



Provisional edition

Thursday 27 January 2022, afternoon

Official report of debates

Opening of the sitting No. 8

Event on the occasion of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust

Opening address by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

We gather today, both online and here in our chamber to honour the victims of the Holocaust and pay our respect to the Jews, the Roma and travellers, people with disabilities, homosexuals and all other people whose lives were taken away so brutally during the darkest period of our European history.

I should like to thank, from the outset, the French authorities, with whom we have organised today's event. Our remembrance ceremony today is about keeping and passing on the memory to future generations as we got our memory from the generations before us. This is critical and essential.

This is why history teaching and education – passing on the memory – is so important and this is why our next generations of Europeans need to get the chance to know not only what happened but how it happened and why it happened in order to let it not happen again. As our Assembly argued in the 2016 Resolution on fighting antisemitism in Europe: "education must emphasise the link between the current instances of hate and intolerance and the Holocaust". Especially in times of rising hate crimes, future generations must be able to call out and challenge wrong when they see it.

I would like to pay tribute here to the outstanding work of the Council of Europe's intergovernmental programme on passing on the remembrance of the Holocaust and prevention of crimes against humanity for more than 20 years now. I also wish to support the work of our Assembly's No Hate Parliamentary Alliance for countering racism and intolerance, including antisemitism.

And, of course, I very much welcome the new Observatory on History Teaching in Europe, an initiative by the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

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.

Dear ladies and gentlemen, before we get to hear from our invited speakers, I would like to invite you to watch a short video showing extracts of the speech of Ms Simone Veil, former President of the European Parliament and President of the Foundation for the Memory of the Holocaust. Ms Simone Veil pronounced this speech 20 years ago in this hemicycle. Her words of then are more timely than ever.

Projection of a video with excerpts from the speech of Simone Veil – Honorary President of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah, former President of the European Parliament – delivered in the hemicycle of the Palais de l'Europe in October 2002, on the occasion of a seminar of the Ministers of Education of Council of Europe member States on teaching about the Holocaust

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to give the floor to Ms Eva CLARKE from the Holocaust Educational Trust.

Ms Eva CLARKE is a survivor from the concentration camps and we are more than honoured she could join us remotely today.

Madam CLARKE, the floor is yours.

Ms Eva Clarke (Holocaust Educational Trust, survivor of the Shoah): Thank you.

Good afternoon.

It is an honour for me to have been invited by the Council of Europe to speak at this year's Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration.

My mother Anka Bergman would be proud to know her wartime experiences continue to be remembered nationally and internationally.

Yes I'm a survivor of the Shoah, but only just, as I was born in April of 1945 in the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria.

My father, Bernd Nathan, was Jewish and came from Hamburg. He arrived in Prague in 1933 thinking that was far enough to be safe. It wasn't, but if he hadn't have done so, he wouldn't have met my Czech mother and I would not be speaking to you today.

They married on the 15 May 1940, already under Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia.

In December 1941 my father was sent to the Theresienstadt Terezín ghetto and concentration camp in Czechoslovakia in one of the first transports from Prague. Anka was deported shortly thereafter.

Unknown to them, they would spend the next three years there, which was an unusually long period of time, and was due to the fact that they were both young, strong, and well able to work. My mother said luck had an awful lot to do with it.

But at the end of September of 1944, their luck ran out when my father was sent to Auschwitz, and incredibly, my mother actually volunteered to follow him the very next day. She had no idea where he'd been sent, and being the eternal optimist, she thought they would survive, but tragically, she never ever saw my father again. She discovered she had been shot dead on a death march near Auschwitz on 18 January 1945, and it was liberated by the Russian army on 27 January 1945, a week later.

That is why we commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day today.

When families first arrived in Terezin, the sexes were segregated. But nevertheless, in 1943 my mother discovered that she was actually pregnant. Although it was extremely dangerous, my parents managed to meet secretly and to hell with the consequences. But when the Nazis discovered my mother was pregnant, they made my parents sign a document saying that when the baby was born, he or she would have to be handed over to be killed. Except they didn't use the word kill, but the word euthanasia, which was totally unknown to my parents.

In the event, my brother Jiří, that's George, he was born in February of 1944. He was not taken away from my parents, but died from pneumonia two months later. His death meant my life and my mother's life. Because had Anka arrived in the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp holding my brother in her arms, she would have been sent straight to the gas chambers. But because she arrived there not holding my brother, and although she was pregnant again, this time with me, nobody knew. She knew, but nobody else did, and it didn't show as it was very very early on.

So again, luck was with her. Not least, when Dr Mengele asked, "*bist du schwanger, fesche Frau?*" Are you pregnant, pretty woman?

Being still strong enough for work, Anka was sent out of Auschwitz to a slave labour camp and armaments factory in Freiburg near Dresden, in Germany. She was to remain there from October 1944 to the beginning of April of 1945.

Discovery of her pregnancy could have been very dangerous, as she might well have been sent back to Auschwitz. However, the factory was evacuated at the beginning of April. This time about 2 000 prisoners were not crammed into cattle trucks, but into filthy open coal wagons.

My mother was on this nightmare of a journey for 17 days with no food and hardly any water. The train eventually arrived in Mathausen on the banks of the Danube.

My mother always maintained the shock of seeing the name at the station provoked the onset of her labour. I was born on a cart between the station and the camp.

There are three reasons why we survived. The first is a very chilling one.

On 28 April 1945, the Nazis had run out of gas for the gas chamber. Well, my birthday is the 29th.

So presumably, had the train arrived on the 26th or 27th, again, I wouldn't be here today.

The second indirect reason was because of Hitler's suicide on the 30th.

But the third and best reason we survived, is because on the 5th of May, the US Army liberated the camp. Anka weighed 35 kg and I weighed one and a half.

In the UK, the theme for this year's Holocaust Memorial Day is "one day".

Well, I hope you might agree that the day of my birth is bound to be my choice of a single day.

Three weeks later when my mother was strong enough to travel, we were repatriated to Prague. Anka always said that arriving there was the worst aspect of her three and a half years incarceration in camps, because previously, she'd never allowed herself to think about what probably had happened to all the rest of the family. Eventually, she discovered her parents, sister, nephew, my father and most of the extended family had been murdered in Auschwitz.

My mother always said she just had to get on with life, as she was the only person I had. In fact, she said I gave her a reason for living.

My mother, my stepfather Karl Bergman, and I, left Prague in February of 1948. My departure was provoked by the Communist *putsch*.

Although we arrived in the UK legally, we might have been refugees, asylum seekers or migrants.

Starting a new life together and creating a new family unit was how my parents coped with the tragedy that had befallen both their families. My parents were so grateful to have been given the possibility of starting a new life in the UK. My mother lived very happily in Cardiff for over 60 years before she came to live with us in Cambridge three years before her death in 2013, aged 96.

When giving my talks, I always like to stress the reasons for doing so, the most important of which is, in my opinion, to try to counteract racism and prejudice. Any form of racism and prejudice.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam CLARKE, for your very moving and yet so powerful testimony.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are now going to watch a video message from the President of the French Republic, Mr Emmanuel Macron, who wanted to contribute to our event. As you know, it was under the impetus of the French presidency of the Committee of Ministers that the Observatory for History Teaching in Europe was created.

Mister Macron.

Mr Emmanuel MACRON (President of the French Republic): *(Recorded video message)*

On this international day of remembrance of the victims of the Shoah, you have chosen to quote the words of Simone Veil, who embodies the destiny of Europe: through the tragedy she experienced in her flesh, through the battles she fought with determination, through the unshakeable faith she carried for the reconciliation of peoples.

Her memory obliges us all, as does the tireless commitment of the men and women who are working to make Europe a space free of all hatred. This is why I wish to pay tribute to Eva Clarke, whom you have just heard, and to Liliana Segre, and to thank them for their presence today at this ceremony.

Indeed, we have a responsibility to history, but also to the future: to ensure that memory is passed on. It is this memory that allows us to fight with strength against anti-Semitism and for the universal values of human rights.

We owe this work of remembrance and humanism to the younger generations in particular: so that the memory of the Shoah is never forgotten, so that the atrocity of our history is never repeated, so that no young European can ignore it. To ignore it is to take the risk of allowing the worst speeches to reappear, to allow the bad winds to return.

All of this is achieved through concrete projects, such as that of Georges MAYER and his association "Convoy 77", during which students and teachers worked in seven European countries, including France, to keep alive the memory of deportees and their families. I would like to thank them, the teachers and the young people for their commitment.

At a time when France has taken over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, I would like to recall our resolutely universalist commitments. Over the next few weeks, we will strive to fight against all forms of discrimination and to reaffirm the specificity of anti-Semitism. In order to adopt the Council's conclusions on the fight against racism and anti-Semitism, we will implement all possible initiatives so that in March we can achieve concrete results. We will also continue to actively support the European strategy.

We are proud to lead this fight at the level of the European Union, in co-operation with the Council of Europe, which plays an essential role in the defense of these values. In this regard, I would like to salute the determination of the Secretary General, Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ, as well as the commitment of all parliamentarians. For this fight is a fight that yields nothing to the uniqueness of the Shoah.

It is a fight that yields nothing to recall the unforgivable, the unforgivable and the imprescriptible of the Shoah, but which, through transmission, reminds us that this unforgivable and imprescriptible teaches us even more humanity and obliges us for the future. It is not only valid for the past: it has led us to know, as Europeans, how to live together again. It must lead us to have, today, the same requirement with regard to all these reappearing discourses, all these transformations of History, these revisions of our European History and of the world History.

This is why, perhaps even more than yesterday, your commitment is so essential and your work so existential for our Europe.

I thank you for this. Good luck to all of you, and you know that we are at your side.

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

Ladies and gentlemen,

I now have the honor and pleasure of giving the floor to Mr Jean-Michel BLANQUER, Minister of National Education, Youth and Sports of France, co-organiser of this event.

Mister Minister, please.

Mr Jean-Michel Blanquer (French Minister of National Education, Youth and Sports): Thank you Mr President.

Madam Secretary General, Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ,

Mr President of the Parliamentary Assembly,

Commissioner, Ms Mariya Gabriel,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This 27 January is an important date: we are all aware of this.

Allow me to begin by paying tribute to Raphaël Esrail, who was the President of the Union of Auschwitz Deportees, who was a tireless transmitter of memories to the younger generations, whom I knew well and whom I saw with kindness, generosity, passing on the memory of the Shoah in schools.

He has just left us a few days ago and we thought of him, as well as of all those who work – still alive, even if obviously too few in number – to go into our schools, our colleges, our high schools, our universities, to bear witness and pass on memories.

Rest assured that schools – in the broadest sense of the term – and teachers are there to take up this torch and to pass on the memory of the Shoah and, with it, the meaning of history, the meaning of humanity, as the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, has just said. He has just reminded us in the message you have just heard: there can be no future for European democracies if they do not know how to transmit to their future citizens the values on which they are founded.

The Shoah was the ultimate negation of these values. The historical facts must always be remembered, and I know that my colleagues will not contradict me, because it is no coincidence that the initiative to establish an international day in memory of the victims of the Shoah was taken by the ministers of education. Because it is through the question of education that we are particularly sensitive to the issues at stake.

For each nation, education is at the heart of the transmission process; for Europe and for humanity, it is also at the heart of what makes us human.

As Ministers of Education, we have duties. With regard to the Shoah, we have first of all the duty to organise the transmission of its history in connection with research; to maintain the memory of the victims and to allow students to learn fully from the light that this genocide sheds on our actions and our commitments.

In doing so, we are not only talking about the past: we are also talking about the present and the future. The current context is marked, unfortunately, by a threat to the values on which our European societies are based. Teaching the history of the Shoah in this context, teaching it to young Europeans, is not a negotiable option. My ministry, for example, has chosen to include this teaching in each of the three main stages of a student's education in France: primary school, middle school and high school.

I will never stop repeating: nothing is more damaging to the development of a student's thinking, and therefore to his or her critical sense, free will, methodical thinking and intellectual vigilance, than not giving them historical reference points. I am convinced that the question of history teaching is a central issue for our educational systems and our democratic societies. The cooperation of our educational systems on this subject deserves to be strengthened to make our collective action more collective.

From this point of view, a tool such as the Observatory of History Teaching in Europe offers rich opportunities for comparison and perspective; and this is obviously the case for the issues of transmission of the history of the Shoah.

I would like to thank the entire Council of Europe, starting with you, Madam Secretary General, and you, ladies and gentlemen of the Parliament, for your valuable commitment to a subject as crucial as history teaching in Europe. I would like to encourage my fellow ministers to join the Observatory project for the benefit of all and, first and foremost, for the benefit of our children, the future citizens of Europe.

Finally, while the school is the foundation of history learning, it is undeniable that its action gains in quality and scope when it is part of structuring partnerships and when it builds on this with civil society on memorial subjects. The school of European history that the President of the Republic has called for fully pursues this objective.

Unfortunately, anti-Semitism sometimes progresses in certain parts of the world and, in these same places, the teaching of history is often threatened by ideologues who want to twist the truth of the facts in order to better establish ideological biases, thought patterns and, sometimes, negationism. We can never accept this.

We will always continue to promote the transmission of history, which is an eminently European value and which presupposes discussion, debate and co-operation, particularly co-operation between historians, because historical research is also a universal reference.

Also, behind the speeches and sometimes behind the pretences, there are realities that are irreducible. "Convoy 77": these 1 314 French and foreign Jews, including 300 children, who were sent to the death camps. We will never forget their sacrifice and I am pleased that through this project, which we will discuss in a moment, the students of France are helping to honour their memory and preserve their legacy.

Allow me to congratulate all those actors who, in Europe, support the school's mission with projects of this type, designed to leave a lasting impression on the consciousness of our students, because it refers, quite simply, to realities that unfortunately existed. This choice is very important and the action that your association is carrying out, dear Georges MAYER, is an illustration of this today.

I hope that this truly European project based "Convoy 77" can, perhaps with the support of the Franco-German Office for Youth – which I thank for its support in the organisation of these exchanges – continue to awaken young Europeans to the work of remembrance and commitment, today in France but tomorrow in Germany, Austria, Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Switzerland and, in any case, in Europe and throughout the world. This initiative is part of what we must encourage.

Let us make no mistake: when anti-Semitism awakens, anti-humanism comes with it. And let us make no mistake: when we do not teach history, we do not prepare for the future. It is at the crossroads of these two issues that we have to discuss today. We will fight mercilessly against anti-Semitism and we will fight mercilessly for memory and for history.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I would like to thank you, Mister Minister, and I would also like to greet your colleague from Austria, Ms Claudia Plakolm, State Secretary for Youth, as well as Mr Martial Courtet for Switzerland, Minister of Education, Culture and Sports of the Republic and Canton of Jura, who are doing us the honor of being here today.

The floor is now given to Mr Georges MAYER, who is the president of the association "Les familles et amis des déportés du Convoi 77" and who will explain to us what the European project "Convoy 77" consists of, in which 11 delegations of students from Germany, Austria, Denmark, France, Lithuania, Poland, and Switzerland have actively participated.

I would like to warmly welcome all the students and their teachers and thank them for participating in this project.

Mister MAYER, you have the floor.

Mr George Mayer (President of the Association "Families and friends of the deportees of Convoy 77"): Mister President, Ministers, Madam Secretary General, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great emotion that I take the floor today, in this Chamber. Allow me to have a special thought for my father, Alexandre Mayer, who, today, 77 years ago, was liberated from the hell of Auschwitz.

To transmit the history of the Shoah in a different way to teenagers born in the 21st century is the objective of the European project "Convoy 77". What does it involve?

We propose to teenagers living today in the places of birth or residence of the deportees of Convoy 77, to carry out a research project in order to reconstruct the personal history of a deportee who was born or lived where they live today.

Under the guidance of their teachers, the students carry out a real historical research project during a whole school year. They analyse and interpret archive documents, consult the press of the time, visit places where deportees lived and places of remembrance, interview witnesses, etc., and then write a biography that will be published on the website of our association, in French, English, German, and sometimes in other languages.

In the course of their work, they deal not only with the tragic fate of the victims, but also with the role of the executioners, as well as with the attitude of the passive witnesses and the resistance fighters.

Nearly 10 000 teenagers have already participated or are currently participating in our project in 19 countries in Europe and the Mediterranean basin. Among the hundreds of biographies already produced, 11 high quality projects from 7 different countries are being honored today in the Council of Europe.

Dear students, I would like to address you now: you should be here with us today. Unfortunately, the pandemic that is still raging in all our countries has put a stop to this meeting. I know that you are watching us and I wish, on behalf of all of us, to congratulate you on the quality and originality of your work.

Mister. President, Ministers, Members of Parliament, the students and teachers that we are going to hear now have demonstrated that it is possible to transmit the history of the Shoah in a different way in the 21st century.

They are living proof of the will to continue to transmit the memory and hope of our generation.

I thank you all.

Projection of the video presenting the European project “Convoy 77”

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Ladies and gentlemen, now it is my pleasure to welcome the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ. We look forward to hearing from the Secretary General about accounts of your work, in particular on education and history teaching and on the remembrance of the Holocaust.

Madam Secretary General, you have the floor.

Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ (Secretary General of the Council of Europe): President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer, Minister Patrizio Bianchi, Madam Claudia Plakolm, President of the Association "Families and friends of the deportees of Convoy 77", dear Ms CLARKE, distinguished parliamentarians, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

It is always difficult to find the right words with which to talk about the Holocaust, to convey the horror of what took place and what this implies about humankind. Certainly, nothing that I say today can have the impact, the poignancy, the wisdom of the remarks that we have heard from Ms Eva CLARKE and the extraordinary Ms Simone Veil and what we will hear shortly in the message from Senator SEGRE.

I have not been persecuted. I have not been detained and I have not seen death or feared for my life as they have. Their stories and their spirits are humbling. What I do share with them – what I have learned from them and others – is the importance of keeping the memory alive, not just out of respect for the victims and survivors of the Shoah, as important as that is, but also because it is by remembering what happened and understanding why it happened that we can equip ourselves and our societies to give meaning to the statement "never again".

The Council of Europe was founded on that sentiment. When Ms Veil stood here in this hemicycle 20 years ago, she said clearly, as we heard, that we are in charge of the education of Europe's younger generations, that in addressing how this period of history should be taught – the age of lead, ashes and tears – we have accepted an important but difficult task on this, as so much she is right.

But we have accepted it and our commitment remains absolute. With the passing of the years, historical awareness of the Shoah is waning. Today's young Europeans know less about it than their parents and grandparents, and given the changes that are happening around us this is especially dangerous. Our politics is now deeply polarised with the rise of populism and extreme nationalism in parts of Europe, creating the conditions in which the distortion and misuse of history can thrive.

Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ (Secretary General of the Council of Europe): It is important today to recognise and teach the facts of European history, striving for consensus among countries and avoiding, as far as possible, political instrumentalisation, so that the young people of our continent acquire the knowledge, skills and critical thinking skills necessary to understand their common past, including its darkest moments.

That is why we have re-invigorated our long-standing intergovernmental program for history education.

Our Observatory on History Teaching in Europe is also based on this philosophy: it will facilitate the sharing of good practices and experiences between member States and strengthen co-operation in history teaching, thanks to regular thematic reports that will provide an impartial analysis and perception that can improve the validity and quality of what young people learn.

The "Convoy 77" project is also part of this spirit, presenting the history of the last great deportation convoy of French Jews to Auschwitz and, more generally, that of the Shoah as a whole. This contribution to research and teaching is also a way of keeping the memory alive.

Mister Minister, I would like to pay tribute to the French government, which, through the Observatory and the "Convoy 77" project, is showing its willingness to work for education and for the truth.

This commitment is vital for our future, just as it is vital to ensure that national education systems provide young people with the skills they will need to defend democratic culture itself.

The Council of Europe, together with its member States, is working towards this goal.

This work, in addition to our work on ethics in education, aims to give young people a solid understanding of democracy and faith in its value, encouraging them to be active citizens rather than casual spectators, recognising the virtue of tolerance and inclusion, and the importance of fighting discrimination in all its forms, including anti-Semitism.

What happened in Europe 80 years ago is still unbearable. It is the sheer enormity of this abomination that must compel us to remember it and to take concrete action to prevent its recurrence, on any scale or level.

This is our duty, and we are determined to do it. This will not change.

Thank you for your time.

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

I now give the floor to the Italian Minister of Education, Mr Patrizio BIANCHI, who represents the Italian presidency of the Committee of Ministers and who will address our Assembly online.

Minister, you have the floor.

Mr Patrizio Bianchi (Italian Minister of Education): Thank you so much.

Thanks to all of you.

Let me thank in particular Mr Rik DAEMS, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for hosting us today. Let me say that I'm particularly pleased to participate in the 17th Italian Presidency in the Council of Europe, together with Emmanuel Macron and my dear colleague Jean-Michel Blanquer, who are currently holding the Presidency of the European Union.

Let me apologise to all of you for not being able to be there in Strasbourg today. This morning I had to chair the ceremony, in Italy, for the national event of remembrance of the Holocaust. I had to do it, through our president. We held it in the Ministry of Education today, because they decided this year it was extremely important to connect this day, 27 January, the Day of Remembrance, and the role of education.

It is very important to start this from the school. It is very important to remember that the place where we have to develop new culture, new knowledge, a new sense of participation to the Shoah memory is in school, at all levels.

We consider that the remembrance of the Shoah is the founding fundamental part of the sense of Europe, the sense of the unified Europe. The integration of Europe, the unification of Europe, is the real response, the real answer, to all who attempt to deny the memory of the Shoah or to relaunch any sort of attempt to recreate the condition to generate new antisemitism.

The concrete refusal of any new attempt at antisemitism, the capacity to refuse any attempt to justify violence, and the capacity to refuse any attempt to justify crimes against humanity are based on good education.

In Italy we decided to introduce, from the very beginning, the study of history of the last century. We decided to pay specific attention to the Holocaust to remember that the Holocaust was part of a debt with the history of Europe, to be considered and not left behind. Behind. Behind us, it was to be decided after the War, to start a new pathway for the unification of Europe.

Europe. Democracy. The basic attention to all these new rights. The idea that democracy is strictly connected with the sense of solidarity is the way that we have to teach our students, our pupils. It is the sense that we are learning from lessons of the history.

The Holocaust is speaking to us also today. I feel that Europe has to be a place of peace. Peace not just in Europe, but peace in the world. We have too many places where they are not in the condition of creating peace. For this reason, we believe that in all countries it is necessary to establish a commission for effective co-operation.

I agree with my colleague Blanquer that we have to work more together about that. Work together about teaching history, teaching contemporary history, teaching the history of the Shoah, teaching the aim of creating the conditions for a better peace.

In this sense, the Italian Parliament, in line with the Recommendation of the Council of Europe, and the possibility, the recent recommendation of the European Union, we decided in January 2020 to support the initiatives combatting widespread messages of hatred and antisemitism.

The Council of Ministers appointed Professor Santorini as the National Co-ordinator for the fight against antisemitism. In the same meeting, the Council of Ministers welcomed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.

In this sense, I feel that we have a lot of work to do together, but having it clear in mind that we have to start from education. We start from school. In this sense, in September 2021 the national strategy on combatting antisemitism was presented to the government and to the parliament. Now, all the Italian institutions and all the Italian schools are called to implement the recommendations in line with the IHRA working definition of antisemitism.

On that basis, the Ministry of Education has recently adopted the guidelines to combat antisemitism in teaching materials which will be used in schools, in all the schools, and in teacher training. With the guidelines we want to sensitise the conscience of young people, and through them, of the entire society, in order to spread the values that the Shoah advises us not to forget: peace, equality for human beings, respect for human dignity, and the values of civil society.

In times of economic and social crisis, such as the one caused by the emergence of Covid-19, there is a feeling of uncertainty among the population that can be the background for discriminatory, xenophobic behaviours in search of scapegoats. This could advance and help us to prevent the control of the onset of similar behaviours.

I'm convinced that in strengthening our action we need these historical events to combat antisemitism and widespread racism and discrimination while combining the rational and emotional dimensions. Just in this way, we can reach wider groups. This time we turn our gaze not only towards the past, but also the future because times of discrimination and hatred are not confined within isolated moments of history. They are, unfortunately, related to human behaviour also today.

To overcome hatred and oppression [segment with poor audio quality] a single political commitment we must unite our efforts to make alliances and promote dialogue. This is Italy's the message. This is the message suffered in the Holocaust and from all the different impacts of the new emerging risk of new antisemitism.

I feel that we have to work more together to develop our education systems more and more. We have to educate our people to be ready for more political dialogue. After Covid-19 we have to train our people to have more hope for the future. More hope for the future is possible if they speak together, if they are able to share the world to have dialogue.

Dialogue means not only speaking, but to also listening and being able to understand other people and consider that equality is crucial now. The basic concept for today is that everyone has to be able to express their own individual capacities.

Thank you so much.

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

Ladies and gentlemen, we will now hear the testimony of Ms Liliana Segre, Italian senator for life and a survivor of the Holocaust.

As the health of Ms Segre could not make it possible for her to intervene online, we will hear her thoughts and message interpreted from Italian.

Ms Liliana Segre (Italian Senator for life, survivor of the Shoah): Warm greetings to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly and through him to all members of the Parliamentary Assembly.

It is an honor for me to accept the invitation to commemorate Ms Simone Veil, in particular the speech that she gave on The Holocaust in October 2002

A person of great public, political and moral importance, Ms Simone Veil was a protagonist in the history of the 20th century, but of utmost importance for European political and civil history.

I have always been struck by how similar our backgrounds were.

Ms Simone Veil came from a secular Jewish family, just like mine, perfectly integrated in the French society of the early decades of the twentieth century. She too had little familiarity with Jewish customs, confirming that the racial persecution was biological in nature and indiscriminately affected even communities with the highest levels of integration in their countries of residence.

In France there were racist laws, exactly like the Italian ones.

These laws were enacted by Mussolini in 1938. In France they were enacted in 1940 by the regime of Pétain, collaborator with the Nazis. Significantly, even in France, just like in Italy, the danger was initially underestimated, even within the Jewish community.

My family refused to leave for the United States because they were convinced that what happened in Germany with Hitler would never happen in Italy. But also Ms Simone Veil reminds us in her autobiography that when Mr Raymond Aron told his mother about the violence going on in Germany, the book burning, for instance, no-one would believe him.

As you can see the specularity between the two situations is practically perfect, demonstrating that no-one is ever prepared for the worst, least of all the systematic extermination of a part of the human race.

We must take into account this fact: we never think that the worst can happen and when the worst happens we are unprepared.

A danger that is still looming today. Incredulity and indifference are always present in the human soul and make too many people insensitive to the dangers of racism, anti-Semitism, violence, and predispose to the spread of irrational fears towards others or foreigners.

The parallels between my story and Simone's are striking.

She, too, was expelled from school, just like me. She, too, had to study privately. She, too, encountered little solidarity and much indifference on the part of her classmates, friends and acquaintances.

It was something that she also found, above all, at the time of her arrest in March 1944, and then the month after, when she was deported on a wagon to Auschwitz.

She arrived when she was 16, I was 13. She was imprisoned along with her mother and a sister and kept asking herself in anguish "what became of my father and brother?" We never knew.

This is exactly my story. We were separated from the mob of the so-called Judenrampe, from my father. We never saw each other again. Only many years later, when I was already an adult, almost old, that I found the courage to try to investigate the date of his death.

Of course then Ms Simone Veil also had her number tattooed on her arm, it was 78651; mine is 75190. Normal, since I had arrived in February 1944 and she in April.

She, too, managed to survive, only because good at her job, the slave labor which we were required to do in munitions factories.

In January 1945, the easternmost camps were abandoned under pressure from advancing Soviet forces.

But, the nightmare was far from over. The Germans forced then forced us, the surviving deportees, into the so-called "Death Marches". Ms Simone Veil was forced to move to the Bergen-Belsen camp.

In a Germany now on the brink of catastrophe everything was chaos, epidemics and hunger, death.

After several stops and endless horrors, I reached in early April a small camp in the north of Germany, the Malchow camp, which was liberated in May.

Ms Simone Veil return home, like that of all the survivors, was also traumatic. She did not want to talk, the others did not want to listen, too many wanted to forget. And this, too, brought us together.

I have often said that one never gets out of Auschwitz, not even decades later. Simone also writes that "the Shoah is omnipresent, nothing can be erased".

The trains, the work, the imprisonment, the barracks, the cold, the lack of sleep, the hunger, the humiliation, the despondency, the beatings, the screams: nothing can or should be forgotten.

This is why memory is important, because it allows us to understand what our Europe could have become: a land of horror, death, destruction, war. If we want a better future, we must never forget this.

Ms Simone Veil, subsequently had a luminous political and juridical career. Several times minister, she was also President of the European Parliament and member of the French Constitutional Council.

But in the various positions she held, she always held high the admonition: never forget, always cultivate memory, history and justice.

It was only many decades after 1945 that I found the courage to tell the story, but for about thirty years since then, I have not stopped. Precisely because I felt a pressing need: only those who witnessed those horrors can attempt to explain the unspeakable.

When we will no longer be here, it will be up to the schools, the culture, the information: but we will never be able to give up the words and images of the direct protagonists.

Thanks again, a warm greeting to you all.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Senator SEGRE, for telling again your story to us.

Now I turn to the leaders of the political groups in our Assembly. And the first I would like to give the floor to is Mr Frank SCHWABE on behalf of the Socialist, Democrats and Greens group.

You have the floor.

Mr Frank SCHWABE (Germany, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): Mister President,

Dear Holocaust Survivors,

Ladies and Gentlemen

This morning the Bundestag, as we are here now, the German Bundestag, commemorated the Holocaust, as it does every year by now, in the country that succeeds the country that murdered 6 million Jews.

Among others, the President of the Knesset, Mickey Levy, spoke today. "Never again", "never again", those were his words as a legacy to today. He tearfully recited an excerpt from the Kaddish prayer there, commemorating the dead of the Shoah. It was an unbelievably moving moment, which I was also able to follow from Strasbourg.

We Germans - and I am speaking here as the chairman of the parliamentary group, but of course also as a German - must be incredibly grateful that we have found our place again in the international community, and that together with you, with all of us, we are commemorating the most horrific crime of humanity. This genocide, which was finally planned in all its cruelty with a perfidious planning at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin 80 years ago, fell victim not only to Jews but also to Sinti and Roma, forced laborers, people with disabilities, the sick, homosexuals, politically disliked people, Jehovah's Witnesses, young people who did not conform to the norm of the time, and many other groups.

The 95-year-old Polish woman Anna Szalańska, prisoner number 47648 - and I saw this on television this morning, you can't understand it, she still has tattooed on her forearm; the four, the seven, the six, the two, the eight, that is prisoner 47648 in the concentration camp in Auschwitz - described on German television this morning what inconceivable normality, basically, people were murdered like in a factory.

She told of how, at Christmas, "Silent Night, Holy Night" suddenly rang out from all the loudspeakers, while at the same time smoke was rising from the crematorium. People were burned there. In Auschwitz alone, more than a million people were bestially murdered, the vast majority of them Jews. Today we stand before this crime inconceivably, incredulous as to how such a thing could happen. It happened, and consequently it can happen again, said Primo Levi in 1986, who, like many others, dedicated his entire life to enlightenment,

admonition, and reconciliation. I bow with humility and respect to the Holocaust survivors Inge Auerbacher, who spoke today in the German Bundestag, then of course to Simone Veil, Eva Clarke, and Liliana Segre, representative of all others who have experienced so badly, and so important for us today.

The Holocaust is without comparison. Some who make such comparisons today, even in the context of critical Corona debates, have understood nothing, nothing at all. Such comparisons are a deep insult to the murdered, as well as to the survivors of the Holocaust. What we can do, however, is learn. We must learn. The commemoration of the Holocaust is a crying reminder and a cautionary warning at the same time. This organisation, all of us, the 47 member States, must never forget that we are talking about human beings. Every human being has his or her own dignity. We too often talk - sometimes technocratically, sometimes derogatorily - about migrants, about members of the LGBTI community, about minorities, about soldiers, about prisoners of war, about opponents - sometimes depriving them of some of their dignity by the very language. They are people. They are all people. To speak again with Inge Auerbacher from the German Bundestag this morning: "We are all born as brothers and sisters. My dearest wish is the reconciliation of all people."

Bertolt Brecht said one thing: "The womb is still fertile from whence this crawled." So let us remain vigilant, compassionate and free. This organisation, the Council of Europe is the great answer to worst times - let us cherish this organisation and its values, and defend them every day anew. We owe it to the dead and the survivors of the Holocaust.

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

Now I give the floor to Mr Aleksander POCIEJ on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party.

You have the floor, Aleksander.

Mr Aleksander POCIEJ (Poland, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Mr President,

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Madam Secretary General,

Dear colleagues,

It is with great emotion that I am participating today, as President of the EPP/CD Group, in this International Day of Commemoration for the victims of the Holocaust.

I have listened with great respect and emotion to the messages and testimonies of the survivors of the Shoah, including Simone Veil, a personality with an exceptional career.

I bow to the memory of the millions of victims of Nazi barbarism in the Jewish community, such as Henryk Goldszmit in Poland, better known as Janusz Korczak, who chose to die, along with the orphaned children he cared for in the Warsaw Ghetto, and who died in the concentration camps in 1942.

The memory of this unparalleled crime – I am talking about the Holocaust – this genocide, must be absolutely preserved, as a conscience raised to the challenges of today's world. We must never, never forget this.

As the last survivors of the genocide gradually disappear, we also have a duty to pass on the memory of the Holocaust to future generations. This day also has a special meaning for me as a Pole.

I always remember the genocide of the Polish Jewish community, one of the largest in Europe, in the Nazi extermination camps and the heroic uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943.

One of my compatriots, Jan Karski, a man with an extraordinary destiny, was one of the first to alert world public opinion to the crimes committed by German troops in Poland and elsewhere in Europe. He was not heard, to his great misfortune.

I would also like to remind you that Poland has the highest number of "Righteous Among the Nations", 6 352 to be exact, whose names are inscribed at the Yad Vashem Memorial in Jerusalem.

More than sixty years after the end of the Second World War, this history seems to have disappeared from the hearts of the younger generation. We are confronted, in Europe and throughout the world, with the rise of nationalism and populism. Worse, in the age of the Internet, certain communities – I am thinking of the Uyghurs in China – are victims of systematic persecution by the authorities, before our eyes and in the silence of the European community.

As parliamentarians, members of this Assembly, who have among us people like our colleague Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS, whose family almost totally perished during the genocide, we have the duty to defend and promote the ideals of democracy, peace and human rights.

As Jean Monnet reminded us: "To make Europe is to make peace".

This is our duty and our responsibility.

Thank you, Mr President.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister Aleksander POCIEJ.

I now give the floor to Mr Jacques MAIRE, for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

You have the floor, Mr Jacques MAIRE.

Mr Jacques MAIRE (France, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you dear President.

Madam Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ministers,

Dear colleagues,

The poignant testimonies of Eva Clarke and Liliana Segre, survivors of the horror of the Shoah, compel us. They force us to remember the systematic, indiscriminate and bloody horror that was the Holocaust.

This horror was the starting point from which our fathers built the Europe of Peace, that of the Council of Europe, in 1949. A wounded Europe, which did not want to relive such a nightmare, such a shipwreck. Our institution is the daughter of this war. It must regularly return to its origins and contribute to the transmission of history.

Simone Veil's voice still resounds today in our hemicycle when she said: "The era of witnesses is coming to an end, what effect will it have on the commemoration and transmission of the Shoah to the younger generations?" Thus, the mission of the survivors is accomplished, she says, they have testified; now we must transmit this collective memory.

This is how I think Mr. Mayer's testimony about "Convoy 77" makes sense. This last convoy left the town of Drancy – in France, my country, the land of freedom – in July 1944, accompanied by the French public services, in the direction of the Auschwitz extermination camp. He is the ultimate example of the primary barbarism, the useless barbarism, the meaningless barbarism that made thousands of men, women and children deported to the extermination camps while the war was on its way out.

Today, this calls for action. We must act. This is also the meaning of the vote this morning, for example, in Paris, in the French National Assembly, of a bill restituting 15 works of art looted from Jews during the war. We are in 2022, it took almost 70 years.

Even today, the sound of boots can be heard in Europe. Today, antisemitism is not dead and it is regularly on display. A recent survey indicated that about 15% of French people have antisemitic prejudices. That's a lot, you say; the same poll indicates higher figures in many European Union countries.

This feeling is expressed by the desecration of Jewish graves, of places of worship, the desecration of places of remembrance, such as, in my own department recently, Mont Valérien, a place of resistance to Nazism.

This sentiment manipulates crises, as it is currently manipulating conspiracy theory about the origin of the pandemic, when it equates the health pass with wearing a yellow star. It invites itself into electoral campaigns when it asserts, against a background of revisionism, for example, that Marshal Pétain was protecting French Jews from Nazism.

So yes, the fight against antisemitism is still relevant. Yes, the transmission of our history to future generations is essential.

Days of commemoration like today are essential to remind us of the horrors of which men are capable, of which we are capable.

On behalf of the ALDE group, I would like to honor the memory of all the victims of the Shoah. We will never forget.

I thank you for this.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Now I give the floor to Mr Hişyar ÖZSOY for the Group of the Unified European Left.

You have the floor, Hişyar.

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

Seventy-seven years ago today, shocked Soviet soldiers liberated the Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Until then, the Nazis had already massacred about six million Jews – a third of the world's Jewry – in an attempt to eliminate Jews from Europe, and also murdered millions of others on the basis of their ethnicity, disability, sexuality, or religious or political beliefs. To make this genocide possible, they persuaded people to think of these people as less than human.

Remembering is an important ethical duty because the Holocaust's victims were people that the Nazis wanted forgotten. Remembering also has a bigger purpose. Humankind is capable of being led into awful cruelty, but the great majority of people are essentially empathetic. We react to horrific events first with grief and then with a determination to learn from them so as to make the world a better place. Long before the designation of a special remembrance day, people reacted to this genocide by vowing "never again", "never again to anyone." Never again to the prejudices that destroy our capacity for empathy and make genocides possible.

This is a call that has been made across the world and made with sincerity, but as we make it again this year, we have to ask why this aim that we share seems always to elude us. Why are we seeing again a resurgence of the politics of antisemitism and the politics of hate-filled violence? Even more importantly, how can we end this?

First we need to understand how prejudices are culturally and politically produced: how they are used and exploited to fob some people off with a false sense of their group superiority, and in pursuit of the old trick of divide and rule. Historically, antisemitism was used again and again to encourage people to take their anger out on Jews rather than address the real causes of their immiseration. Today, we are witnessing a new generation of leaders who build their power not on addressing real needs but on turning people against each other. Our responses to racism and prejudice have to go beyond criticism of the words and actions of individual bigots. We have to investigate and address the historical and structural roots, institutional mechanisms, and cultural forces that underlie racism and make genocides possible.

Finally, in our struggles for justice against antisemitism and all kinds of racism, we need to always remember that the Holocaust is not an historical event that started and ended in the past. Rather, it is a still-lived experience in the present, "in the here and now", as anti-semitism continues in so many ugly forms, *inter alia*, Holocaust denialism, and with all kinds of effects and traumas on the collective psyche of the Jewish and European peoples and the humankind as a whole.

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

Now I give the floor to Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER on behalf of the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance.

I apologise, Ian, that I mixed up the list.

Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER (United Kingdom, EC/DA, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you very much.

I would like to start, if I may, just by reading a quote and it says this, "Thou shalt not be a victim. Thou shalt not be a perpetrator but above all, thou shalt not be a bystander". That is what the Holocaust really stands for and that is what this is about.

Eighty years ago, it was the first time in human history that people were killed on an industrial scale. Before that, there had been perpetrations of genocide – whatever they used to call it in Roman times – but it was the first time an idea from a group of people took to the route. And the warning signs were there for all of us to look at. The Kindertransport that came to England with children – displaced children – should have warned us all what could happen. Yet, in that time between the First World War and the Second World War when people were hopeful we missed all the signs.

And that is really one of the strongest problems that we have in the future, if we look now, the last time in my lifetime, 62 years. You look at Cambodia, look at Rwanda, look at the Balkans and other places. We could have maybe stopped some of them, not all of them, some of them.

What happened then is millions of people lost their lives again – genocide – but the Holocaust itself was unique because people decided there was a solution to a problem: took away – stripped away – intellectual rigour, stripped away morals, stripped away decency and took a line that was going to end in catastrophe for people. And I must admit my family are involved in it. As Mr Frank SCHWABE would know, my family are half-German and therefore I bear as much responsibility looking at it from the other side, as to what happened, and could my family have done something? I do not know. It is too long ago. But I think those history lessons, we have to keep learning. You do not rewrite a book, you watch it as you turn the page and that history keeps coming back. From the earliest days of Alexander the Great until now, all that has happened is that the problems have got bigger. The media's got quicker – we have Facebook, we have Twitter, we look at it – but those lessons we must never forget and the Holocaust, we have seen right around the world, is being celebrated today to make us never forget.

But I wonder this: if we went out now in Strasbourg and just asked people, "what do you know about the Holocaust?" Probably in Germany, it would be different, and in my country as well, I think you would get some very strange answers. And I am sorry about that because I think we should not allow this to come off the agenda. So often, we see people say, "Well, it was something to do in Europe or it was the Germans, or whatever." It is specific, as I have already said, to an ideal that was tyrannically warped to do one thing and one thing alone. And I suppose I get to that stage and when I am talking to you is to say: have we learned those lessons now? Is appeasement still a problem. We appeased in the 1930s. My God, how wrong were we? If we appeased now and we allow things to get out of our control – and I am not thinking of any particular – but that is where we have got to learn.

I mean I look at my notes and I see that – I wonder – whether Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States in 1944–1945 could have got to the camps quicker. They knew they existed but they did not know what to do. There was actually a plan to bomb Auschwitz. Was that the right thing to do? I do not know but what I do know is that when they got there, whichever country liberated whichever camp, the horror of what they found stuck in their minds and read the history of those Russians, those Brits, those Americans, those French that came to these camps and realised with horror, everything they had stood for to fight these wars, battles, suddenly came home to an emaciated body that had been gassed, shot, starved – however – killed. And that is that. That image that you see in these frightful films and the things we have heard today, Mr President, never must ever leave our mind.

And I wonder this – and I do not know the answer to it, it is a rhetorical question – when Churchill decided that we needed a home of democracy, law and order, was he thinking – when the Council of Europe was being thought about – about what happened in 1944–1945, well, 1941 onwards, was he thinking about that, when he set this up? I do not know but I bet it was in the back of his mind. He lived through that and we are losing these survivors now. They are ailed, they move on. But it is our legacy to remember on their behalf. To teach the children across the world what happens when you turn a blind eye or you appease or you do not stand up for what you believe in because that is when evil prevails: when good men and women turn their backs.

On behalf of my group, can I thank you all for listening? And to my Vice-President and to all of you and Mr Tiny KOX and thank you for calling me. I do say this: forget, we then suffer what happens in the future and that future will not change if we allow it not to change.

So I would urge you all colleagues, please, we stand together, we stand united against these horrors that we saw 80 years ago and the six million dead that were lying out in front of us.

Thank you very much indeed.

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

Ladies and gentlemen,

This ceremony in memory of the victims of the Holocaust is now coming to an end.

We will conclude our event for the musical performance performed by the violinist Gaspard Perrotte.

Mister Gaspard Perrotte will interpret "Wiegala", a song that was composed by Ilse Weber, who was deported from the concentration camp of Theresienstadt and then Auschwitz. While Ms Weber worked in the camp's children's hospital at night doing all she could for the patients without the help of medicine, she wrote many songs for the children to try to comfort them.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is one of them.

Ladies and gentlemen, this concludes our event.

Thank you very much for your participation and your attention.

Music performance – Wiegala, by Ilse Weber (1903-1944), composed in Theresienstadt concentration camp, played by Gaspard Perrotte, violinist

Debate: The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Dear Colleagues,

The next item of business is the debate on the report titled, "The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe" (Doc. 15423) presented by Mr Bertrand BOUYX on behalf of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media.

We are a bit late. In order to finish this item, we must interrupt the list of speakers to allow time for the replies and the vote.

The rapporteur has 7 minutes to present the report and then will have a further 3 minutes to reply to the debate at the end.

Mister BOUYX, you have the floor.

Mr Bertrand BOUYX (France, ALDE, Rapporteur): Thank you, Madam President.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

On November 12, 2020, 17 member states of the Council of Europe decided to create the Observatory for History Teaching in Europe within the framework of an enlarged Partial Agreement. The Observatory is open to the 50 member states of the European Cultural Convention and offers the possibility for other non-member states to join. In the coming years, the main priority will be to broaden its membership and to ensure a better geographical balance among the members in order to enhance the relevance and added value of the Observatory's work.

The clear definition of the Observatory's mandate, which excludes any attempt to harmonize curricula in Europe, should reassure the other member states of the Council of Europe and lead them to recognize the added value of such a platform for the exchange of policies and methodologies and to consider joining the Enlarged Partial Agreement in the near future.

The proper functioning of the Observatory, initially created for a period of three years, will inevitably depend on its budget. I strongly support the argument that the budgetary restrictions imposed in the Member States in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic should not undermine the decision to ensure the proper functioning of the Observatory.

Finally, I think it would be important to define in more detail exactly how the activities of the Observatory will be linked to the work of the Council of Europe in history teaching, in which 47 member states participate, in order to reinforce each other. In this respect, I strongly maintain that the regular budget of the Council of Europe should provide adequate funding for the activities of the Council of Europe Education Service in history teaching, in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the intergovernmental programme.

It is truly encouraging to see that the European Union is open and willing to participate in the activities of the Observatory. While recognizing the principle of subsidiarity and the independence of EU Member States in deciding on policies in the field of history education and teaching, the European Union could play an important role in encouraging EU member states to join the Enlarged Partial Agreement.

The European Union could also contribute effectively to the activities of the Observatory and to the intergovernmental sector of the Council of Europe; it could devise appropriate mechanisms for financing innovative cooperation projects based on principles and guidelines established by the Council of Europe.

Within the framework of the current Erasmus program, history students could do part of their professional training abroad. I also propose the creation of a specific ad hoc scheme to finance professional exchanges between history teachers, allowing also the participation of teachers from neighboring non-EU countries.

In order to create a political momentum, the European Union could consider including in the accession criteria for candidate countries "the reconciliation of the candidate state with its neighbors".

I invite you to read in particular Chapter 3 of my substantive report which deals with guidelines for quality history teaching that promotes diversity, multiperspectivity and tolerance.

Unlike mathematics, science, or languages, history is essentially an interpretative discipline. Historical thinking is therefore at the heart of history education, which enables students to gradually acquire the ability to analyze historical facts, debate complex ideas about the past, and thus better understand contemporary issues and navigate their way through them.

In 2018, the Council of Europe published a set of principles and guidelines for quality history teaching in the 21st Century, which we have pursued further in the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and the Media in order to disseminate these ten key themes to policymakers and to include them in the future work of the History Teaching Observatory.

First, it seems important to make history curricula more flexible so that teachers have more time and autonomy to gradually move from knowledge-based to competency-based and learner-centered teaching. In my opinion, it is crucial to teach the complex history of democracy and to develop the practices, attitudes and values of democracy in the classroom to help young people understand and value them in their future lives as active citizens.

Second, I think we should bring a European perspective to history teaching in our respective countries, identifying common historical themes that could be studied from similar or different angles.

Multiperspectivity is essential to understand the different points of view that often emanate from a particular historical context. When analyzed in class and taken as a whole, they create a nuanced and deeper understanding of the historical dimension of an event. In our increasingly diverse societies, knowledge of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity and interaction is essential to avoid a monocultural curriculum.

Interactive pedagogies that recognize the cultural differences and multiple identities of the learners in a classroom are needed to create a safe and nurturing environment where sensitive and controversial issues can also be addressed. These learning processes represent a first step towards constructive dialogue, respect and better mutual understanding in order to overcome prejudices and preconceptions within a society.

Teachers play a major role in these processes. They must be supported and recognized within national education systems.

Thank you for your support.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister BOUYX.

Now we move on to the speakers on behalf of political groups.

So, first on the list is Mr Erkin GADIRLI.

Mister GADIRLI, you have the floor.

Mr Erkin GADIRLI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you. Thank you very much Madam speaker.

History teaching is a very delicate issue. It can be, and often is, problematic also. Why is that?

Because of its intrinsic dichotomy. History consists of two relatively independent levels. Facts and stories. Facts are a matter of what happened, when, where, and how. Stories are a matter of why something happened then, there, and us. We can agree on facts much easier than we can agree with stories.

Why is that? Because facts can be proven. Today, many fields of knowledge can come to history's help. Archaeology, biology, geology, technology, so many fields of knowledge that history can benefit from today.

Stories are very different, because storyfication and storytelling are a cultural phenomenon. You cannot teach them, because it's not a matter of education. It's a matter of memorisation.

Different cultural groups tell different stories about the same facts, because they memorise them differently.

This draft Report is very eloquently prepared. I thank the rapporteur for that. We should be very careful when we think that the goal of history teaching is to strengthen common values.

History teaching is not about going back; it's about going forward. It's like driving a car, for example. You drive the car, you move forward, you look ahead. But from time to time you have to look in the rear-view mirror. All drivers know that to drive safely, they need to see what's behind them.

Societies are likewise. They need to see what they left behind to move forward. Common values do not lay in behind. They lay in ahead.

History teaching should take note of that. Otherwise, I have no objections to this report. I wish good luck to the rapporteur. Also, my advice would be that politicians should not interfere with the work of historians.

Thank you.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister GADIRLI.

The next speaker on behalf of the political group is Mr Gusty GRAAS.

Mister GRAAS, you have the floor.

Mr Gusty GRAAS (Luxembourg, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

"Everything that is dead as fact is alive as teaching." This quote from the famous writer Victor Hugo perfectly reflects the importance of history education in creating an enlightened, transparent and open society.

The study of history allows us to discover the origin of our norms and values, to learn from the events of the past. It helps us develop critical thinking skills, encourage respect for others and challenge preconceived notions. History is a flexible subject that leaves room for interpretation.

The methodology of teaching can either bring people together or divide them. It can either contribute to the establishment or maintenance of peace, or to the creation of conflict. There are many examples where public authorities have disseminated a simplistic and incomplete image of their own history in order to manipulate their citizens.

In our digital age, the ALDE group believes that it is more important than ever to combat "fake news" and attempts to manipulate history. It is therefore necessary to ensure quality education that reflects the fundamental values of the Council of Europe, namely respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

As many countries are currently revising their history curricula, the role of this discipline in the education of our future citizens must be clarified. One cannot impose one's own interpretation of one's country's history. We must admit it: the study of history can be partial.

My political group is in favor of teaching history through a transnational perspective. Thus, teachers should be encouraged to use teaching techniques and methods that promote diversity and tolerance. History teachers in particular bear an enormous responsibility that goes far beyond the mere transmission of knowledge. The goal is to inspire students to develop a critical reading of the past and to cultivate a spirit of openness.

Our moving ceremony this afternoon demonstrated that we must never forget the terrible crimes committed.

The school must be a place where one learns to see a human being worthy of the same respect as oneself and it is especially through the study of history that man learns to better understand and interpret the problems of today. It is for this reason that the Council of Europe has created the Observatory for History Teaching in Europe.

ALDE welcomes this new instrument of cooperation. The Observatory's reports and analyses allow us to better monitor and coordinate the quality of teaching in the different member states. Secondly, the Observatory facilitates international exchanges between teachers.

But the Observatory also requires the necessary financial means. This effort must be undertaken by the Member States, in the interest of a balanced evolution of our society.

In view of the enormous potential of this professional development platform, ALDE calls on the remaining thirty countries to join as soon as possible in order to realize this project.

Finally, a big thank you to Mr Bertrand BOUYX for his excellent report.

I thank you.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister GRAAS.

We move on to the next speaker on behalf of Group of the Unified European Left, Mr Hişyar ÖZSOY.

Mister ÖZSOY, you have the floor.

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

The report discusses The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe as a unique knowledge-exchange platform that seeks to use multiperspectivity – and I would like to underline this notion, which I will elaborate on later – to develop a critical understanding of the past and its relevance to the present.

I very much, of course, appreciate the institution of such an Observatory and the report on it now we are discussing, these are important steps in the right direction of building critical and pluralist historical consciousness that is much needed to address various problems that plague contemporary societies and to promote democratic citizenship.

I would like to raise only three points here as humble contributions to the debate. First, we need a philosophy of history that views history not simply as things that have happened in the past but a philosophy that focuses on how the past actively shapes and structures the realities and problems in the present. Like the Holocaust debate we had in the previous session, the Holocaust is not just an event in the past but it shapes our contemporary realities in so many different ways. This point is important because every single social, legal and political issue that we try to address also in this Assembly does have a historical background and without critically attending to the root historical causes of such problems, any attempt to resolve them is doomed to failure.

Second, to put it frankly and bluntly, all official national histories are full of lies and half-truths. They are almost always focused on states, nations, governments, wars, enemies, leaders, commanders, enemies, enemies and more enemies. The notion of multiperspectivity that structures this report means a radical pluralisation of representing history that deconstructs the typical monoculturalism of nationalist histories. Many groups of people in our societies, however, do not have equal or fair access to economic intellectual and cultural resources as well as political power and representation. It is not a coincidence that these same disempowered people are also denied the right to a place in history. In other words, the exclusion of certain groups of people from economic, political and social systems, always goes hand-in-hand with their exclusion from history and history books. Women and sexual minorities, indigenous people, immigrants, refugees, the poor, workers, the youth, ethnic and racial others, religious minorities, such as Muslims in Europe or non-Muslims in Turkey – my country or other Muslim countries – the list can be extended. In order to democratise our social and political systems, we need to bring the perspectives of these marginalised people into the field of historical representation.

Finally, the question of who and what gets represented in history books is not a question of truth; it is a question of power. That is, those who are empowered decide on how history should be represented, which events, persons and debates should be included or excluded and how. That is why history itself emerged as a most crucial site of political and cultural struggle. We should know that if those in power control our sense and experience of the past, which is often the case, they also control our present and the future.

Thank you.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister ÖZSOY.

We move on to the next speaker on our list.

Ms Petra BAYR from the Socialist Group.

Madam BAYR, you have the floor.

Ms Petra BAYR (Austria, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): I actually wanted to speak German, because what I'm going to say is very Austrian.

At the moment, esotericists, anti-vaxxers, virus deniers and conspiracy theorists are taking to the streets together, hand in hand with convicted neo-Nazis, shouting "*we are the new Jews*", wearing yellow stars and carrying banners that say "*vaccinating makes you free*". This is unbearable. It is far from any historical truth; it downplays the Shoah, it downplays the Holocaust. And I was particularly affected by the fact that the Austrian parliament was equated with the Wannsee Conference, with that conference which, organised by the Nazis, planned the industrial slaughter of 6 million people, conflating this with the parliament that passes vaccination legislation is something that, in my opinion, is unbearable.

I reported it to the police and got a call the day before yesterday that the public prosecutor's office will not pursue this further. That actually makes me more concerned than a lot of what I first said: something has clearly gone wrong, not only in the history education of those who shout things on the street, who want to play down the Holocaust, but something has also obviously gone wrong with the Austrian law enforcement agencies.

The report – and I am very grateful for it – logically deals mainly with formal learning but I think informal learning is also very important. I think especially when it comes to this important role, as we also heard very impressively from Simone Veil; the facts are perceived by fewer and fewer people, because there are so few eyewitnesses left.

In Austria we have had for many years a very broad civil society alliance called "*Jetzt Zeichen setzen*" ("Making a mark"), which is pretty much just now beginning to hold a commemorative event in Austria, as it does every year. We have decided for exactly the reasons described above to stand up against this downplaying of history and we have decided to share these sentiments: on the one hand to share the burden, but also to bring it to more places. And we have interviewed Holocaust survivors, eyewitnesses, but also their grandchildren and asked them to join us at places that are historically important, but which are also now occupied by Corona deniers, and asked them about racism, about anti-Semitism, about incitement and about their feelings about it.

Trivialising the Nazi regime is simply not on. I am very grateful for this report and I can assure you that we as a group of Socialists, Democrats and Greens support every effort where it is a question of history being taught without distortion, and that it helps to ensure that we all bear responsibility, both for the victims, for the survivors, but also for the actions of the perpetrators.

Thank you very much.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam BAYR.

We have one more speaker from the political groups. It is Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS from the Group of the European People's Party.

Mister ROUSOPOULOS, you have the floor.

Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group)*: Well, I'm very interested in all of this for various reasons.

Firstly, I think it is important. We have to come to some kind of agreement to ensure that issues of history not always lead to dissent. We know that can be a weapon. It's often used in this way.

I think this is characterised by various attempts. Attempts for example to teach history. It needs to be done in an objective and interesting way.

That brings me to some conclusions.

Let's jump back some decades when we ourselves were at school.

History was often boring. It was a difficult subject, a bit tedious. We heard things about some battles. Many facts. Too many figures. We heard about the past of our own country. Only in the course of time did we note that history could be much more than individual battles, or even wars, or information about our own people.

That's why I'm particularly pleased that yesterday and today there is a growing awareness. Our access to information, media is so much greater. I'm pleased that we're discussing this issue today.

We heard before another issue. It had to do with history. Not so much about methods with which we teach it. We heard eyewitness testimony of people that joined via VideoLink. That's also a kind of education if you will. It was so important to think about the content.

When we look back, we conclude, for example, that many things are not immediately depicted as they should be.

When we talk about the Peloponnesian War, it might not be so obvious, but we can draw clear conclusions.

I ask: do we always have to insist on our own opinion? We aren't necessarily always right. Maybe the other side is.

Very often, in the teaching of history, we talk about the victors, because they wrote history. Let's think about something that Engels said. The one true lesson of the past is that we don't learn from the past. So, isn't it time that we do learn from it?

Thank you very much.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister ROUSOPOULOS.

Unfortunately, we don't have much time so I must now interrupt the list of speakers.

The speeches of members on the speakers list who have been present physically or remotely during the debate but have not been able to speak may be given to the Table Office for publication in the Official Report, provided that speakers connected remotely can report their actual presence when the debate is closed. I remind colleagues that typewritten texts must be submitted electronically, no later than four hours after the list of speakers is interrupted.

I call Mister BOUYX, the rapporteur, to reply to the debate. You have 3 minutes. You have the floor.

Mr Bertrand BOUYX (France, ALDE, Rapporteur): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to thank all the members who have taken the floor in this important debate.

Before proceeding to the vote, allow me to briefly present the draft resolution and recommendation.

For the draft resolution, which is addressed to the governments and parliaments of our member states, I basically propose:

1- To join the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Observatory of History Teaching in Europe in order to take full advantage of this knowledge exchange platform dedicated to experts, policy makers and professionals in history teaching;

2- To participate actively in the work of the intergovernmental sector on history teaching within the framework of the Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe; this work is long-standing and has allowed for a common reflection on the guidelines for history teaching.

Point 6.3 of the draft resolution invites Member States to conduct a strategic analysis of history teaching policies and summarizes the proposals I made in Chapter 3 of my substantive report.

For the draft recommendation: it is specifically addressed to the Committee of Ministers, with a number of proposals concerning the activities of the Council of Europe. In particular:

- To ensure sufficient funding for the activities of the Council of Europe's Education Department relating to history teaching, in order to guarantee good synergies with the Observatory and the long-term sustainability of the intergovernmental program;

- Provide technical assistance in the review of educational policies in our member states that are considering it, in particular with a view to integrating the Council of Europe's guidelines for quality history teaching and its framework of reference for competences for a culture of democracy;
- To develop cooperation with the European Union, UNESCO and other relevant international organizations in the framework of the Observatory's activities;
- Finally, to encourage cooperation between European professional associations and institutes active in the field of history teaching by taking full advantage of the coordination platform offered by the Observatory.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for your attention and I invite you to support these important proposals which aim to help our parliaments and governments to develop quality history teaching.

It is my firm belief that knowledge of history and a critical understanding of political, social, cultural and economic systems and their interactions lay the foundation for more nuanced and mutually respectful debate in our diverse societies, and enable young people to fully embrace democracy.

Thank you.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister BOUYX.

Does the Chairperson of the Committee wish to speak?

You have the floor.

Lord Alexander DUNDEE (United Kingdom, EC/DA, Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I warmly congratulate my distinguished colleague Mr Bertrand BOUYX on his excellent and timely report.

I will briefly pick up three points: why setting out to learn history in a Council of Europe context is the right approach; however, why this approach should be as much as possible learner centred, using the Socratic dialogue; then the connected reasons why the Council of Europe shared values together with certain attitudes towards history assist an improved understanding of political philosophy as well as a better direction for future political developments.

Ironically so, the 1949 Council of Europe consensus might well have been established in Europe many centuries earlier on between 1100 and 1492. This was through the enlightened and powerful Christian Norman rulers of Sicily, who were nearly able to force the Papacy to pursue ecumenical policies towards faith and religion. As it also was through the equally enlightened Arab and Muslim rulers of Spain, who were entirely tolerant of those belonging to the Christian and Jewish faiths.

Arguably, such a consensus by 1492 would have spared Europe not only its religious wars following the Reformation but also the devastation of the 20th century arising from 19th century nationalism, thus also sparing us the Holocaust and its victims whom we commemorate today.

Mr Bertrand BOUYX emphasises that if history learning includes cultural, religious and ethnic diversities, then a one-sided curriculum is avoided. At the same time he gives a clear definition of what the Observatory's mandate is and what it is not, and how it excludes any attempt to harmonise history curricula in Europe.

Thereby, remaining Council of Europe States can be reassured to recognise the good scope of the Observatory platform, which instead is designed to exchange on policies and methodologies.

The rapporteur also illustrates, how alongside formal history teaching, there should be non-formal deliveries as well, not least through on line and digital opportunities. That in the cases of both formal and non formal history teaching, as much as possible history learning ought to be interactive, hence making full use of the Socratic dialogue.

Through our Court of Human Rights, and as we know, one individual himself or herself can take on a whole nation state. Within political philosophy this reflects two important inferences. Firstly, that state and citizen can now be on an equal footing. Secondly, however, that as a result the state need not be undermined at all.

Future political stability depends upon a continuing and growing consensus that human rights should remain a priority.

Today's report on history learning by Mr Bertrand BOUYX fully backs up and augments that prescription.

Thank you.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Lord DUNDEE.

The debate is over.

Mr Frédéric REISS (France, EPP/CD): *Speech not pronounced (Rules of Procedure, Art. 31.2), only available in French.*

Mr André GATTOLIN (France, ALDE): *Speech not pronounced (Rules of Procedure, Art. 31.2), only available in French.*

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

Dear President, Dear Colleagues,

It is a pleasure to speak today about history teaching in Europe. I congratulate Mr. Bertrand BOUYX for his Report, which embraces the importance of history teaching in strengthening a sense of citizenship.

I believe that the proposed model of history teaching in the Report will undoubtedly promote democratic culture and values, enhancing democratic citizenship.

Obviously, there are coexisting narratives in history, and choosing among them always rules out the other version of reality. There is no one unquestionable truth in history, and teaching mono-cultural and one-sided narratives do not tell the whole story. So, it is highly critical to be inclusive as much as possible in history teaching to overcome prejudices and biases among nations, cultures, and ethnicities.

Being inclusive and reading from primary and secondary sources gives learners a floor for open discussion. Such open debate environment, sustained with analysing the past from different views and perspectives, definitely promotes learning of democratic culture and values. This also helps raise new generations who are open to cultural differences, respectful, responsible, and empathetic.

As mentioned in the Report, the amount of information people are exposed to daily has increased tremendously due to the rapid development of digital technologies. This situation entails both opportunities and risks in teaching and learning history. The ease of availability of the wide range of information contributes to the historical narrative as long as it involves different versions and perspectives.

However, this wide range of information also involves fabricated content and misinformation. Therefore, it becomes more and more essential that people learn how to examine and interrogate historical sources comparatively and analytically instead of taking them for granted.

Dear Colleagues,

In order to achieve the objectives presented in this Report, all member States need to contribute to these efforts. Thus, I would like to conclude by calling all member States to strengthen more inclusive history teaching.

Thank you for your attention.

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

Dear President, Dear Colleagues,

First of all, I would like to thank the rapporteur for this valuable report. As a history professor, I highly appreciate the nearly 70 years of work of the Council of Europe on history teaching. The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe is the result of this continuous effort of the Council.

I believe that the forthcoming thematic reports of the Observatory in 2022 will promote the debates on more effective and comprehensive history teaching. We need to take the Observatory and its upcoming works as an opportunity to embrace a new way of learning history.

We all see there is a practice of creating historical narratives to feed national causes. Unfortunately many countries use the history as a tool for nation building process. While this is somewhat understandable it is very dangerous to plant hatred against other nations, in the mind of the new generations. And also history should not be used for political purposes. History is for historians, politics is for politicians.

Dear Colleagues, for many years Turkey has been the target of fictionalised and untrue historical claims. Fictionalised history means forged history. when forged history combined with political rhetoric, history teaching becomes one of the obstacles for peace among nations. Besides, passing resolutions in parliaments regarding unbased, untrue and forged historical claims can cause in repairable damage to international relations.

Instead forged historical claims we should trigger critical thinking based on extensive academic literature and primary sources on historically sensitive and controversial issues. This would also help us overcome prejudices and biases. If the Observatory leads to strengthening objective historiography instead of fabricated historical information, it can have a function in line with the principles and objectives of the Council.

The multi-perspectivity in history education to consider the different standpoints and focus on learning cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity can help fight against things that drive us apart, such as Xenophobia, Islamophobia, and Antisemitism.

We have shared values as well as diversity arising from our cultural, religious, ethnic beliefs and traditions. Hence, teaching history built upon common values and embracing diversity is an essential opportunity for us.

As you all know, the Observatory is open to all States parties to the European Cultural Convention with the possibility of adherence to other non-member States. Since the Observatory offers a knowledge-exchange platform for all in this field, the enlargement would contribute to exchanging ideas, information, and knowledge among participant states.

As a concluding remark, I would like to call all Member states to use the unifying aspect of history rather than using it as a dividing line apart from us.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Liliana TANGUY (France, ALDE): *Speech not pronounced (Rules of Procedure, Art. 31.2), only available in French.*

Mr Christophe LACROIX (Belgium, SOC): *Speech not pronounced (Rules of Procedure, Art. 31.2), only available in French.*

Ms Nicole TRISSE (France, ALDE): *Speech not pronounced (Rules of Procedure, Art. 31.2), only available in French.*

Ms Inka HOPUSU (Finland, SOC): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Mr President, dear colleagues,

“Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it”. Philosopher George Santaya’s words give cause for reflection. How do we ensure that Europe’s history of violence, war and genocide is not forgotten and repeated? Or that history is not abused for extremist, nationalist and hateful purposes? We can do this by ensuring qualitative history teaching and by approaching the past as a way of shaping a better future. Positive historical achievements also deserve attention. I commend Mr Bouyx for raising this important issue in his report.

It is widely understood and accepted that history offers scientific and justified interpretations of past events and their consequences. This is important when teaching history: there is no single watertight viewpoint for observing historic events. The world history narrative was long controlled by white European men: kings, princes and explorers. Today we understand that history includes a wide range of perspectives and experiences. The quantity of sources has increased, and the voice of minorities is presented in history books. History is so much more than what is being offered by people in power.

Teaching history is teaching interpretations of the past. This does not mean that the subject is any less scientific or objective. Rather it underlines the importance of source criticism. Not all interpretations of history are equally justified. All depends on the quality of the sources and the conclusions drawn from them. Although history teaches cause and consequence it also teaches a healthy criticism towards how we observe the world.

Within this peculiarity of history teaching lies its opportunity. Its role in unifying nations and building peace is unique. At its best, history teaching increases empathy skills of children and young people: observing the past through different spectra helps us understand the situation and the experience of others.

The increasingly infected discourse and polarization is reflected also in schools. Some history and civics teachers avoid discussing divisive issues with their students for their own safety. A year ago, Finland saw an extreme example of this when the youth wing of a political party encouraged students to expose teachers that have put their party "in a bad light". We must condemn and counter such attempts to intimidate, silence and shame teachers and let them work in peace.

Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV (Azerbaijan, ALDE): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

The idea of a Common European Home can be realized through the establishment of common values in the world which we all reside. As for the formation of joint mechanisms in the education system, specifically in the teaching of history, this is an idea that can be implemented in several stages. Because teaching is a very delicate area, and each step must be taken with extreme care. History is taught in all countries. And national history, and European, and world history. Teaching is a triangle. Student and teacher - any subject, textbooks on this subject. Of course, if we are talking about common approaches and a common space in teaching, then we must finally think about bringing the target subject - the subject and its textbooks - to a more common denominator for Europe. However, in order to reach this final stage, it is necessary to form general, adequate principles of the learning process, and both the teacher and the student must master the general skills of teaching in a democratic, free-thinking, critical and creative approach. Of course, once such an appropriate level is created, it is a lengthy process and textbooks will need to be written according to this methodology.

If textbooks that are common or close in content and essence are found in the European educational space, they will be able to quickly and effectively implement many of the great intentions that international organizations have been trying to implement for decades and have not always succeeded.

In view of all this, I drafted Resolution 12149 in the Parliamentary Assembly on January 27, 2010, entitled "Expediency of use of common guidelines in the European educational network",

We are glad that concrete steps have been taken in this direction 10 years after the preparation of this document, and a separate report on the first practical measures has been prepared in the Parliamentary Assembly.

One of the utmost conditions for this history teaching project to work properly and achieve the desired effect is, first of all, the participation of all member states in its implementation. Afterwards the network should be further expanded, the number of countries involved in the project should be increased. Because the larger and wider the geography of the implementation of projects of common interest, the more satisfactory the outcome will be.

Let's wish that the initiative on teaching history in Europe will result in such a desired success!

Mr George PAPANDREOU (Greece, SOC): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

As today is the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, allow me to start with a phrase from the speech of the Secretary General of the UN António Guterres: "Our response to ignorance is education.

We know that when young people learn about the Holocaust they can better understand the fragility of shared values and democratic institutions- particularly in times of social and economic upheaval".

And it is so true that we are witnessing how fragile our democratic institutions can be.

This is a testament to the fact that we cannot take our achievements for granted. We cannot take our democracies, our freedoms, the respect of human rights, for granted.

So we must nourish, replenish, re-discover these values and practices in our daily lives.

This begs the question of how we can do so.

How we, and our younger generation, can develop the tools, the skills, the aptitude, to discern and defend historical facts and differentiate them from overt or hidden agendas of hate, antisemitism and racism!

Much can be instilled through education.

In schools or outside schools.

But what type of education?

History, and history books must play a major role in building democratic culture. And I commend both this report and the decision to create this new cooperation instrument on history education.

So let me quickly conclude with a few key ideas:

History education needs to cultivate critical thinking. And critical thinking means to have the courage to assess and critique your own historical experiences. Not simply those of your adversaries. To teach the complexity of the conflicts whether in or between our societies.

To understand both the facts but also reveal our different interpretations of these facts.

Secondly, why not digitise and translate (into as many languages possible) history books used in our member state schools, and upload them to a common website so all can discover the 'other's history'.

The history of art, music, theatre, should be included as we teach history. This will also be a way to learn about other cultures and histories in a less controversial way.

Finally we need a new pedagogy to allow for more active participation of students in the learning process, and in researching history as a way to create active citizenship.

Thank you for this truly important report.

Mr Ahmet Ünal ÇEVİKÖZ (Turkey, SOC): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

The establishment of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe is a significant step forward in our long-standing programme on history education. First, I would like to commend the rapporteur for bringing this issue to the attention of the Assembly with this report, and second I particularly appreciate the draft resolution and the draft recommendation thereof which prepare a good framework for the continuation of our efforts.

History is not only the knowledge of and study of the past. It is also a form of collective memory. In that sense, it is the story of who we are, where we come from, and can perhaps also reveal where we are heading to.

To study history is also to study change. As history gives us the tools to analyze and explain problems in the past, it also helps us to see patterns which may not be visible in the present.

We have to be careful in teaching of history. It is not simply all about memorising "facts" from a history textbook. Such an understanding of history teaching is inaccurate and frankly put, I believe, is naive.

Certainly, there is some basic information involving names and dates that any professional historian who studies a specific period needs to know. But those names and dates are merely background information; they are not what professional historians actually study. To be fair to the discipline of history, we have to admit that the study of history is not the study of names and dates, but rather the study of primary sources. The report, from this point of view, alerts the danger of information pollution, as well as the abuse of digital social media organs to disseminate mis- and disinformation. The Observatory, therefore, will be an essential haven to avoid such felony.

And finally, the importance of multiperspectivity...

From an epistemological point of view, history is believed to be interpretational and subjective. There is not a single narrative but there exist multiple narratives about particular historical events. Therefore an objective approach to history teaching requires incorporating source materials that reflect different views of a historical event. Such multiperspectivity is necessary because as we teach history, we also need to increase diversity and cultural pluralism. Many groups such as women, the poor, ethnic minorities, etc. tend to be ignored in traditional historical narratives. This is why multiperspectivity is essential.

Thank you.

Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA (Ukraine, ALDE): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

The famous wisdom of Winston Churchill says that "those that fail to learn from history, are doomed to repeat it". This idea to learn from the past and not allow global conflicts and World War to happen again. Our predecessors wanted Europe to live in democracy, rule of law and respect for international law. But it seems it is no longer happening. And one of the reasons is the manipulation and distortion of historical knowledge and using history teaching as a political weapon in hybrid wars.

No doubt, historical education contributes to the strengthening of common values, the development of critical thinking to understand the past and comprehend the present, for mutually respectful discussion and building dialogue and partnership in a complex global and multicultural world.

There is a need to use an evidence-based approach, impartiality and objectivity in teaching of general history and the history of foreign countries.

Politicians cannot decide about the results of the history studies, cannot influence and cannot set the political doctrine to follow in doing history research.

Unfortunately, history education has become a victim of manipulation and disinformation wars, when the study of real historical facts is replaced by the distortion or propaganda interpretations of these facts. In our eyes history is being rewritten in favor of certain political views, new historical myths are being created, even the modern history is full of such examples. The idea of Russian Crimea can be destroyed in the professional unbiased historical discussion, for example with Crimean Tatars or with Turkish experts. The liquidation of the "Memorial" is one more example.

In this regard, we consider it necessary to pay special attention to the inadmissibility of rewriting history and distorting historical facts.

Professional level of history teachers plays a significant role, so I support initiatives to expand opportunities for their professional development and international exchange. I also believe that the Basic Competence Framework for a Democratic Culture is an excellent guiding tool for improving history education in united Europe and the world.

Also modern information and communication technologies make it possible to organize platforms using videoconferencing, interactive online classes, blogs etc to build collaborative learning and intercultural dialogue between young people from all over the world.

And I sincerely hope that the principles laid down of Observatory for the teaching of history in European the basis of its activities will contribute to the strengthening of democracy, humanism, and open dialogue in the European and world space.

Vote: The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): We move on the consideration of amendments.

The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media has presented a draft resolution [Doc. 15423] to which 4 amendments have been tabled. There is also a recommendation, to which 1 amendment has been tabled. We will consider the amendments individually. The amendments will be taken in the order in which they appear in the Compendium. I remind you that speeches on amendments are limited to 1 minute. I ask parliamentarians participating remotely to ask for the floor only when they have to support their own amendment or wish to speak against an amendment.

I call Mr Vladimir KRUGLYI to support Amendment 1.

Mr Vladimir KRUGLYI (Russian Federation, NR)*: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In this Amendment we wanted to focus on means of accomplishing the task set out and emphasise the importance of the issue. We are prepared to share our many years of Russian experience in this field, knowing that the history of other countries, however, should not undermine one's own national history without the knowledge of which it is impossible to train citizen participation.

Thank you.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr KRUGLYI.

Does anyone else wish to support this Amendment?

OK.

Does anyone else wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mr Bertrand BOUYX, you have the floor.

Mr Bertrand BOUYX (France, ALDE, Rapporteur): Yes, I am against The Amendment.

With the argument that we developed in the Commission: it goes against the diversity that is proposed by the Observatory; since the Observatory does not speak of a universal history but precisely of diversity and multi-perspectivity.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Bertrand BOUYX.

What is the opinion of the Committee on this Amendment?

Lord Alexander DUNDEE (United Kingdom, EC/DA, Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media): The Committee is against.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): I shall now put the Amendment to the vote.

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

Okay. The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 1 is rejected.

We move on to Amendment 2.

I call Mr Vladimir KRUGLYI to support Amendment 2.

You have 1 minute.

Mr Vladimir KRUGLYI (Russian Federation, NR)*: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Amendment 2 is the same as Amendment 1, actually. We want to emphasise the importance of studying the history of other countries.

Thank you.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister KRUGLYI.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mister BOUYX, you have the floor.

Mr Bertrand BOUYX (France, ALDE, Rapporteur): Thank you, Madam President.

For the same reasons, against, because this amendment aims to introduce the universal notion and this goes against the very principle of the Observatory, which is the respect of the historical diversity of each country.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister BOUYX.

What is the opinion of the Committee on the Amendment?

Lord Alexander DUNDEE (United Kingdom, EC/DA, Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media): The Committee is against.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): The Committee is against.

I shall now put the Amendment to the vote.

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

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 2 is rejected.

We move on to Amendment 3.

I call Mr Vladimir KRUGLYI to support Amendment 3.

You have one minute.

Mr Vladimir KRUGLYI, you have the floor.

Mr Vladimir KRUGLYI (Russian Federation, NR)*: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

In accordance with the observatory statutory documents, the European Union participates as an observer. That's what we wanted to emphasise via our Amendment.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister KRUGLYI.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mister BOUYX, you have the floor.

Mr Bertrand BOUYX (France, ALDE, Rapporteur): So, on the third amendment, we are in favor: it is a clarifying amendment which, finally, ratifies the role of the European Union, in accordance with its statutes.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Bertrand BOUYX.

What is the opinion of the Committee on the amendment?

Lord Alexander DUNDEE (United Kingdom, EC/DA, Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media): The Committee is for.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): The Committee is for.

I shall now put the Amendment to the vote.

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

The vote is closed. I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 3 is agreed.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in Document 15423.

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

The vote is closed. I call for the result to be displayed.

The draft resolution is adopted.

We now move on to the draft recommendation.

The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media has presented a draft recommendation [Doc. 15423] to which one amendment has been tabled.

I call Mr Vladimir KRUGLYI to support Amendment 4. You have 1 minute.

Mr Vladimir KRUGLYI (Russian Federation, NR)*: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In accordance with the observatory statutory documents, the European Union participates as an observer. That's what we wanted to emphasise via our Amendment.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister KRUGLYI.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mister BOUYX, you have the floor.

Mr Bertrand BOUYX (France, ALDE, Rapporteur): Thank you, Madam President.

We vote against this amendment because it goes against the Observatory's statutes. In its article 2.5, the order is first the European Union and then UNESCO.

Thank you.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister BOUYX.

What is the opinion of the Committee on the Amendment?

Lord Alexander DUNDEE (United Kingdom, EC/DA, Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media): The Committee is for.

Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ (Montenegro, NR, President of the Assembly): The Committee is for.

I shall now put the Amendment to the vote.

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

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 3 is agreed.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft Resolution contained in Document 15423.

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

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

The draft Resolution is adopted.

We now move on to the draft Recommendation.

The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media has presented a draft Recommendation to which one amendment has been tabled.

I call Mr Vladimir KRUGLYI to support Amendment 4.

You have 1 minute.

Debate: The functioning of democratic institutions in Armenia

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Then we continue on to the next debate.

I think this next item of business this afternoon is the debate on the report titled, "The functioning of democratic institutions in Armenia", which is Document 15432 presented by Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN and Ms Boriانا ÅBERG on behalf of the Monitoring Committee.

In order to finish by 7 p.m., we must interrupt a list of speakers at about 6 p.m. to allow time for reply and the vote.

We will begin with Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN and Ms Boriانا ÅBERG rapporteurs. You have 7 minutes in total to present the report, which you may divide between you. Then you will have a further 3 minutes in total to reply to the debate at the end.

I call Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN.

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, Co-rapporteur): Actually, I allow Ms Boriانا ÅBERG to present the case first and then I would add.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Scandinavian co-operation, I understand. Nordic, yeah.

Ms Boriانا ÅBERG, you have Finland, Sweden and Norway up here. That is why I am joking about this.

Even though, Ms Boriانا ÅBERG, the floor is yours.

Ms Boriانا ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, Co-rapporteur): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

When Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN was appointed co-rapporteur by the Monitoring Committee, in 2019, Armenia had recently experienced the Velvet Revolution, a peaceful change of government that took place in strict compliance with the constitutional provisions. It was a milestone in the history of Armenian institutions.

The newly appointed government had undertaken numerous and ambitious reforms, covering the criminal code and procedure, the judicial system, the fight against corruption, the judicial code, electoral reforms and the funding of political parties.

By then, our predecessors – who had visited Armenia – praised the will to respect, protect and promote human rights at the highest levels of the state. Co-operation between the Council of Europe and Armenian authorities was extremely fruitful, as testified by the five ad hoc requests for assistance addressed to the Venice Commission.

Only two weeks after my appointment as co-rapporteur, in September 2020, armed conflict broke out with neighbouring Azerbaijan over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The Armenian institutions had already been put to trial – as each of our countries – by the sanitary crisis.

Nothing tries the institutions of a democracy more than war – many of our old European countries have experienced it – and the relatively young Armenian democratic institutions could have been overwhelmed.

But on the contrary, they emerged stronger from this extremely trying period and offers to the members of the Council of Europe an example that however exceptional the circumstances of the time may be, democratic debate, disputed elections and respect for the rule of law are not a burden, but a strength for our societies. The early parliamentary elections held in June 2021, which permitted to solve a political crisis, are an example.

You will find in our report a detailed account of the political events that occurred since 2018. I would like to focus on four key points of this report: electoral reform, democratic culture, fight against corruption and the situation of the media.

The electoral reform is the area where the most significant results have been achieved, in accordance with the recommendations of the Venice Commission and the OSCE.

The establishment of a democratic culture is a long process, but some checks and balances have been built. The institution of the Human Rights Defender is very popular and receives the confidence of 63% of the Armenian population. In spite of the drastic state of Armenian public finances, a constructive dialogue between us and the Armenian delegation allowed protection of the budgetary independence of this institution.

The fight against corruption is a major issue. We welcome the establishment of the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, chaired by a competent woman. We encourage the Armenian authorities to strengthen this institution by ensuring, in the constitution, its genuine independence.

Regarding the media, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict led the authorities to severely restrict the independence of journalists and freedom of expression to fight against the spread of false news and hate speech. Even if the aim pursued was legitimate, the measures were excessive. Fortunately, they were relieved since. Still, the fines for defamation have been raised, and "serious insults" have been criminalised. We wish to remind the clear position of this Assembly against the criminalisation of defamation.

Much has still to be done. As in each of our countries, democracy is a work in progress. The resolution lists many demands to the Armenian authorities.

The political climate stays excessively polarised, emphasis should be given to the alternatives between party programmes and projects rather than on the individuals. We call for the reinstatement of a Ministry of the interior entrusted with law-enforcement agencies. Confidence in the judiciary is low among the population, the judicial reform needs to be continued.

But Armenia can be proud of its accomplishments so far, and our Assembly can be proud of the assistance it offered through these difficult times.

Thank you, Madam President.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Ms Boriana ÅBERG.

I think that of the 7 minutes, 3 minutes are left, I think. You had 7 minutes in total.

I continue with the speakers list.

I'll start with the speakers on behalf of the political groups

The first one is Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN, from Ireland and Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN, I do think that you can start over again because there's a technical problem. The interpreters are not able to translate. Try this microphone, and I'll allow you to start over again.

Thank you.

Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN (Ireland, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Could I thank once again the co-rapporteurs of this report. Ms Boriana ÅBERG gave us her summation on behalf of herself and Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN. They have done excellent work – very detailed work indeed in relation to Armenia. There is no doubt that Armenia has made very large progress in its democratic development since 2018. It had, during that time, a series of events which have exerted a very strong influence on the functioning of its institutions. I think it is important that, again, that the Assembly welcome the fact that Armenia has successfully emerged from the conflict – the very serious conflict that it had. With the early elections in June 2021, which were organised very well, that that together with the pursuit of reforms, have been really important.

According to the 2020 EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy, Armenia has a relatively good record of human rights and democracy. We have to acknowledge that it is undertaking significant steps to improve good governance and the rule of law. A number of areas have been identified for further improvement, including discrimination and hate speech, gender equality and preventing gender-based violence, prosecution of torture and ill-treatment, and the regulation of pre-trial detention.

Obviously, in 2020, the double crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict did slow down the pace of reforms. Despite these challenges, as I mentioned, Armenia has reiterated its commitment to the implementation of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the EU and Armenia which entered into force in March 2021 and includes provisions on strengthening democracy and human rights.

Of course, we also have to note that Armenia adopted a comprehensive judicial reform strategy and human rights strategy in 2019 following the police reform strategy.

The government, which was re-elected in July 2021, remains committed to reforms, adapting the new criminal and criminal procedure codes in 2021. It is important to note also that Armenia's civil society is also seeing slow and steady progress in creating a sustainable, enabling environment, increasing organisational capacity and improving sectoral infrastructure.

However, the institutions do still continue to struggle a little bit with issues of capacity and implementation, which hamper further reform.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam O'LOUGHLIN.

Then we go to Iceland and to Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON of the Group of the Unified European Left.

The floor is yours, Sir.

Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON (Iceland, UEL, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President

I want to start by congratulating the rapporteurs on the excellent report. As reflected by the report, Armenians have indeed faced their sufferings and challenges in a most constructive manner recently, evidenced by recent developments.

The situation in Armenia is sensitive and there is a lot to be done when it comes to reconstruction of society. Also, the reconstruction is made even more difficult while the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is still unresolved despite the tripartite agreement between the two countries and Russia.

The wounds of war are still open and have not been given the chance to heal.

Armenians have been quite critical of the International Community for its lack of response to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and rightly so.

The new government in Armenia has demonstrated the will to engage with the Parliamentary Assembly and the commitment to our shared values. The authorities are implementing various reforms including law enforcement reform, education reform, and judicial reform.

Armenians have further indicated that an important pillar of their foreign policy as a landlocked country is the importance of securing an opening transport route to neighbouring countries in order to enhance economic prosperity and cultivate contact between countries and their inhabitants.

The international community could support these plans to foster peaceful co-operation between neighbours and contribute to peace and stability in the area.

In the Council of Europe a new action plan on relations with Armenia is currently in the making and will take effect around the time Iceland takes over the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers.

I know that Iceland is fully committed to following through on the matter and looking forward to constructive work by the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly along with Armenians and the neighbours to strengthening democracy, peace, and prosperity in the area.

Thank you, Madam President.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister JÓNSSON.

Then we go to Austria and to Mr Stefan SCHENNACH from the Socialist Group.

Mister SCHENNACH, can you click on the request-to-speak icon?

There you go.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you Madam President,

As a year-long co-rapporteur for the neighbouring country Azerbaijan, I know a lot of the situation, also in Armenia.

I congratulate both rapporteurs for their report. Our group will support this report.

It shows that Armenia and Georgia are two countries in the Caucasus region which changed their by-election, their political system. It shows that democracy is going on. That's what happened in Armenia in 2018. But from the beginning on, the new government had the problem with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the different wars, especially the last war.

After the ceasefire, after the trilateral agreement, which was done by the Russian Federation to stop the killing of people, soldiers and civilians, and the destruction of houses and infrastructure, there was a lot of movement to push away the government in Yerevan.

Through big harassment there was an election, and it was a big surprise that the government was still the same and won those elections.

I think this is very important also for the peace process.

I think both countries - Armenia and Azerbaijan - have now to work on this neighbourhood feeling and peace process.

They have to look into the curriculum of the schools – that they delete all those 'enemy' phrases – so that Armenia and Azerbaijan can live together in the same peaceful way as they live in Tbilisi, in Georgia: in this district where people are living post-coup, there are no problems.

I hope in the long run that Armenia and Azerbaijan could be friends or good neighbours. That would be a great thing.

So again, congratulations. We will support this report. This is very well done. Thank you.

Ms Ingrid SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister Stefan SCHENNACH.

Now I give the floor to Mr Aleksander POCIEJ from Poland and the Group of the European People's Party.

Mr Aleksander POCIEJ (Poland, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

First of all, on behalf of the EPP Group, I would like to thank the rapporteurs for this report and congratulate them on the quality of their work.

At a time when the Armenian President, Mr Armen Sarkissian, has just resigned, on 23 January, on the grounds that he did not have the means to influence internal and external policy, this report constitutes an important contribution to a current reflection on the Armenian institutional system.

Indeed, I recall that Armenia moved from a presidential regime to a parliamentary system after the approval of constitutional reforms in a national referendum in December 2015. It should be said that at the same time, the Venice Commission spoke very favorably on the change of the constitutional law of Armenia, which is not always the case.

Since then, Armenia has made remarkable progress in the field of democracy and the rule of law, with a political changeover that took place in a peaceful manner. After the bloody Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in late 2020, the country also managed to emerge from the political crisis with free and fair elections held in June 2021.

Of course, there is still progress to be made, particularly with regard to the participation of women, judicial reform and peaceful relations between the majority and the opposition. We therefore express our hope that the polarisation of the political scene will result in a true parliamentary culture taking root. We hope that the Parliament will become a real forum for constructive dialogue.

But the greatest danger to Armenian democracy is the external threat. Security, by the way, was the main issue in the campaign for the early parliamentary elections in 2021. Despite the ceasefire, the security situation in Nagorno-Karabakh remains extremely tense. The issue of the return of prisoners of war and civilians detained by Azerbaijan has still not been resolved.

Dear colleagues, Armenia's choice to follow the path of reform towards democracy and the rule of law fully meets the requirement of our House. We should support its efforts. Today, in another debate, one of our colleagues said that it is authoritarianism towards one's own citizens that leads to aggression towards neighboring countries: we see that this is not the case in Armenia.

Thank you very much.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister POCIEJ.

I continue with Mr John HOWELL from the United Kingdom and from the European Conservatives Group.

Mister HOWELL, the floor is yours.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you very much, Madam President.

I, too, would like to start my speech by thanking the rapporteurs for a very good assessment. A very good overview of the situation in Armenia.

What they have done in that is to be very comprehensive in the issues that they have tackled, so I thank them for that.

I thank them too for ending today's debate with an optimistic report, an optimistic report about the future of Armenia and of the area as a whole.

It is so lovely to participate in a debate where that is the main theme that comes through, because I, too, have concerns over how Armenia will maintain its position in the rule of law. Like the previous speaker, I, too, pay tribute to it for moving from a presidential style of government to a parliamentary style.

What we have done in this is to help them in an exercise of democratic confidence building. I do think that that is an important role that this Council should be playing in a whole number of different countries where particularly there has been conflict or where there has been difficulties in establishing a democratic basis for it.

While I give my congratulations to the government of Armenia for the work that has been undertaken, I would be the first to say that the work doesn't stop.

The rapporteur listed a whole number of areas where additional work is required. The most important of those is in trying to have some form of reconciliation over the terrible war that took place in Nagorno-Karabakh.

We have heard many, many times in in this Hemicycle one side accusing the other of terrible crimes, of not revealing the locations of bodies, of not doing this and not doing that. I do think we have to move fast to overcome that.

Some form of reconciliation is called for for Armenia to enter forcefully to be able to bring Azerbaijan to the table.

We've already mentioned issues, such as money laundering, which need to be pursued and justice that needs to be pursued, particularly in relation to the constitutional court and the status of judges.

There is an important area in the state of the media which which Armenia, like many countries, is having to struggle with disinformation and hate speech, which has seen an uprising in it.

Overall, although it is difficult to establish the checks and balances that Armenia needs in one go, I do congratulate Armenia on this, on the way that they have come so far.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr John HOWELL.

And I continue with the speakers list and I will introduce one speaker from Armenia and one from Azerbaijan before I interrupt the list of speakers.

And the first speaker is Mr Ruben RUBINYAN from Armenia and the Group of the European People's Party.

The floor is yours.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): Dear colleagues,

Firstly, I would like to thank the rapporteurs, Ms Boriana ÅBERG and Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN, for their truly excellent work. This was a much-expected report since the last one was back in 2011.

The report starts with high assessment of the democratic developments in Armenia since the times of the non-violent, Velvet Revolution in 2018, and notes with praise that Armenia has successfully overcome the serious political crisis caused by the consequences of the recent devastating war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

We very much value the high assessment that gives the Assembly to our democratic progress.

Colleagues,

The outcome of the 44-day military aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan, indeed, became a check for the democracy and the rule of law of Armenia. But we managed to overcome it in a peaceful manner, through snap parliamentary elections, which received the highest assessment by the international community as free, fair, competitive, with respect to the principle of equality and fundamental freedoms. Though these elections passed in an extraordinary and challenging situation, they showed the permanence of democratic processes in the Republic of Armenia and proved that free elections are guaranteed in Armenia, that people irreversibly exercise their power – guaranteed by the Constitution – through elections and other means of direct democracy.

The consolidation of democracy through the strengthening of democratic institutions, legislative improvements and other governance reforms is a priority for us.

We have implemented reforms targeted at the improvement of the electoral processes, *inter alia*, improving legislation, ensuring the free exercise of the electoral right. This process is undertaken taking into consideration the European standards and with close co-operation with specialised international organisations.

Speaking about anti-corruption policies, I would like to highlight the activity of the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, the role of which is also noted by the co-rapporteurs, as a significant toolkit for ensuring the transparency and accountability of the governance system. This is a unique body working with the government over the elaboration of the government's anti-corruption policies and the ways of its implementation.

One of the other major areas of activities of the government is the independent judiciary. The government launched the judicial-legal reforms for the development of the sector and effective administration of justice, by reviewing the scope of strategic directions. The aim of the reforms is to guarantee the integrity check of judges, efficacy of the activity of judges and the courts, uniformity of judicial practice, modernisation of procedural law and many others.

Colleagues,

Today our democracy continues to face a number of serious challenges, first and foremost connected with military threats to the security of Armenia. The constant threat of the use of force has its most negative effect on the stability, normality of life and the course of development. Nevertheless, we believe that peace is the most reliable way to ensure security and further progress. For that purpose, we have also to reach a fair and lasting solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, and the solution of all humanitarian issues, the utmost of which is the urgent and safe repatriation of the Armenian prisoners of war.

And lastly, dear friends, I would like to thank all the colleagues for the high praise of the democratic pact that Armenia has chosen. But I cannot stress enough that as my friend, Mr Aleksander POCIEJ, rightly mentioned, the main danger to Armenian democracy does not come from within, it comes from outside. I hope that Armenia will not walk alone on the path of democracy it has chosen.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Mr Ruben RUBINYAN, thank you so much.

The next speaker is Mr Samad SEYIDOV from Azerbaijan and the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance.

The floor is yours.

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

It seems to me this is *déjà vu*.

We are already seeing the situation within the report of Armenia several years ago. Then, the majority in the Assembly approved the result of the election of former president Mr Armen Sarkeesian, calling them progressive and democratic.

It was already clear to us, neighbours of Armenia, that the report absolutely didn't reflect the reality - but they didn't listen to us; we're Azerbaijanis.

Just a few years later, the Armenian people themselves answered this question.

Through Mr Sarkeesian, from his prime minister, Chair, it's easy to satisfy the ambitions of the elite or the diaspora, but it's very difficult to reflect the national interests of the people.

And now in this new report, on a new Armenia, we again do not see the full realities.

For example, there is a subcommittee on a conflict between member States here in the Assembly. Armenia and Azerbaijan are fully-fledged members of it. There is a report presented by Mr Paul GAVAN just a couple of months ago where the conflict has been titled as a 'conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan'. We were involved - I mean Armenia and Azerbaijan. But despite all these facts, you are not able to find the words 'Azerbaijan and Armenia' in the report. They titled it 'Nagorno-Karabakh conflict'.

The conflict is over! Nagorno-Karabakh does not exist. We are looking for peace, my colleague from Armenia just mentioned that, but again this un-existing formula is within the report.

A real assessment of events is the main condition for the stable development of Armenia.

That is why we are against pleasing Mr Nikol Pashinyan, satisfying the diaspora, saying nice words to the revanchist forces in the region.

After all, we have to live together. That is why we propose our amendments, which will make the report balanced, meeting the requirements and principles of the work of the Council of Europe, reflecting documents which have already been adopted in the Assembly.

Dear colleagues,

Now it's up to you.

If you are able to assess the situation in Armenia realistically - where the president has to resign because of the chaos, chaos in society and revanchism in the mind of politicians who lost the war, who dreamed about a new war - then we will be able to help Armenia.

If you put on rose-coloured glasses and do not see deep political, social, economic; human problems here in Armenia; revenge attempts and willingness to sign any documents with Azerbaijan - including a peace treaty, growing xenophobia - then what happened once to Mr Sarkeesian will definitely happen to Mr Pashinyan's government.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you so much, Mr SEYIDOV.

I must now interrupt the list of speakers. The speeches of members on the speakers list who have been present physically or remotely during the debate but have not been able to speak may be given to the Table Office for publication in the Official Report, provided that speakers connected remotely can report their actual presence when the debate is closed. I remind colleagues that type written texts must be submitted electronically, no later than four hours after the list of speakers is interrupted.

I call Ms ÅBERG or is it maybe Mr KILJUNEN, you can decide between yourself.

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN, the floors is yours to reply to the debate.

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, Co-rapporteur): Madam President, thank you very much for allowing me to say a few words also about the debate and the report itself.

I only want to stress strongly that I've thoroughly enjoyed my colleague Ms Boriana ÅBERG's presentation because she fully summarised all my experiences also and we can share the view. So I don't want to repeat what she said.

Madam chair, in November 2021 we visited the country to prepare this report. And that report is reflecting our experiences because we were – I was personally and I share the view and I suppose that Brianna can agree – we were absolutely positively surprised. Clearly there has been a positive development in the country and we have enjoyed that. Including the anti-corruption entity which has been established, which is a novel institution. Actually we also need that type of institution in other countries, too. So we can learn how to do that.

Obviously shadowing everything, was the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. That was clearly shadowing it. And we actually visited the even border areas and we heard shootings, etc. So the peace is still in question, but we are happy anyhow that other sites have been somewhat agreed. In respect of those hate speeches nevertheless there is some positive developments also on that area.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV just now made a presentation here but I have been actually listening very carefully the discussions throughout this assembly meetings between Armenians and Azerbaijanis and I feel, listening to them, that there is a new mode, the steps of reconciliation are already taking place also in our hall concerning relations between those two countries and also including the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict itself. So that is important to recognise and in that way we are looking forward for the future of Armenia in very positive terms and we submit humbly our report for voting now.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister KILJUNEN.

I know that Mr Piero FASSINO is now online, the Chair of the Committee.

Do you want to speak? In that case you have 3 minutes.

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): Thank you very much,

Of course I also thank the two rapporteurs, who have really done an extraordinary job.

The Armenian situation is a very complex one that has had, in recent years, some very turbulent events, both in domestic politics and with with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh.

The most recent developments of the situation in Armenia are more comforting in the sense that a number of democratic reforms are being conducted and they are moving towards political stabilisation; going in the direction of the recommendations from our rapporteurs and from the Venice Commission itself. It is important because a new phase in the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan is opening up.

Some first steps have been taken. It is also mentioned in the report that our rapporteurs have presented; it is necessary to go on with great determination, knowing that Armenia and Azerbaijan have always insisted on their right to the same territory. And when you look closely, it is more complicated and more difficult; you have to create the reasons for co-existence and co-operation.

It was mentioned yesterday, as part of the work of the Monitoring Commission, and one of the first topics that our subcommittee will address in its work is exactly to promote all useful initiatives to encourage a progressive and constant improvement of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Thus ensuring that each can develop, let's say, its own political initiative, its internal life and its economic development, without being afraid of new conflicts and new tensions.

The report that has been presented is very detailed, very useful. It is an important reference for the work of the Council of Europe and the Monitoring Commission and therefore, we will continue to follow the Armenian situation and do everything to support and promote and foster processes of democratic stability and peace in the region.

Thank you.

Mr Stéphane BERGERON (Canada): *Speech not pronounced (Rules of Procedure, Art. 31.2), only available in French.*

Ms Arzu ERDEM (Turkey, NR): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear President, Dear Colleagues,

I believe that this report is of great importance for Armenia in terms of democratic processes in the country. In this context, the continuation of the progress and resolving the shortcomings stated in the report will contribute not only to the democratic processes in Armenia but also to regional stability.

I would like to draw your attention to the dissenting opinion submitted by Azerbaijan, which I fully agree with. We should not forget that Azerbaijan is the victim and Armenia is the aggressor.

Every member state of the Assembly should support the call for respect for the territorial integrity of countries. This is a must for the future of regional stability and peace.

Moreover, as the Azerbaijani side rightly stated, the wording of the report should focus on building a solid future between the two countries rather than repeating the accusations and provoking possible revanchist approaches.

Since we always asked for justice, stability and peace in the region, we support this approach of Azerbaijan and their call for a peace agreement between the two countries. Both countries should work together in order to build good neighborly relations and a common future.

Regarding the references in the report to my country, I would like to express my disappointment and strongly reject the references with respect to Turkey's involvement in the conflict. Similarly, the reference to some historic events that were not confirmed even by the European Court of Human Rights is deplorable, irrelevant and unconstructive.

Finally, I hope that the talks initiated between Turkey and Armenia through special representatives will contribute to the improvement of bilateral relations and also ultimately to regional stability.

Thank you.

Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV (Azerbaijan, ALDE): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Over the past 20 years, the Parliamentary Assembly has repeatedly debated the activities of democratic institutions in Armenia, parliamentary and presidential elections held in the country. Notwithstanding the debates took place at different times, in different political situations in the country in the presence of different people in power, the rapporteurs were surprisingly unanimous in their assessment of the situation. Nevertheless, the developments that took place in recent years in Armenia demonstrated that in fact the position of the Armenian people did not coincide with the views of these rapporteurs. Finally, the Armenian society raised its voice of protest, rejected them, voluntarily elected a leader, and the state exposed a number of crimes committed by the leaders of the previous regime. This signifies that the Armenian society, in fact, confirmed the falsity of the pseudo victories of these leaders in the elections.

However, let such undesirable experiences become a lesson, let the passengers of such a road learn from the tragic fate of the rapporteurs who worked to order which was a stain on the name of the Council of Europe!

Today, assessing the state of democratic institutions in Armenia under Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, I think that having seen everything that we have witnessed, we must take into account the most correct criterion proposed by history - the opinion of the people. The people rejected the head of the criminal regime and elected Pashinyan. The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, in which the former presidents were among the main culprits and which lasted for almost 30 years, turned into a 44-day war in November 2020, in which Azerbaijan defeated and liberated its occupied territories. As if the case fell into the hands of the old forces, living and working with the desire to return to power, shaped by revanchist appeals. However, the people voted for Pashinyan, not for them, thus having proved and declared that they were against war, conflict, and did not accept the policy that had been leading the country into the abyss for years. In my opinion, all these developments can give a certain idea of the level of activity of democratic institutions in the country and the state of the democratic spirit. New perspectives are now opening up. Azerbaijan, which has become the leading economic coordinator in the region, offers multilateral cooperation. Including to Armenia! If cooperation is possible, it promises to open wide horizons for mutual enrichment of the region and neighboring countries as a whole.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

I think a lot of people in Armenia would be very surprised to read about the political system you described in your report, rosy and democratic. There is also another Armenia, about which you probably never heard, and therefore did not reflect in your report, with a number of recent politically motivated arrests, intimidation of political opponents and abuse of power.

However, the main reason for my comment is slightly different. In clause 5 of the draft you refer to consequences of the Karabakh war. May I remind you that this war took place in the territory of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenian army for 3 decades. Loss of Armenian lives, soldiers in the war happened in the territory of Azerbaijan. So my question to you dear colleagues – what did they do there?

Mr Pashinyan, after becoming leader of Armenia in 2018 did not do anything to stop the occupation, but on the contrary sustained it, sabotaged negotiations and publicly stated that Karabakh is Armenia. Mr Pashinyan's administration failed one of basic tests for democracy. Democratic governments do not occupy neighbours lands. And this report fails this test too, by not mentioning this fact.

There is one more point that I want to make. In the core of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan lies the issue of territorial claims of Armenia to Azerbaijan. Such claim is clearly stated in the main constitutional laws of Armenia. Until this basic issue is resolved and Armenia cleans it up, there is no way Armenia is able to build a proper democracy or achieve long term peace with its neighbours. If the report is aimed at helping Armenia I strongly recommend that this obvious fact is mentioned there, bearing in mind that Prime Minister recently signed a decision on reform of constitutional commission, it would be very timely.

A historical chance. But I doubt it will be used properly.

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear colleagues,

I would like to reiterate my strong discontent with the serious misrepresentation of a number of important issues and uses incorrect terminology referring to the post-conflict situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Referring to the so-called "self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic" in the explanatory memorandum, which has never been used in any official documents of the relevant international organizations, including PACE, is absolutely unacceptable. This contradicts the principled position of the Council of Europe on the full respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of its member States. The Assembly must strictly abide by this well-established position in its activities.

Furthermore, the report fails to properly reflect new realities in the region following the liberation of the illegally occupied Azerbaijani territories and restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan in accordance with the international law, most particularly the respective Resolutions of the UN Security Council from 1993.

No one should forget that Armenia has been directly responsible for the conflict that lasted for more than 30 years due to its aggressive policy and territorial claims.

However, despite all this, Azerbaijan looks to the future. As our President Ilham Aliyev said that Azerbaijan is committed to peace, stability and predictability, and our efforts are aimed at minimization of risks of any new war in the region. For that purpose, the best way is to open communications to establish active dialogue, and to learn to be neighbors again.

Therefore, instead of fueling revanchist calls in Armenia, co-rapporteurs should encourage Armenia to take constructive steps to establish peaceful coexistence and cooperation in the region

Finally, the way that the respective amendments were voted and the report was adopted casts shadow on the monitoring procedure as well as on the activities of the co-rapporteurs.

Mr Hayk MAMIJANYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

According to AJMC COVID-19 can cause ocular problems. This is the only acceptable reason for me to understand why European organizations had set a blind eye on Armenia.

It is hard to imagine that the international community hasn't noticed Pashinyan urging people to block the entrances of all the courts and ordering law enforcement agencies not to interfere on-air.

I can't believe that the free world can't see that cases of opposition leaders are always assigned manually to the same judges because the case assignment system was confiscated.

It is impossible that the democratic society missed the fact that those judges who accepted to become a punishing stick in the hands of Pashinyan will get more salary than their colleagues. This fact was praised in the report.

By the way 3 members of parliament were in-prisoned without the permission of parliament for months. So "immunity of the MPs" is just a word in my country. Not mentioning two oppositional mayors who have won in the local elections, the father of my fellow opposition MP and many others who are still in custody.

You don't see the ruling party changing the Constitution without consultations with the sole purpose of getting rid of the head of the Constitutional Court. Or decides to start a criminal prosecution and replace the head of the Supreme Judicial Council with a loyal one.

The vision of watchdogs of democracy is so affected that they can't even see that the freedom of speech in Armenia is endangered because of new laws voted by the Pashinyan's parliamentarians.

I can't imagine that the fact that terrorists were used by turkish-azeri tandem against Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh during 44-day war can be left out of scope.

People can not be blind to the fact that Azerbaijani government refuses to fulfil its obligations by the trilateral agreement and return all the prisoners of war kept in Baku for more than a year.

Europe refuses to acknowledge the fact that Azerbaijani forces had occupied sovereign territory of Armenia for almost a year. You just don't see it.

The aggressive rhetoric of Aliev stays in the blindspots of international organizations. He even makes jokes about OSCE Minsk group activities assuming that the only agenda of the mentioned organization is to plan the events for their 30th anniversary.

Dear colleagues, please stop looking at the region and Armenia with your eyes wide shut.

Ms Arusyak JULHAKYAN (Armenia, NR): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Honorable Chair,

Today I want to tell you about the Armenian reforms in the field of combating corruption.

The National Security Strategy of Armenia adopted in 2020 identifies corruption as national security threat. According to this document, strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law contribute to Armenia's national security.

One of the main reasons for the velvet revolution in Armenia was the systemic and systemized corruption.

So, after the revolution the first thing we did was the elimination of systemic corruption.

The most important component of fighting corruption is the political will, which we have. The second component is the institutional basis, the third one is strategy. The Anti-Corruption Strategy adopted in 2019 envisages 3 general directions: Prevention of corruption, Counteraction of corruption, Raising public awareness. As a first significant step of prevention of corruption the Commission to Prevent Corruption was created in 2019. This is an independent body the commissioners of which are elected by the Parliament. Quite a wide range of public officials and their relatives, as well as the political parties submit a detailed annual declaration about their income, property and expenses. The Commission also checks the integrity of the candidates for judges, prosecutors, and investigators. The Commission has access to state database, financial information, including bank secret. Within the scope of counteraction of corruption new institutions, in particular, the anticorruption committee, the anticorruption court, as well as a new anticorruption division in the Prosecutor's Office were created. The corruption is a universal problem. From this perspective transparency of assets would enable the world to combat corruption and kleptocracy breaking the pathway- steal, obscure, spend. The Armenian reforms in this field are the following. In 2021 new regulations were adopted, which envisage creation of open register for real owners and beneficiaries of legal persons. The obligation to reveal the real beneficiaries and owners will gradually become compulsory for all the legal persons including companies operating in the fields of metal mining, energy, regulation of public services, as well as the audiovisual media, etc.

Dear colleagues, it is important to understand how we can join our efforts to combat money laundry, which will in its turn help us strengthen and protect the democratic institutions. We know that the democracies are very frequently targeted using the laundered money itself. So it is important to understand what can be done by the democracies to protect themselves and each other.

Vote: The functioning of democratic institutions in Armenia

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Mr Piero FASSINO.

The Monitoring Committee has presented a draft Resolution [Doc. 15432] to which 17 amendments have been tabled. The amendments will be taken in the order in which they appear in the Compendium. I remind you that speeches on amendments are limited to one minute. I ask parliamentarians participating remotely to ask for the floor only when they have to support their own amendment or wish to speak against an amendment.

We start with Amendment 6. I call Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 6. You have one minute.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Madam President.

The major and the very important – to follow the style of the presentation of the papers within the Parliamentary Assembly, and especially within the Monitoring Committee – our respectable rapporteur presented the report.

Within the Monitoring Committee we have the sentence or using the title of this conflict and the beginning of this conflict and words from the text "the military hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan". This is, I quoted, from the document which the Monitoring Committee adopted during and after the war and that is why taking into account that it is very logical to put the sentences, which were already used by the Monitoring Committee in the report. My amendment is to put these sentences in the report which was prepared by the respectable co-rapporteurs, please.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister SEYIDOV.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mister RUBINYAN, the floor is yours.

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

Mr Samad SEYIDOV is wrong.

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the name that has been used for the conflict for decades including in this Assembly. So it's simply wrong and I understand that he wants to wipe out the region, the name, and everyone who lives there, but you cannot simply do that.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister RUBINYAN.

What is the opinion of the Committee on the Amendment?

Thank you, Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN, also for that?

The rapporteur?

No?

Mister FASSINO first.

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The committee voted against. It rejected the Amendment by a two-thirds majority.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): The Committee is against.

I think, you know, I should...

Yes.

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

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

The Amendment is rejected.

We continue to Amendment 7.

I call Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 7.

You have one minute Sir.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Madam President.

I just want to remind to my colleague, Mr Ruben RUBINYAN, the title of Report 1416 which was adopted in 2005: the Conflict dealt by OSCE Group. The title of the report which presented to the Parliamentary Assembly and just recently adopted by Mr GAVIN: the Humanitarian consequences of the War between Armenia and Azerbaijan/Nagorno-Karabakh. Where he can see Nagorno-Karabakh conflict title in the document? Please, show me. And that's why instead of this kind of accusation and presenting not so right information, our Amendment is about changing the wording which, within the report, into the phrase 6-week war.

Thank you very much. I ask for support.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister SEYIDOV.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mr RUBINYAN, the floor is yours.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): I'm against the Amendment for the same reason that I was against the last Amendment.

By the way, Mr SEYIDOV is asking where I saw the words "Nagorno-Karabakh". He said it. It was in the title. Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr RUBINYAN.

What is the opinion of The Committee on this Amendment?

Mr FASSINO.

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The committee rejected the Amendment with a two-thirds majority vote.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Yes, it is against and I shall now put the Amendment to the vote.

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

The vote is closed and I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 7 is rejected.

Thank you. And then we go to Amendment 8 and I call Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 8.

You have one minute, sir.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Madam President.

As I already mentioned, this is a conflict unfortunately being between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh is an integral part of my country. Even though Armenia was not able to recognise Nagorno-Karabakh, negotiations are going on between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Old discussions. We are looking for confidence-building measures between Armenia and Azerbaijan. That's why our suggestion is to put the word on both sides, not all sides. Both sides reflected the reality.

I ask for support.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr SEYIDOV.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mr RUBINYAN, the floor is yours.

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

It's unfortunate that our Azeri colleagues are spamming the discussion that had to be about democratic achievements of Armenia, but anyway I'm against the Amendment because this was a conflict involving unfortunately more than two sides and it's a fact.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister RUBINYAN.

What is the opinion of the Committee on the Amendment?

Mister FASSINO?

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The committee rejected it by a two-thirds majority.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The Committee is against with a two-thirds majority.

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

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 8 is rejected.

Now we move to Amendment 9.

I call Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 9.

You have one minute.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Again, Madam President.

I think that the continuation of logic within the Parliamentary Assembly is a very essential thing. Not just denial of the facts as my colleague Mr Ruben RUBINYAN just said, but presenting the facts. The report which already adopted by the respectable members of the Assembly, I mean the report which was presented by Mr HOWELL included the word captives, not prisoners of war. And that's why we are in favour of the same logic which Mr HOWELL has and that's why I asked for support, not just to deny all this.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr SEYIDOV.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mr RUBINYAN, the floor is yours.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): In violation of the trilateral statement and in violation of the international humanitarian law, Azerbaijan a year after – more than a year after – the end of hostilities, hasn't repatriated all the army and prisoners of war. And this amendment should absolutely not pass. I'm against this Amendment.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister RUBINYAN.

What is the opinion of the Committee on the Amendment?

Mister FASSINO?

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The committee rejected it by a two-thirds majority.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): The Committee was against with a big majority.

I shall now put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote in hemicycle and remote voting is now open.

Thank you. The vote is closed. I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 9 is rejected.

Thank you and then we move to oral amendment 1. I have received an oral amendment from Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN on behalf of the Monitoring Committee which reads as follows:

"In the draft resolution, paragraph 5, replace the fifth sentence with the following sentence:

'The Assembly welcomes the transfer of landmines maps to Azerbaijan and calls on the parties to continue their co-operation for demining efforts in the region.'"

The President may accept an oral amendment on the grounds of promoting clarity, accuracy or conciliation and if there is not opposition from ten or more members to it being debated.

In my opinion the oral amendment meets the criteria of Rule 34.7.a. However, is there any opposition to the amendment being debated? To object members present in the hemicycle should stand up and those connected remotely should request to speak.

I see none in the Plenary who has raised and none on the screen.

That is not the case. I therefore call Mr KILJUNEN to support Oral Amendment 1. You have 1 minute, Sir.

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, Co-rapporteur): Actually, this wasn't a compromised formulation which we would like to propose – in terms that there will be good efforts or de-mining of the overall area, obviously including those landmine maps which Armenia has given to Azerbaijan. It's a good reconciliation move, and we support that compromising formulation, and I hope that we all can agree with it.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN.

Does anyone wish to speak against the oral amendment?

None in the Plenary and none on the screen, and I think Mr Piero FASSINO and you know that the Committee is obviously in favour.

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The committee rejected the original amendment by a two-thirds majority and unanimously adopted the oral sub-amendment.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Piero FASSINO.

The Committee was unanimously in favour.

I shall now put the oral Amendment to the vote.

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

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

The oral Amendment is agreed.

Thank you.

Amendment 1 falls because oral Amendment 1 was adopted.

We go to Amendment 10.

I call Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 10.

You have one minute Sir.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Madam President. Actually, my logic is the same.

We already have the report which was presented to the Parliamentary Assembly by Mr Paul GAVIN. Within that report, it calls to investigate the crimes and all illegal acts that had happened, which is very, very important. I think we should refer to and take into account the report presented by Mr Paul GAVIN. On the basis of this report, we should include this item into the report presented by the respectable rapporteurs.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Samad SEYIDOV

Does anyone want to speak against the amendment? Mr Ruben RUBINYAN, the floor is yours.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): Thank you, the Amendment is unnecessary and one-sided. So I'm against the Amendment.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Ruben RUBINYAN.

What is the opinion of the Committee? Mr Piero FASSINO.

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The Committee rejected the amendment by a two-thirds majority.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): The Committee rejected it by two-thirds majority.

I shall now put the Amendment to the vote.

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

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

Amendment 10 is rejected.

Thank you.

We go to Amendment 11.

I call Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV to support Amendment 11.

You have one minute.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV, will you go in for Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV?

Okay. The floor is yours.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): I am also presenter of the report, of the amendment.

Thank you very much, Madam President.

In my speech I have mentioned about the realities and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is over. And that is why we should do our best in order to find the resolution of the humanitarian problems in the region. We should do our best in order to create confidence-building measures. But in paragraph 5 you can see the sentence about "just and lasting resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict".

My dear friends, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was already resolved and that is why, of course, it will be the real situation when in the report, we will find the sentence, which could help us to find the resolution of the humanitarian issues, which still exists but not the conflict, which is already resolved.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Samad SEYIDOV.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN, the floor is yours.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): Thank you Madam Chair, dear colleagues,

Literally two hours ago the Azeri armed forces were shooting at Armenian positions in Nagorno-Karabakh.

So unfortunately what Mr Samad SEYIDOV is saying is not real.

I am against the Amendment. Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Ruben RUBINYAN.

What is the opinion of the Committee? Mr Piero FASSINO.

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The Committee rejected the amendment by a two-thirds majority.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The committee rejected with a two-thirds majority.

Thank you. I shall now put the Amendment to the vote. The vote in the hemicycle and via remote voting is now open.

The vote is closed and I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 11 is rejected.

Thank you.

We continue to Amendment 12. I call Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 12. You have one minute, sir.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Madam president, thank you very much.

You know, the 7 December 2021, the International Court of Justice adopted the interim decision about prevention of all forms of racial discrimination which we can see in Armenia. That's why I think this is really very important because this is a tribunal, this is a court, and I think that's very important to put into the report the interim decision which already was made by the court in The Hague.

Thank you very much.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr SEYIDOV.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mr RUBINYAN, the floor is yours.

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

Dear colleagues, I am truthfully sorry for this kind of debate that we are all witnessing but what can you do? I am against the Amendment because it is unnecessary and one-sided.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

And what is the opinion of the Committee? Mr Piero FASSINO.

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The Committee rejected the amendment by a two-thirds majority.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The Committee rejected this Amendment with a two-thirds majority.

I shall put the Amendment to the vote.

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

The vote is closed and I call for the result to be displayed, thank you.

And then you see Amendment 12 is rejected.

I continue with Amendment 13 and I call Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 13. You have one minute, sir.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Madam president, thank you very much.

This is really very strange, actually. We are talking about the peace, actually. We are doing our best in order for confidence-building measures, actually. Two leaders of two states came together under the auspices of President Putin in Sochi. They agreed to do much more in the future than they have done in the past. Everything is going in the right direction – peaceful negotiations; communication – and we are in favour to input these peaceful moods as the respectable rapporteur said. That's why this is a reality, under the auspices of the leader of the big country, peacekeepers, who are working together with Azerbaijanis and Armenians in Azerbaijan and in Karabakh, have done a lot. And two leaders of two states were together. How can we prevent these Amendments from being inserted into the text. That's why, of course, I am in favour.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr SEYIDOV.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mr RUBINYAN, the floor is yours.

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

Unfortunately if everything was going in the right direction, all Armenian prisoners of War would have been repatriated, a number of unarmed civilians wouldn't have been killed in Nagorno-Karabakh in the last two months along, and we wouldn't be having yet another inglorious quarrel in this hemicycle.

Things are not going in the right direction, and this Amendment is unnecessary in this text. So I'm against this Amendment.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Ruben RUBINYAN.

And then I ask for the opinion of the Committee, Mr Piero FASSINO.

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The Commission rejected this Amendment with a two-thirds majority.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The Committee was against with a big majority.

The vote in the Hemicycle and via remote voting is now open. I call you all to vote.

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 13 is rejected.

Thank you.

I go to Amendment 14.

I call Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 14.

You have one minute, sir.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Madam President.

It's very strange and I don't want to advocate my Amendment, but I want to read my Amendment in order to explain what you are going to reject, my dear friends and respectable rapporteur: "The Assembly emphasizes the necessity of working for reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in particular through confidence-building measures and achieving the normalization of their relations based on the respect of each other's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and inviolability of international borders."

Could he imagine? And at the Committee they said no. No for what? For reconciliation? For confidence-building measures? For peace? Okay, diaspora is strong, no but not so strong, friends.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Samad SEYIDOV.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment? Mr Ruben RUBINYAN.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN, the floor is yours.

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

It is true diaspora is not as strong as caviar is and regarding the amendment, it does not belong here firstly, and secondly, according to the principles of the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict set out in the OSCE Minsk group co-chairmanship, the principles are the following: the principle of territorial integrity, the principle of self-determination of peoples and the principle of non-use of force or non-use of threat of force.

And since the two principles are not here, it is a completely one-sided amendment and I am against this amendment.

And Mr Samad SEYIDOV, reconciliation does not happen by shooting or shouting in different hemicycles.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Ruben RUBINYAN.

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mr Piero FASSINO?

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The Committee rejected with a large majority.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister Piero FASSINO.

The Committee rejected it with a large majority of two-thirds.

The vote in the Hemicycle and via remote voting is now open. I think we are ready for that.

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 14 is rejected.

Thank you.

Amendment 15. I call on Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 15.

You have 1 minute, Sir.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Actually Madam President, I did it already.

But again, I have to stress that if we are not ready to accept the realities, the reality will change the situation by itself.

The real war had happened between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Thank God that now, in the region, we are fighting for peace, because Karabakh is already free from occupation. Because international law has been restored. Because the refugees are able, from both sides, to return back.

That's why I asked my friends to reflect on the realities that this is a war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

I know that the Committee has been against, but I have to say that.

This is the reality.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Samad SEYIDOV.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN, the floor is yours.

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

Dear colleagues,

We have already rejected similar amendments twice, so it makes sense to reject it again, but I want to address one thing that Mr Samad SEYIDOV said. Did I hear that he said that all refugees are able to return?

Do you know how many Armenians now live on the territories which came under Azeri control after the war? Zero. And they can't return.

No ethnic Armenian can enter Azerbaijan, unfortunately, in the 21st century.

But this is not about the Amendment. I am against the Amendment for the same reasons as I was against the other amendments.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Ruben RUBINYAN.

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mr Piero FASSINO?

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The Committee rejected the Amendment by a two-thirds majority.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Piero FASSINO.

The Committee rejected the amendment by a two-thirds majority.

I shall now put the Amendment to the vote and the vote in hemicycle and via remote voting is now open.

The vote is closed. I call for the results to be displayed.

Amendment 15 is rejected.

Thank you.

Amendment 2. I call Ms JULHAKYAN to support Amendment 2. You have 1 minute.

That will be Mr Ruben RUBINYAN to support Amendment 2, I think. Is that right?

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): Yes Madam Chair.

I will support all of our amendments.

The purpose of this Amendment is to correct the text factually.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

I see no one in the plenary. Is there anyone on the screen.

No.

What's the opinion of the Committee, Mr FASSINO?

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): The Commission approved it with a large majority.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): The committee was in favour by a large majority.

I shall now put the Amendment to the vote. The vote in the hemicycle and via remote voting is now open.

The vote is closed. I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 2 is agreed.

Thank you.

Amendment 3: I call maybe also Mr Ruben RUBINYAN wants to support Amendment 3, or else I have Ms Arusyak JULHAKYAN.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): Thank you Madam Chair,

Again, the purpose of this Amendment is to correct the text factually.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

I see no-one in the Plenary.

And do we have anybody on the screen?

None on the screen.

Mister FASSINO, what's the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): Approved with a large majority.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): The Committee was in favour with a large majority.

I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

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

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment 3 is agreed to.

Thank you.

Amendment 5.

I'll call Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 5.

You have one minute, sir.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Madam President,

Taking into account information which I have got from rapporteur during the Committee meeting, I withdraw this Amendment.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, you withdraw this Amendment.

Does anyone else want to keep the Amendment?

No. I see none in the Plenary. Is there someone on the screen? No.

Then we go to Amendment 4.

It is an oral sub-amendment and I understand there is an oral sub-amendment to Amendment 1.

First, I call Ms JULHAKYAN to support Amendment 1. You have 1 minute – but it might be Mr Ruben RUBINYAN – Mr Ruben RUBINYAN, the floor is yours.

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

Again the purpose of this amendment is factual and also we have reached a compromise text during the Committee meeting which I again approve.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you so much Mr Ruben RUBINYAN.

I have been informed that Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN wishes to propose an oral sub-amendment, on behalf of the Monitoring Committee, as follows.

In Amendment 4 replace "creating a risk of undermining the principle of irremovability of judges" with "endangering the independence of this institution".

In my opinion, the oral sub-Amendment is in order under our rules.

However, do ten or more members object to the oral sub-Amendment being debated?

The object members present in the Hemicycle should stand up, and those connected remotely should request to speak.

I see none in the Hemicycle.

What do you see on the screen?

No one there?

Then it's obviously fewer than ten members who object the oral sub-Amendment being debated.

Therefore, I call Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN to support his oral sub-Amendment.

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, Co-rapporteur): Madam Chair,

The question is about the integrity of the Constitutional Court. The wording which was originally creating a risk of undermining the principle of irremovability of judges is too specific. It is much better to speak about the independence of this institution as a whole. That is the reason why we have this compromised proposal there.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): That's a compromise proposal.

Does anyone wish to speak against the oral sub-Amendment?

I see none in the plenary, in the hemicycle and none on the screen.

And it's ok for Mr Ruben RUBINYAN, I see.

What is the opinion of the mover of the main Amendment, Ms Arusyak JULHAKYAN, Mr Ruben RUBINYAN that commented?

The committee is obviously in favour, Mr Piero FASSINO, isn't it so? Can you nod? Yes?

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)): Yes, unanimously.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Excellent.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

And there you see, *the oral sub-amendment is agreed to.*

Then we continue.

Amendment 4 as amended.

We have to go through that too?

Yes.

We are soon reaching the end of the day but we have a couple of amendments more.

We will now consider the main Amendment as amended.

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?
No-one in the Plenary and no one on the screen?
What is the opinion of the Committee on the Amendment?
Mr Piero FASSINO? Mr Ruben RUBINYAN?
It's okay Mr Ruben RUBINYAN says.
I continue putting Amendment 4 to the vote.
The vote is open.
The vote is closed.
I call for the result to be displayed.
Amendment 4 is agreed to.
Thank you.
We then continue to Amendment 16.
I call Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 16.
You have one minute, Sir.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): President,
I already explained my logic. I gave an explanation.
Even we have sent dissident opinion to your report.
That's why I withdraw this Amendment.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): You withdraw the Amendment. Does anyone else want to keep it? No one in the hemicycle and no one on the screen.
Then we can go further on to Amendment 17. And I call Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support Amendment 17.
You have one minute, sir.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Madam President.
Despite all of these difficulties, I want to express my gratitude to you for your patience.
I hope in future we will be able to reflect the realities at least.
Thank you very much.
I withdraw my Amendment.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr SEYIDOV.
Does anyone else want to keep Amendment 7?
If so, you have to raise your hand. There is no one in the plenary. Is there someone on the screen? No one.
Thank you.
We will now proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in Doc. 15432. The vote in the hemicycle and via remote voting is now open.
The vote is closed.
I call for the result to be displayed.
The draft resolution in Doc. 15432 is adopted.
Thank you and congratulations.

Yes, then I give the floor to the President, Mr Tiny KOX. Thank you.

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

Before ending this issue on the debate that we had, I now would like to welcome at the end of our debate, Mr Alen SIMONYAN, president of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

Now that we have concluded our debate on the functioning of the democratic institutions and you have taken your decisions on the draft resolution, I am honoured to give the floor to you, Mister President of the Assembly, for a short contribution from your side after the end of this debate.

President SIMONYAN, you have the floor. You are online with us.

Mr Alen Simonyan (President of the National Assembly of Armenia): Dear Mr Tiny KOX, Honourable Mr President. First, I congratulate you on your election as President of the Assembly.

Dear colleagues, it is an honour for me to address the Parliamentary Assembly and I wish to express my gratitude to the rapporteurs, Ms Boriana ÅBERG and Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN, for their work on the report about democracy in Armenia.

The determination by the Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Europe that Armenia has made progress is important to us. Strengthening democracy in our country is a pillar of our agenda. We prioritise developing democratic institutions, respecting the rule of law, promoting human rights and fighting corruption.

Armenians know the value of democracy. Over the past three years, we have twice reaffirmed our commitment to democratic values: in 2018, through the non-violent Velvet Revolution and in 2021 after the 44-Day War. Armenia passed a critical test for democracy and the rule of law when it successfully conducted parliamentary elections in June 2021. These elections were vital in restoring public trust. Through them, we rewrote our commitment to the electoral process, held in difficult conditions. The elections attracted the attention of the international community and were deemed free, fair and comparative.

Implementing policies to protect human rights is a high priority. We seek targeted solutions and additional safeguards against human rights violations. We continue to implement reforms to fortify the electoral process to meet European standard legislation, ensuring the free exercise of electoral rights will be enacted. We have launched a new round of discussions in the framework of the newly-established constitutional reforms council.

Fighting corruption is another important priority of our government. We seek to create an anti-corruption policy that reflects this. To this end, the role of the Corruption Prevention Commission (CPC) mentioned in the report is significant. I stress that CPC participates in crafting the government's anti-corruption strategy and has leverage to ensure transparency and accountability. This is a powerful platform that takes the desired steps and the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia will continue to support the Commission in fulfilling its functions.

We are also focused on improving the judiciary. Reforms are being implemented to increase public confidence in the judiciary, creating a positive impact on all spheres of public life.

Colleagues, today we face serious challenges in our effort to strengthen democracy. The last two years were hard for Armenia. We faced both the global pandemic and the grave consequences of the 44-Day War against Nagorno-Karabakh. The effects of the war were very profound. Sometimes it seemed that post-war unrest would threaten the viability of the state. Today the biggest challenge for us remains security. The Armenian people and our democratic achievements have been under constant threat since September 2020. We strongly believe that only peace can guarantee long-lasting security and stability, and that is why our government's greatest duty to its citizens is to start an era of peace for Armenia and the region.

Of course, accomplishing this objective depends not only on us but also on other countries in the region and the support of European institutions, principally of OSCE and the Council of Europe. Armenia assumes its share of responsibility for building the foundations of peace in the region.

To this end, we must also reach a just and lasting resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to avert addresses, humanitarian issues, including the safe return of all Armenian prisoners of war.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you for your contribution, Mr President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

I do want to ask you to bring the results of our debate and of our resolution to the attention of the members of your parliament.

The monitoring procedure of this Assembly is there to assist countries to be able to live up to their obligations when they joined our Assembly.

This concludes the debate on Armenia.

Colleagues, I want to say one more thing at the end.

We have had a very tight day; we worked very hard.

But let us be aware that we are not the only ones who work hard.

I want to thank all the staff here who helped us come through the day, but especially in this respect our interpreters who have done a tremendous job far beyond their normal schedule. I would like to ask for a round of applause for them.

(Applause)

Without our interpreters we would not even be able to communicate.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, dear interpreters, for helping us through this day.

I hope that you have a peaceful and enjoyable evening.

The Assembly will hold its next public sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. with the agenda that was approved on Monday.

The sitting is adjourned.

Request for an explanation of vote

Mr Bob van PAREREN (Netherlands, EC/DA): For the record, I would like to mention that during the vote on the draft resolution on *The functioning of democratic institutions in Armenia*, my intention was to vote in favour, and that I voted against by mistake.

The sitting is closed at 7:10 p.m.