restoring the respect for international law and human rights and freedom of the Crimean Tatars.

I hope that international solidarity will help Crimean Tatars to build a future where people are free on the Ukrainian territory of the Crimean peninsula.

Thank you very much.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

We have now our last speaker. That is Ms Sena Nur ÇELİK from Turkey.

Would you please ask for the floor?

You're invited already.

She's coming. She's coming in.

Ms Sena Nur ÇELİK (Turkey, NR): Dear Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank the Rapporteur for preparing this comprehensive report addressing the violations of international humanitarian law in Crimea.

In the seventh year of the illegal annexation of Crimea, we unfortunately witnessed the considerable worsening of the situation of Crimean Tatars. The activities of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people are still banned and the Tatar leader and the members of parliament are persecuted and banned from entering Crimea.

As the report indicates, there has been grave human rights violations including extrajudicial killings, abductions, and enforced disappearances that target Crimean Tatars. There are reports of arbitrary detentions, political trials, torture, and ill treatment of detainees, and they are transferred from Crimea to the Russian Federation.

Human tragedies in the Crimean Peninsula are growing day by day. The occupying authority does not any take action to put an end to that. Crimean Tatars are deprived of their fundamental rights and freedoms, such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and even their right to live.

It's concerning that hundreds of Crimean people have suspiciously disappeared, some of whom were found dead in abandoned regions. Neither the human rights observers nor the international monitoring personnel are allowed to enter and freely perform their duties in Crimea.

According to the Crimean authorities, 45 people have disappeared suspiciously in Crimea since 2014. The whereabouts of 15 people are still uncertain. For instance, Ervin İbragimov, member of the executive board of the World Crimean Tatar Congress, has been missing since 2016.

The list of disappeared and murdered people even contains the name of a three year old boy.

Turkey's position on the crisis in and around Ukraine is clear and solid. We fully support Ukraine's territorial integrity and do not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea.

With that understanding, Turkey co-sponsors the relevant Crimea-related resolutions at the United Nations. Crimea and the wellbeing of Crimean Tatars is a key issue for Turkey, since we host more than three million Tatar Turks in our country.

Protecting the lives, rights, interests, and the cultural identity of Crimean Tatars and keeping the Crimean issue at the top of the agenda of the international community has to be among the priorities of our Parliamentary Assembly until the violations of the rights of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians come to an end; deaths and disappearances and all human rights violations are investigated; perpetrators are brought to justice; and the illegal annexation of Crimea is reversed.

I thank the Rapporteur for bringing the issue to the agenda of our plenary session and giving a voice to the oppressed Crimean Tatar people.

I hope this report brings with it strong momentum when it comes to the attempts to put an end to the severe human right violations in Crimean Peninsula.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Many thanks, Madam ÇELİK.

Now I interrupt the list of speakers. Those who didn't have the chance to deliver their speech can forward it to the table office, but it has to be done within 4 hours of finishing the debate.

The list of speakers is concluded. I would now ask the rapporteur to reply.

You have 3 minutes.

Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR (Iceland, SOC, Rapporteur): Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to thank all of our colleagues for an interesting and fruitful debate on this very important and very serious issue that we are facing today.

I would like to add a few points that I did not mention in my introductory speech and I would also like to answer to a few of the comments, especially those made by the Russian colleagues. Now, first of all, I would just like to note that of course it is also true that other minorities, especially Ukrainian, and especially those who have publicly opposed the new regime, also face human rights violations in Crimea, as some of which are of course also mentioned in my report.

And I would also like to state that many Crimean Tatars that have been illegally prosecuted under Russian legislation may well be considered political prisoners, and this issue I think will be covered in my report on Russian political prisoners, in part at least.

Now, as to the comments of my Russian colleagues and their criticisms, I would like to say this. First of all, throughout my time and handling this report, I've been struck by the fact that our Russian colleagues have not once denied or refuted any of the very serious human rights violations they are accused of. They talk of bridges, infrastructure, and mosques, and language courses, but they have not refuted extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, acts of torture, and inhuman or degrading treatment that are allegedly committed by the members of the security forces. And the fact that they have not been effectively investigated. Threats, assault, illegal searches and arbitrary arrests.

All of this, as well as the retroactive application of Russian law, these are all acts that our Russian colleagues do not refute and have not objected to. So, I ask you: where are your arguments when it comes to that? I take it that you approve of it. You haven't objected of it. I find it deeply disappointing that they try to twist the report or twist the facts into something a lot less significant, when we are looking at very grave violations of international humanitarian law, very grave violations of human rights. And still, they are not disputing them.

The Russian delegation had every opportunity to present their side of the story to the Committee in this Assembly and instead they choose to attack my motives. I'm accused of some ulterior motives, although I did not understand nor hear what kind of motives those were.

I would just like to say I would have of course like to visit Crimea, but as you know, the situation on the ground regrettably does not permit it. But of course I think it is crucial that human rights monitoring can begin again in Crimea as soon as possible.

But I would like to say in closure that I have relied on exceptionally extensive research in this report, I have relied on bilateral meetings of my predecessor Mr Tornare and our committee hearings in which all members could participate. And I think it is a report that is timely. We waited long enough. Let's get on with the voting, Madam President.

I hope you will all support this important report.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Congratulations already, but we have to vote on the report.

But now, first of all, I would like to ask the Chair of the Committee, Ms Petra BAYR, if she wishes to speak.

I understand that she wishes to speak.

You have 3 minutes.

Ms Petra BAYR (Austria, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination): Thank you very much, Madam President.

I will not start to list all the human rights violations which are included in the report. We all hear that we can read it, it was debated throughout the last hour.

I want to draw your attention to the fact that almost every article of the European Convention on Human Rights is at stake, from torture to freedom of press, to freedom of religion, to personal liberty and security.

I should underline that the targets of these violations are very often Crimean Tatars who are known as opponents of the Russian regime, dissidents, as some members chillingly said.

Our Committee has examined this report really extensively.

We held two major hearings, one on March 19th and one on October 20th, where the issues at stake were discussed.

The ombudswomen of both Ukraine and Russian Federation as well as Crimean Tatar representatives participated in the second hearing.

Our Russian colleagues argued in the Committee and also in today's debate that the report lacks objectivity.

As Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR just said, it was often talk about new mosques or language courses or other things.

They are enshrined in the report, and maybe it did not get so much attention as our Russian friends would like to have seen it, but they are there, and the report is objective.

I want to congratulate Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR for her report on behalf of our Committee.

I hope that you will support the draft resolution presented by the Committee as amended.

Ms Petra BAYR (Austria, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination)*: I am sorry if I do not use a perfect Russian and I do seriously hope that we will be able to instigate a genuine dialogue with our Russian friends within the Assembly.

Thank you very much.

Mr Ziya ALTUNYALDIZ (Turkey, NR): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear Colleagues,

Crimean Tatars have been suffering from all kinds of harassment and violence for years but receive little attention from other international organizations and countries. It is so sad that they are the subjects of the killings, torture and disappearances. Worse than that, occupied political authority and its security forces are claimed as the responsible for these inhuman treatments while all of them remain as uninvestigated.

Turkey, as a home for millions of Crimean Tatars, pays attention to the current situation of the Crimean homeland where we have strong cultural ties. Therefore illegal annexation of Crimean peninsula is not acceptable for Turkey and neither should be for the international community. Territorial integrity of Ukraine is infringed disrespectfully and I believe this should be condemned at the highest tone. In the 21st century it is a shame that we are still talking about protecting the sovereign and undisputable rights of an independent country.

The Mejlis of Crimean Tatars, which is the legitimate legislative and executive organ of Crimean people, was shut down. Crimean political leaders are impeded from making politics; even, they are not allowed to be in their own country. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other human rights observers are not allowed to enter Crimea. According to the report of the Commissioner dated 25 June 2019, the majority of 37 Ukrainian citizens who were illegally arrested in the first 6 months of 2019 were Crimean Tatar activists. Another problematic situation is that the Crimean Tatars are forced to join the Russian army and are forcibly recruited. In November 2019, Human Rights Watch declared that Russia did not have the right to summon the Crimean people to serve in the army and that such actions violated international law.

I believe that the violations of human rights in Crimea should be known to all anymore from now on and I would like to thank Ms Raporteur for bringing this humanitarian issue to the agenda of the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe.

Thank you.

Ms Emine Nur GÜNAY (Turkey, NR): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear President,

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank Madam Rapporteur for her valuable report on the situation of Crimean Tatars. I personally appreciate her work as a parliamentarian representing Eskişehir where Crimean Tatars make up a sizable portion of the city's population and an important part of its culture. Crimean Tatar Turks have been torn from their ancestral homeland and exiled under inhumane conditions for centuries, and it is quite upsetting to see history repeating itself.

Crimean Tatars have faced enormous challenges for generations. They suffered mass deportation by the Soviet regime followed by two generations of exile in Central Asia, before returning home to rebuild their lives from scratch in an independent Ukraine. For the past seven years, they have endured constant pressure and persecution by Russian occupation authorities since the illegal annexation of Crimea.

We, as the international community, have witnessed the continuous mistreatment of Crimean Tatars: oppression, arbitrary arrests, raids, disappearances in custody and violations of the right to free press, expression and assembly. In Crimea, it has become increasingly difficult to live a free life. Those who speak out against the regime are immediately silenced. An active religious life can be enough to land someone with charges of terrorism and sentences of up to 20 years.

We should strive to be more than witnesses to the situation of Crimean Tatars and do everything within our power to ensure the security of life, rights and interests of the Crimean Tatars and the protection of their cultural identity. I would like to thank the Parliamentary Assembly for continuing to keep the Crimean issue and the problems of the Crimean Tatars on our agenda and on the agenda of the international community.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr Andrii LOPUSHANSKYI (Ukraine, ALDE): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear colleagues!

There are three "official" languages in the Republic of Crimea: Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar and Russian. It means that schools and other "public institutions" must provide services in any of these languages.

In practice, the situation is critical. It is forbidden for Crimean Tatars to speak their native language in court. And there are no textbooks in schools and there is a lack of teachers. It is offered to study Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar after classes as an elective. The Russian authorities are doing everything to suppress the desire to learn these languages and cultures.

Until 2014, 100% of students or 191,000 children studied Ukrainian on the peninsula. In 2020, only 0.2% of schoolchildren study Ukrainian, and it is only 232 children on the whole peninsula.

After graduating from school, children from the occupied Crimea have about four options for higher education: on the peninsula, in Russia, on the mainland of Ukraine or in another country abroad. In addition to the difficult conditions of crossing the administrative border, many are stopped by poor knowledge of the Ukrainian language, as in the occupied Crimea they study the Ukrainian language with a tutor or online courses. It is also quite difficult to study profile subjects in Ukrainian.

In April 2017, the UN International Court of Justice in the case "Ukraine v. Russian Federation" adopted temporary measures in which, among other things, it obliged the Russian Federation to provide Ukrainians in Crimea with access to education in the Ukrainian language. But for four years now, Russia has been ignoring an order from the UN's chief judicial body.

Prohibition of the use of the native language, despite its formal official status, is a classic example of xenophobia. This is a typical totalitarian practice that reflects the government's desire to control people's words and thoughts. As is often the case with Russia, this policy is hidden in the democratic rhetoric of "equality" and "interethnic friendship"!

Therefore, please support the resolution!

Vote: The situation of Crimean Tatars

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now we are going to vote.

We have a draft resolution. The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination has presented this resolution to which 11 amendments have been presented.

I understand that the chair of the Committee wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendments 2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 4, 5 and 1 to the draft, which were unanimously agreed or approved by the Committee, should be declared as agreed by the Assembly.

Is that the case Ms Petra BAYR?

Yes, that is the case.

Is there anybody who wants to object to that?

I don't see.

There is no objection

Therefore, I declare Amendments 2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 4, 5, and 1 to the draft resolution to be agreed. There is no objection.

Now the rest of the amendments will be taken individually.

I call Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK to support Amendment No. 6.

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE): President, we withdraw this amendment.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Withdraw.

Thank you very much.

Withdraw, that means nobody can take it over.

I need to ask.

The Committee. What is the opinion about the withdrawal of this amendment?

Does someone else wish to pick up the withdrawn amendment?

No. I don't see so.

That means that we don't need to have an opinion on it.

I come to Amendment No. 8. I call Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK to support Amendment No. 8.

You have one minute.

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE): Thank you, Madam President.

This amendment inserts the following words in the draft resolution Paragraph 6, first sentence: "and freedom of thought, conscience and religion".

This amendment is aimed at reinforcing individual religious rights of Crimean Tatars, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Does anybody want to speak against this amendment?

No.

What is the opinion of the Committee on this amendment?

Ms Petra BAYR (Austria, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination):

The Committee was in favour by a small majority.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Then we have to put this amendment to the vote.

Members present should vote here in the hemicycle. Members who are somewhere else should vote using the remote voting system.

The vote is open now.

I think I can close the vote now.

I close the vote and I look at the results.

Results: 58 in favour, 1 against, and 10 abstentions.

Thank you very much.

And now Amendment No. 9. Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, you have the floor to support.

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE): Thank you, Madam President.

This amendment is aiming to underline the unlawful ban of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis and to reinforce the individual religious rights of Crimean Tatars.

The political motivated prosecutions are ongoing, as many speakers today said. On June 1st 2021 one of the Mejlis leaders, Refat Chubarov, was sentenced to 6 years of imprisonment. We discussed this amendment during the committee and the rapporteur suggested an oral sub-amendment.

I would like to say that we also support this oral sub-amendment.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): I give the floor now to the rapporteur for the oral sub-amendment.

Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR (Iceland, SOC, Rapporteur): The oral sub-amendment.

Apologies, Madam President. I am just looking for it.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): I can read it for you if you want.

"The systematic violation of the Crimean Tatars rights especially freedom of assembly and association, freedom of expression and freedom of thought, conscience and religion." With the following words "calls on the Russian Federation to implement immediately the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice on the 19th of April 2017."

In my opinion this sub-amendment meets the criteria of rule 34.7 and 67.4.

Is there an objection to the oral sub-amendment being debated? I don't see one.

If there is no objection, then we ask Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR to support her oral sub-amendment.

You have 1 minute.

Ms Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR (Iceland, SOC, Rapporteur): Thank you, Madam President.

It clarifies the text. It contains the same language, it's just a more precise way of saying it. So it is in reconciliation and it is just to be a bit more clear and to the point than the original amendment. Nothing more than that.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Does anyone want to speak against? I don't see that.

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK already said that she is in agreement.

The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination is, of course, in favour of the amendment.

I will now put sub-Amendment No. 1 to the vote.

I open the vote.

I close the vote.

The result of the vote is:

72 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstentions.

Thank you very much.

Now we have to put to the vote the original sub-amendments.

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK.

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE): We think that the amendments should be supported with the sub-amendment of the Rapporteur.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): I will now put to the vote which one?

Good advice.

That means that we have to consider now the main amendment as amended.

Does anybody wish to speak against it?

No.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Ms Petra BAYR (Austria, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination): The committee was unanimously in favour of both of the sub-amendment and the amendment.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Okay.

Then I have to put it on the vote.

I declare the vote now open.

Close the vote now.

The result is coming.

The results:

73 in favour, 0 against, 2 abstentions.

Thank you very much.

I now come to the adoption of the draft resolution which is amended.

I put it to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote

The results will be displayed.

73 in favour, 17 against, 2 abstentions.

That means that with a large majority the report, the resolution, is accepted.

Congratulations to the rapporteur and also to the Committee. Thanks a lot.

Okay, then we come to an end. That means that I have to announce that the Assembly will hold its next public sitting tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock with the agenda that was approved on Monday morning.

I would like to adjourn the sitting now and wish you a very nice evening.

Thanks a lot.

Requests for an explanation of vote

Mr Yury OLEINIKOV (Russian Federation, NR): For the record, I would like to mention that during the vote on the draft resolution on *Human rights violations committed against Crimean Tatars in Crimea*, my intention was to vote against, and that I abstained by mistake.