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Official report of debates

Opening of the sitting No. 18

Debate: The role of political parties in fostering diversity and inclusion: a new Charter for a non-racist society

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

I would like to draw your attention to the exhibition of the War Childhood Museum, opening this afternoon at 5 p.m. in the lobby of the hemicycle.

The exhibition has been arranged by Mr Jasminko Halilović, the president and founder of the War Childhood Museum of Sarajevo, and Ms Svitlana Osipchuk, the Museum of Ukraine project manager. Mr Halilović and Ms Osipchuk are in the public gallery.

You are all cordially invited to attend this opening. Welcome.

Then to the item of this afternoon. It is The role of the political parties in fostering diversity and inclusion: a new Charter for a non-racist society.

The first item of business at this sitting is the debate on the report titled The role of political parties in fostering diversity and inclusion: a new Charter for a non-racist society, Document 15535, presented by Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW on behalf of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

We shall also hear an opinion from Sir Tony LLOYD on behalf of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, it is Document 15536.

In order to finish by 5 p.m. I will interrupt the list of speakers at about 4:50 p.m. to allow time for the reply and the vote on the draft resolution.

I called Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW, rapporteur, to take the floor. You have seven minutes, sir.

Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW (Sweden, UEL, Rapporteur): Madam President,

Dear colleagues,

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.

Racism, xenophobia, sexism and hate speech, in all it's different forms, is on the rise, threatening the very fabric of Europe. It sows the seeds of hate and normalises the entrenchment of the very principles that the Council of Europe was established to fight against.

Intolerance and discrimination still permeate our societies, making our peaceful living together more difficult and undermining the human rights and dignities of millions of people.

However, the lack of political will to acknowledge, speak out against, and address this, has been one of the most significant barriers in achieving equality.

Political parties are best placed to contribute to the fight against racism and intolerance, and to foster an inclusive society. They largely contribute to shaping the political conversation. They are the main gatekeepers of elected bodies and enjoy a wide autonomy in regulating their internal functioning.

As politicians, we owe a lot to our respective political parties. They support us, they put down our names on electoral lists. They can also take our names off electoral lists, and even deprive us of our party membership. So political parties have a wide autonomy and self-regulatory power that allow them to decide on our fate as members.

The Charter of European political parties for a non-racist and inclusive society is based on political party self-regulatory power. It takes into account the evolution of Europe's social and political landscape, the emergence of new technologies in communication, and the increase in racism and intolerance.

Political parties signing the Charter commit themselves to defending basic human rights and democratic principles, and to rejecting all forms of racism, intolerance and hate speech. When a political party signs the Charter, it simply means that the party shall demand the members abide by these principles.

Now, we expect all parties to use this power not only to manage the internal functioning, but also to act for the common good, to make the world we live in more open, non-racist and inclusive.

Madam Chair, that's the reason we need this Charter for a non-racist and inclusive society.

Racism and hate speech in all its forms is on the rise and being normalised. It undermines everything the Council of Europe stands for.

Structural racism is a reality in Europe. Just think of the absurd conspiracy theory that targeted Chinese people and people of Jewish origin during the Covid-19 pandemic, or the racist narrative about migrants from Africa and the Middle East.

We politicians have an important role to play in preventing and countering hate speech, because communication is a crucial part of our work. in and out of parliament, on and offline. Our responsibility should not be underestimated because words have meaning, Madam President, and language is often where in intolerance begins.

Negative stereotyping, derogatory language, stigmatisation. These are the four steps. Then come scapegoating, victim-blaming, ostracising.

Some politicians indulge in this kind of communication because they think it may help in giving them votes. We must counter this. Political parties have the power to do so.

The ultimate aim of the resolution that we are debating today is to make political parties and their members aware of the formidable power they have to counter discrimination and racism in whatever form it manifests itself, to encourage them wholeheartedly to take on this mission. We have a choice and we have a chance.

Madam President, this is a very important charter. Just like the original version, the revised Charter is based on its self-regulatory power for each political party, which freely adheres to the principles mentioned in the document, and commits itself to implementing them in its actions.

This is very important for all of us that are here to adhere to, because we are here and we're representing an institution that defends human rights. Everything that is said in the Charter is the basic principles of human rights, is the basic values that this institution stands for. So it is the minimum standard that all of us that are here will have the possibility to sign a charter that says that our members would respect human rights, our members will refrain from spreading hate and hate speech, our members would work for an inclusive society. That is what this Charter is about. That is something that we all that are here in this Chamber agree on, because otherwise we wouldn't be here.

It is important that we do everything that we can so as many people as possible would sign this Charter, as many parties as possible to sign this Charter, because the last Charter that we had, the previous one, we didn't have enough political parties to sign it. But in this new, revised Charter, we are hoping that each and every one of us will start from home, because they say charity begins at home. We read the Charter, we go back to our political parties, and we asked them to sign it. Signing it means that we would abide by the very principles that this institution stands for.

What are these principles? The principle is to adhere to the fundamental human rights, non-discrimination. Those are the simple principles. All of us might think, oh maybe we all adhere to those principles, but we also know with the rise in hate speech that we see, especially when it comes to people in power, when it comes to policy makers, that we do not always adhere to these principles. So what this Charter is doing is basically saying that encouraging each and every one of us and our political parties to adhere to the very principles that we claim that we represent by sitting here. That is what it is saying.

I hope, Madam Chair, that all the members here would take this opportunity, because it's a chance and it's an opportunity, to revisit and recommit ourselves to these fundamental principles that we represent in this grand Chamber.

Thank you so much.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister Momodou Malcolm JALLOW, the rapporteur.

I now call Sir Tony LLOYD, rapporteur of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy to present the Committee's opinion.

Sir Tony LLOYD (United Kingdom, SOC, Rapporteur for opinion): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let me begin by congratulating our colleague, Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW, for what I think is an excellent report. The report that is timely, because he is right to tell us that in this European home of ours hate speech is on the increase, intolerance is on the increase. Some of that is driven by other forces, but clearly social media has been a major driver of those changes. It is time that we once again examine the role of political parties in combating this.

Mr JALLOW is absolutely right: the values of tolerance, the values of basic respect for others, the values of non-discrimination, the values of driving down against hate speech ought to be the core values of this Council of Europe of ours. It ought to be the core values, actually, of political parties across Europe, because this ought to be our common home. It ought to be the values of people around the world.

Madam Chair, I would say, unfortunately, we cannot claim that we do not have – even amongst our political parties – those who preach a language that is very different to these values. Yes, social media have made it worse.

I think within this context we all recognise the role of leadership from our political parties and particularly the role of leadership from the leaders of our political parties in demonstrating the case for tolerance, demonstrating the case that we want to change, we want to change for the better. Most political parties from time to time have to look at themselves and recognise that times change. There was a time when it would have been acceptable in my own political party to have very few women as representatives of the party. That has changed enormously. I am glad to say there are more women in the Parliamentary Labour Party than there are men. That is a success not because there are more but because the strive for equality, understanding and respect has gone a long way. I would be kidding myself if I said there still was not misogyny in my own party. We have to be on the alert all the time. Racism is with us, intolerance of those with disabilities, and as I say, misogyny. These are things that still inflict all our society. Political parties have a very specific leadership role. It is that leadership role, Madam Chair, that we have got to say to us all.

Let us accept that challenge. Let us accept the need for this new Charter of the European political party for a non-racist, inclusive society and let us make sure that we ask our parties round this Council of Europe chamber to sign up to the Charter. That's a very sensible and very minimal demand. We can go a little bit further, because we also have got to recognise that if we simply sign up to a charter but do not implement it, if we do not seek to make it something real, something that we drive through in our societies, then by our

silence, we fail those who become victims of intolerance. That is the real challenge because, in the end, it is trying to ensure that we drive down against those who we would victimise and help and support those who are victims, ultimately, by there being fewer victims. Maybe no victims is too idealistic.

I do want to applaud Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW as well for the conversations that he has had with a wide range of people in drawing up this report. I would simply say I particularly welcome the fact that we agree on the need for political parties to have mechanisms for, where appropriate, for censoring their members, for challenging their members who flout the kind of standards and rules that we would want to be there, and ultimately, to have both the process for sanction, and in the end, to implement the independence of a complaints process which gives certainty to those who feel they have been victims that they are being listened to-That is important, but actually, in the end, that there is a remedy. This Charter does offer a challenge, as it offers a lot. If we get this right, we are advancing those principles and values that we should all believe in, those values of a tolerant Europe.

Mister Momodou Malcolm JALLOW, I thank you but also thank those who drew up the Charter. If we can make this work... It may look like a small step, actually, it is a big step for the Council of Europe and our European home. Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Sir Tony LLOYD, now we continue on the speaker's list and first we will have the speakers on behalf of the political groups. And the first speaker on behalf of Group of the European People's Party is Ms Jorida TABAKU from Albania.

The floor is yours.

Ms Jorida TABAKU (Albania, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I really appreciate the presentation of the rapporteurs of the resolution on the charter here.

It is true that now we are in the face of new ultra-right research. It is crucial for this Chamber to be united against racism.

As representatives of political parties we must team up with this war about what is going on that, I believe in some respects, is even shameful.

On behalf of the EPP Group we concord with this resolution in this war towards a more liberal and social environment that accepts differences. Never get involved in politics used to be advice given to all immigrants, women, young people, people with disabilities. It is true: this has happened before. As it is true now that more women and different categories and groups are being involved in politics, everyone is also facing very harsh hate speech.

Sometimes some of us are under attacks. Women in politics are much more welcomed, but sometimes even bullied. It is a new reality we have to live with, but we also have to change what's going on in some countries, especially more than others. Several cases of unfair treatment because of race belonging have happened in political environments. I can proudly say that this attitude is not the case any more.

Our political group has played a great role in this by setting examples. Members of Parliament in this chamber, but also in the European Parliament with disabilities, refugees, and immigrants are now the case every day more. I welcome the initiative for national parliaments to promote this resolution. I hope that all national parliaments, starting from the European Parliament, also supported by civil society actors, including media, will be part of it.

What I want to focus on more is the explicit references to online media communication and social media, who are playing a greater role today. Hate speech from the other side, not only for racist comments, but in general in politics, is creating a division that should not be created. Several resolutions, examples of inclusions have been promoted, but still it exists. This is not a new issue. It is on the rise, especially in Europe. Roma, minorities, immigrants, refugees are amongst the groups that are most often targeted.

I am sorry to say that this happens frequently every day more, especially in the Balkans for women. As a Member of Parliament from Albania, from the Western Balkans, I know what prejudice means, I know what it means to be considered different, and I know how difficult it is to fight against stereotypes. We have to start from this room, we have to start with the top down approach, and we have to start by empowering. Everyone who chairs the party in a political environment said that I want to make change, but change comes by a top-down approach and by empowerment in your party structures.

Thank you.

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

And the next speaker on behalf of the European Conservatives Group is Mr Erkin GADIRLI.

The floor is yours.

Mr Erkin GADIRLI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you Madam Chair, dear colleagues.

I thank the rapporteur. I am more than sure that this draft report was conceived of, prepared and presented with good intention, yet I'm rather sceptical about it.

First of all, as a lawyer myself, I seriously doubt that this draft report is needed, because most of the issues which are reflected in this report are already covered by existing rules of international and national legal systems.

On the other hand, dear colleagues, let us take into account that political parties, as non-state actors, have their very peculiar nature. By their nature, political parties are opportunistic organisations. They are squeezed within electoral cycles and their two core strategies are mobilisation of members and maximisation of votes.

These draft report and resolution seemingly tends to put an unbearable burden on political parties. They, as this report suggests – I seriously disagree with this suggestion by the way, political parties are not best placed to counter racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination – yet politicians and organisations should be held responsible for certain forms of speech, which constitute punishable acts.

Yet, this report suggests that their responsibility should also be prospective. This can end up with additional censorship. And let us not forget, like it or not, but hate speech is an integral part of free speech. This is how it developed. And what is hate speech can differ from culture to culture, and especially some meaning can get lost in translation. And since we live in the era of internet, when particular words of a particular politician in one country can be translated and then misunderstood in some other countries, international media and politicians are now being blamed and lynched not by the governments, but by the public.

So this report can further endanger freedom of speech and I think this report should be rejected.

Thank you very much.

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

And now the next speaker on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe is Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN.

The floor is yours, representing Ireland.

Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN (Ireland, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam Chair, and on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I want to thank the rapporteur for the work that he has done in producing this report.

Our countries have become more diverse in recent decades, and this should be seen as a strength, but sadly it's seen as a threat by many and because of this threat that they perceive they openly engage in racism and discrimination.

Hate speech is rife and it permeates public communication, including political discourse and very much online.

If we accept that we live in a racist society, we also have to accept that it's not enough to be non-racist. But we have to be anti-racist, and we have to develop policies and protocols to fight racism and discrimination and to progress truly democratic and inclusive societies, that basically emphasise and support the fundamental rights and values of human dignity, respect and equality. And it is the responsibility of every legislative body to send a clear message that racism will not be tolerated.

I believe that political parties are best placed to contribute to the fight against racism and intolerance and to foster an inclusive society. Political parties largely contribute to shaping the political conversation and are the main gatekeepers of elected bodies, and indeed enjoy a wide autonomy in regulating their internal functioning. Unfortunately migrants often find themselves marginalised from public discourse on issues of integration and diversity, and there's some barriers indeed to migrants getting involved in politics and contributing to policy.

Within the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, many of our parties have developed migrant networks to help address this issue and to encourage those from a migrant background to use their voice to get involved and to help formulate policy. And I suggest that those parties here who have not developed these networks do so. We also absolutely need to call out politicians who deliberately make racist comments to garner populist popularity. We must engender respect by example, by promoting understanding so that people will make fewer wrong assumptions, let go of biases and stereotypes that are damaging to a pluralist and inclusive society.

The Charter of European political parties for non-racist and inclusive society, originates from the revision of the previous 1998 Charter, which basically was in the last century and a lot has changed then.

So it's clear that we need a new charter taking into account the evolution of Europe's social and political landscape, the emergence of new technologies in communication, and the increase in racism and intolerance.

Of course, for the Charter to have an impact, monitoring its enforcement is absolutely crucial.

Thank you.

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

The next speaker on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left is Ms Laura CASTEL from Spain.

The floor is yours.

Ms Laura CASTEL (Spain, UEL, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, we want to thank the rapporteur for this important initiative. It is of urgent need to put racism in the front row of political parties' priorities and especially now, with this resurgence of the extreme right and populist political parties like in Poland or Spain, Türkiye, etc. Because racism is a frontal attack on democracy and human rights, political parties play a key role in combating and eradicating racism.

We could summarise five actions that could be carried out in parallel. First, admit – it is essential – admit that European society is racist and has a structural character. The eradication of racism requires specific and transversal legislative measures. Racism is not an isolated fact, it is a system. It is a system of structural oppression that soaks all social, political or economic structures and generates arbitrary domination. The racialisation of entire groups permeates everything from hierarchies of status and power, everyday interactions, labour relations, legislation or the composition of institutions – everything. It is expressed also in the naturalisation of racism in laws and practices that legitimise and perpetuate racist social structures and result in school segregation, ethnic profiling, etc.

Second: quantify. A system is needed for collecting data to detect the concrete situations of racism and to take measures for its eradication.

Third: fight. We need laws, measures and mechanisms that explicitly prohibit discrimination on racist grounds, especially in the police and justice. Reform legislation that causes inequality of rights based on the origin of people.

Fourth: prevent. We need to promote awareness of historical facts that help explain current racism and disseminate insufficiently known phenomena, such as slavery or colonialism. It is necessary to guarantee the presence of this anti-racist memory in the public sphere, in education and the media.

Fifth: compensate. Provide means to ensure that the diversity of origins and phenotypes is also reflected in all spheres and levels of society. Eliminating barriers, for example, in accessing public office for residents or foreign nationality. As the report states, political parties are not the best placed to counter racism, intolerance and hate speech, promote diversity and foster inclusion. We, as politicians, should refrain from perpetrating racism. That is why this revised Charter is very, very necessary. We encourage all political parties of all delegations of the Parliamentary Assembly to sign and adopt it.

Thank you very much.

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

Now Ms Margreet De BOER, from the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group, representing The Netherlands.

Ms Margreet De BOER (Netherlands, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Chair.

On behalf of the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group, I want to thank Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW for this most important report, and Sir Tony LLOYD for his comments and additions.

As the report rightly states, we are facing increasing racism and intolerance in Europe. Hate speech is targeted at people because of their ethnic origin, cultural background, skin colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other grounds which make them the other.

It is good that the scope of the Charter is broadened so it covers discrimination on all these grounds.

What the report does not explicitly mention is the multiple discrimination a lot of people have to face. If you are a woman and Black you have to endure both sexism and racism. If you are Muslim and gay you also have to face a lot of extra hate. I'm sure the rapporteur does acknowledge the it, and the No Hate Parliamentary Assembly will take it in a into account when reviewing the implementation of the Charter.

This report is a special one because it does not address the member states or the Committee of Ministers, but our political parties, the European Parliament, national parliaments, civil society, and if the amendment of Sir Tony LLOYD is accepted, the national delegations and political groups within PACE.

This means this is not a resolution we can adopt and move on to the next topic. We have to work on it. Working on it is more than speaking out our good intentions.

The report and the Charter address the role of political parties in shaping the political conversation by speaking out against racism and intolerance on whatever grounds, and by not to endorse or distribute hate speech. Of course, we should do it, but this will probably be the easiest part.

The Charter also calls on political parties to refrain from cooperating with parties that incite racial or ethnic prejudice. Here it can become more difficult in these times when the extreme right is growing and the need for a majority is a political fact.

This Charter urges us to keep our back straight and not to give in to intolerance and hate. The Charter also calls on parties to strive for fair representation within the parties on all levels. To that, I want to add that it is not enough to recruit diverse candidates and members and to have them on our lists. Political parties should also ensure a truly welcoming and safe environment within their parties. From experience I can say this is not easy. It will require a complaint mechanism also for complaints within the party, but it also and firstly requires that we really welcome politicians that are not copies of ourselves, and not so we can tick the diversity box, but because we really value diversity and diverse personal qualities.

To conclude I want to make one more point. I tried to find online which political parties did sign the Charter, and found it is very hard to find any information on the Charter online. So I hope this also will change after this report, that will hopefully be adopted.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam Margreet De BOER, and thanks to the speakers on behalf of the political groups.

We continue with the speaker's list. The first is Ms Petra BAYR, representing the Socialist Group from Austria.

The floor is yours.

Ms Petra BAYR (Austria, SOC): *Thank you very much*, Ingrid,

Yes, the fight against racism, against hatred and against intolerance must be conducted in parallel on many, many levels.

It makes absolute sense to start with the political elites. One of the reasons for this – even if not as much as in the past – is that politicians are still something of a role model for many people, or at least they should be. They certainly set an example in their behaviour, in their actions, in their speeches. That is why it is very, very clever to start with the political parties. It is actually the political parties that are most likely to manage to really, I will say, take their representatives, their candidates in election campaigns by the reins and somehow see to it that they really behave accordingly so that racism, the serving of racist resentments does not become an election campaign magnet, does not become simple vote catching at the expense of those who are in the minority and at the expense of those who are somehow different.

That is something that drives societies apart. It is something that does not help to promote human rights, to promote minorities, and also to really create diversity in a society that is, after all, very fertile, that is very important, and to treat each other with respect.

If we campaign, if parties campaign in a way that human rights, diversity and respect are really there, are tangible, are visible; then that is also a very simple and important means of preventing racism and preventing racist resentment, not excluding anyone and not weakening social cohesion.

In German, they say that the tone makes the music. It is indeed very often the question of subjects, of slogans, of themes that I choose in an election campaign, which then has an effect on the social climate that is then really noticeable among people who read these posters, who read these slogans. From that point of view, it is also possible for political campaigns to poison the whole climate of a society, and that is not meant to be.

The Charter of the European political parties for a non-racist and, hopefully in the future also, inclusive society is an absolutely proven means to this end. Renewing it also makes sense. Adapting it to new current social realities makes sense. I think this is a very, very important step that I would like to support wholeheartedly. Also, the idea that the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance is a kind of watchdog function and a central link is something that I find very, very meaningful and that I am really looking forward to contributing to.

Mister Momodou Malcolm JALLOW, thank you very much for this very, very important report.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you so much, Madam Petra BAYR. Then we go to Mr François CALVET, representing the Group of the European People's Party from France.

The floor is yours.

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

Dear colleagues,

In all the states of our organisation, extremist parties are on the rise and, with them, hate speech. In a world plagued by war and serious crises, whether health or economic crises, this hate speech tends to be against scapegoats. It is often foreigners, refugees or, quite simply, those who have a different culture.

It is fully legitimate for our Assembly to address this issue and to question the role of parties, in line with our previous positions, notably from 2019 on the role and responsibility of political leaders in the fight against hate speech and intolerance.

Our Assembly, at that time, called for encouraging political parties and movements to adopt instruments of self-regulation and referred to the Charter of Parties against Racism and Intolerance.

The scope of the revised charter has been considerably enlarged and specified by our rapporteurs, who have done an excellent job, leading to a change in its title to "Charter of European political parties for a non-racist and inclusive society". It also now includes explicit references to online communications and social networks, which was absolutely necessary in view of the changes to political practices.

The general objective of this Charter is commendable, as the future of our democracies depends in part on our ability to combat hate speech. On the other hand, some of the wording appears somewhat problematic.

For example, the principle mentioned in the charter of striving for equitable representation, at all levels of political parties, of certain groups of people likely to be victims of discrimination or hatred could imply the establishment of statistics on the "race", language, religion or sexual orientation of populations.

Such a practice would be contrary to French law and to the very concept of republican principles. I know that our colleague Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW had a long discussion on this subject with two of our colleagues in the Senate.

I also wonder about the consideration of caricatures, and you know how sensitive the subject is in France, in the name of freedom of expression.

I would therefore like our debates to allow us to go into this aspect of the question in greater depth and for our rapporteurs to explain their approach to the matter.

Thank you very much.

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

The next speaker, on behalf of the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance, is Mr John HOWELL.

The floor is yours.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA): Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I appreciate that this report covers a very sensitive issue. I would fully agree that political parties should not exhibit any signs of racism at all. I was surprised, however, at a statement that the report mentioned where it says that racism and intolerance are rife in Europe. In spite of the efforts to eradicate them on the part of public authorities and civil society organisations, forms of intolerance including a number of different forms as well as online and offline hate speech are on the rise.

I wondered just why that was. I wonder whether part of it can be found in the response to the scope of the Charter, which includes afrophobia, antigypsyism, anti-Semitism, islamophobia, and xenophobia. Then we come onto a number of new things against LGBTI people and sexism. Now, I looked back at my own parliament to see how it was dealing with this. Of course, I come from a party that has had two prime ministers who are women, but in order to find out how many LGBTI people that were in Parliament, I did not know the answer to that. I had to look that up on the internet. The answer, quite surprisingly, is 45. We are one of the best parliaments in the world for the number of LGBTI people who are in posts as MPs.

I just wonder how that fits in with what the reporter has put there. Of course, we must deal with racism, and we must deal with intolerance. Yet, the pressure on political parties can be also seen to be exercised by people in the street. If you take for example the accusations of anti-Semitism that were made against the Labour party and look at the Labour party now you will see many many changes that have occurred as a result of that feeling there. All of that was done without a new charter.

Would these things be better dealt with by a new charter or by simply pressure from members?

I think that they would be dealt with better by pressure from members and pressure from the voters.

Who is going to pay for this compliance? Who is going to look at the compliance? And who is going to help to root it out?

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you so much Mr John HOWELL and the next speaker is Ms Jennifer DE TEMMERMAN from France and representing the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Ms Jennifer DE TEMMERMAN (France, ALDE): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

First of all, I would like to thank the rapporteur for his work. I share the idea that the Charter should indeed be revised and that the role of political parties in the fight against discrimination and racism should be re-emphasised.

As you know, in France, we are coming out of a very long political sequence that started with the presidential elections and ended last night with the legislative elections. And I want to denounce what happened, because it is a beautiful thing to be here and to talk about charters and to say that we are going to sign charters, but it is something else than what happened in France. And I am ashamed of what happened in France.

As you may know, the next French delegation will certainly include deputies from the extreme right because we have, for the first time in 36 years, a National Rally (*Rassemblement National)* group that will be formed in the Assembly, and not a small group: a group that is multiplied by 11. We will have 89 RN deputies. Why?

President Macron was able, between the two rounds, to appeal to the republican front in France to get re-elected; and then, once re-elected, he and his party never stopped attacking, politically, the alliance of the left, the socialists and the ecologists in France. He has spent so much time criticising this alliance that he has let the RN quietly run its campaign. And that is the responsibility of the political parties. To dare to say that we have a republican front against a left-wing alliance, which opens the door to the National Rally and that is what happened yesterday.

So yes, we have a return, a real return of the left and the ecologists in the National Assembly, but above all – and this is what I remember – we have 89 RN deputies. And in my constituency, I had chosen not to run again. It is important to know that the presidential majority has never called for a republican front against the National Rally and that they have not called for a vote against an ecologist deputy, against the National Rally. As a result, my constituency will be represented by an extremist next year.

So, it's all very well to vote for charters, but political parties must also look at themselves in the mirror and, when their only goal is to be reelected, this is what they do: they forget all the beautiful principles they had denounced. President Macron's party forgets all the beautiful principles and his so-called fight against intolerance and racism and allows a group of 89 RN in the French National Assembly.

Thank you.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you so much Ms Jennifer DE TEMMERMAN. And the next speaker is Mr Mehmet Mehdi EKER from Türkiye.

The floor is yours.

Mr Mehmet Mehdi EKER (Türkiye, NR): Dear President,

Dear colleagues,

It is very timely to speak today about the new Charter on the role of political parties in fostering diversity and inclusion. I congratulate Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW for his report, which provide us parliamentarians the revised text of the Charter of European political parties for a non-racist and inclusive society.

It has been quite a long time since the previous Charter has been drawn up and opened for signature in 1998. The recent challenges faced in Europe regarding racism and intolerance, the rise of hate speech and Islamophobia through a large spectrum of political parties required the revision of the Charter. Therefore, I believe that such an update will be crucial in fighting against racism in Europe.

Dear colleagues,

Political parties provide an essential forum for countering racism and intolerance as they greatly influence the formation of political discourse. So it is crucial for political parties to join in fighting against intolerance and racism in any form.

I support the scope of revision of the Charter. It now includes not only the fight against discrimination and hatred based on ethnic origin but also Afrophobia, anti-Gypsyism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia.

The daily life of Muslim people of different ethnic origins in Europe has become unbearable due also to the rise of hate speech and discriminatory language against them among right-wing and centre parties and populist politicians. Unfortunately the problem is not anymore limited to extremist parties.

Secondly, the specific reference that has been made in the report to social media is also vital. Racism and intolerance have now taken many different forms in the face of the new technologies.

I hope this revised Charter would have a tangible positive impact on the work of political parties and discourse in general.

Before concluding, I would like to invite once again all colleagues to contribute to the efforts to combat racism, hate speech, Islamophobia and all forms of discrimination.

Thank you for your attention.

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

We then go to Ms Ruth JONES, from the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group, representing the United Kingdom.

The floor is yours.

Ms Ruth JONES (United Kingdom, SOC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is good to be here in person for the first time after two years on KUDO. I do want to say thank you to all the admin and the IT teams who kept us together as hybrid during these last difficult two years. I am very glad to be able to speak in this important debate.

I fully support the report today on fostering diversity and inclusion, but I am so sad that we actually need to be having this debate in 2022. Civilised society should not need to debate such basic rights, because they should be enshrined in law. We see democratic backsliding in all countries of the world, and yes, including here in Europe. This is a deeply worrying thing, and we must do all we can to reverse this trend. It is incumbent on all of us here to ensure that the political parties we represent are as diverse and inclusive as we can make them. This can be at a national level, where we can ensure our rule books are clear and inclusive. Yes, we may need to reach out to groups who may struggle with traditional ways of working. Our rules and traditions can seem very strange and impenetrable even to us. Just imagine how difficult it is for someone to cut through and make themselves heard in a second or third language, or to speak up in a conference hall using arcane procedures and protocols.

Political parties have a real responsibility to make sure they look like the people they want to serve. Representation matters on BAME, on women, LGBTQ+ and those with disabilities, too.

Madam Chair, I represent Newport West, a mainly urban area in South Wales. In our last council elections, I was very pleased to see a great increase in the number of younger members, BAME members, and more women elected. I am very proud that my council in Newport looks like the people it represents, and I look forward to seeing them develop inclusive policies in the coming months and years.

We need to ensure at the grassroots, our political parties take account of and include everyone in their activities. We need to make things easier so that everyone can take part in our democratic processes, regardless of race, creed, colour, sexuality or physical or sensory ability. If we value everyone as we say we do, then we must reach out to make sure everyone is included. We must not leave anyone behind. Actions speak louder than words.

Thank you.

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

The next speaker is Mr Alain MILON, from the Group of the European People's Party, representing France.

Mr Alain MILON (France, EPP/CD): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

First of all, I would like to thank the rapporteurs for this work which highlights the structuring role of political parties in the fight against discrimination. Indeed, political parties are the backbone of democracy: according to the French Constitution, they contribute to the expression of the vote and, in fact, play a central role in the selection of political leaders.

In this context, political parties must allow the emergence of new talents – whatever they may be – from the whole of society, without discrimination, including minority groups. However, I must say that the French republican conception does not allow the recognition of minority groups in the law. Indeed, the French Republic recognises only French citizens, without distinction of origin, race or religion. This is Article 1 of the Constitution.

While I am in favour of the idea of developing inclusion policies within political parties, I remain much more hesitant about positive discrimination, which remains a form of discrimination. Thus, the legitimacy of the person who benefits from it can be questioned, arguing that this person has been chosen only because of his or her religion or skin color. I can testify that in France, political parties undertake to facilitate the emergence of a political class representative of the whole of civil society. It is then up to the voters to make their choice freely, but also to civil society to engage in political parties and to participate.

Regarding hate speech, I am pleased to see that the Charter expressly condemns discrimination based on religion or sexual orientation. This is all the more important as hate speech, as has been said, is on the increase throughout Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all have an important responsibility to denounce hate speech systematically. Political parties must not be used to further propagate such speech. As Sir Tony LLOYD points out in his report for opinion, political party leaders have a particular responsibility to take action against members of their party who are allegedly spreading racism or hatred.

The revised Charter, even if it requires legal clarification of the scope of some of its stipulations, could be a useful tool. How far it will reach will depend, of course, on how political parties adhere to and use it.

Thank you.

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

We continue with Lord Leslie GRIFFITHS, from the United Kingdom and the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group.

Lord Leslie GRIFFITHS (United Kingdom, SOC): Thank you, Chair.

To all who have taken part in this debate thus far, and particularly to Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW, for bringing before us material which I think is a reminder of what we have been, or ought to have been, and must continue to be. There is nothing radically new except the *prise de position* and a commitment to a future based on the values he describes.

If I have a sadness with the report it is that it is largely reactive. Hate speech can only be dealt with when people have spoken hatefully, and after the event, to formulate responses to what has been said becomes a different kind of exercise.

I'm the product of a liberal education in a tolerant country. But I recognise that that has given me what I can only call a bourgeois way of looking at issues like this, so that I can smile when it's appropriate, I can be polite and courteous. None of that affects the inner being from which attitudes that we really need to be contending with spring.

Perhaps I may be personal, and I hope that members here will allow me that, they can behead me afterwards if not, simply that I began my ministerial, I'm a churchman, career, in Haiti, in the Caribbean. My wife, who's here today, and I spent ten years there. I was sent there because I spoke French, but I had 48 communities to look after where no one spoke French.

We were in the hills, the mountains of Haiti. This is the most despised nation you can imagine. The peasant people of Haiti, Frantz Fanon called them *les miséreux de la terre,* they were the people who humanised me, who taught me their language, who offered me their courtesy and their hospitality and their generosity. I learned more from that about the levels at which we must learn to be together, than I ever did by, forgive me, reading a charter.

Indeed, when I think about HIV/AIDS, does everybody know that the the "H" in "HIV", the four "Hs" is haemophiliacs, heroin addict, homosexuals, and Haitians. The racism that Haiti has suffered from is extraordinary. I've seen it with my own eyes. It is detestable that these people who gave me back my

humanity should be treated in that way. I believe that we have to find a way to get through the lawmaking and the charter-setting to the cultural level where actually, we might actually learn to enjoy people of other backgrounds and learn from them and be bettered by them. So this personal word.

Thanks for the effort. A good read. May it come to pass, but may we go deeper in our ongoing considerations.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Next on the list is Mr Christian KLINGER.

The floor is yours.

Mr Christian KLINGER (France, EPP/CD): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

Freedom of expression is an essential component of a democratic society. It is recognised by our Convention. However, this freedom can unfortunately be misused to promote prejudice and intolerance. It is therefore necessary to set limits on the freedom of expression of some to protect others from hatred.

In some countries, freedom of expression is regulated by law. This is the case in France, for example, where racist comments are punishable under criminal law.

However, complaints are not always filed and we know that the time of justice is not that of the media, and even less that of social media. The judicial sanction, when it is pronounced, does not prevent the propagation of hate speech that can destabilise our democracies and threaten certain population groups.

Thus, given their role in the dissemination of ideas, I believe it is necessary that political parties are fully aware of these issues and that they take their responsibilities. Indeed, they have a privileged access to traditional media and are particularly active on social media.

The Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist and Inclusive Society, signed in Utrecht in 1998, provides a framework that can be useful in this respect, by formalising the commitment of political parties to defend human rights and fundamental democratic principles by rejecting all forms of hatred.

The current revision should make it possible to extend this scope to homophobia in particular, which seems to me to be a good thing. I also agree with the questions raised by some of my colleagues about the legal scope of certain stipulations envisaged, particularly with regard to national constitutional values.

In any case, I hope that this revision of the Charter will allow debates to take place within the parties and will contribute to raising the awareness of the political leaders of our member states of the fight against hate speech.

As parliamentarians and members of this organisation, I am convinced that we have a special responsibility to prevent hate speech from becoming commonplace and endangering our democracies.

I thank you for your attention.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Ms Nicole HÖCHST.

The floor is yours.

Ms Nicole HÖCHST (Germany, EC/DA): Thank you very much, Madam President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think we are agreed that no one may be discriminated against or given preferential treatment because of his or her gender, ancestry, race, language, home country and origin, faith, religious or political views. No one may be disadvantaged because of his or her disability, and parties are not only legally well-advised not to violate this foundation of values.

However, in order for this report to have a positive impact while upholding our Western values, including with respect to freedom of expression, we must ensure that its cornerstones are themselves free of double standards. Unfortunately, they are not. The definition of racism, for example, is inherently racist in that it

stipulates that whites cannot be discriminated against. This is demonstrably false. It is further wrong to assign minorities and victim roles to people, to trap them in, to quote them, and thus to foment reverse racism and resentment.

It must not be the case that parties and citizens who rightly address grievances on the basis of facts are muzzled with references to alleged racism, discrimination, hatred and incitement. Having an opinion that differs from the common left-wing opinion must not be criminalised or ostracised as unconstitutional through observation by domestic intelligence services. There must be no double standards based on skin color or origin, either in terms of the definition of racism and hate speech or otherwise. We are approaching a pseudo-democratic society that is willing to restrict freedom of expression, to exercise censorship. This report, unreflectively, would be another step on the road to a post-democratic society that is becoming visibly more undemocratic, paradoxically, in order to protect democracy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These double standards destroy our values, our democracy, more than they protect it. Raising moralistic index fingers against people who criticise illegal immigration, or phenomena such as the cultural bonus, the so-called prohibition error in court rulings or against people who rightly oppose statements such as "the penis is not a primarily male sex organ", such index fingers and hate speech labelling do us a disservice in their bigotry and ultimately support autocracy, not democracy.

Thank you very much.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, sir.

I call next Mr Gusty GRAAS from Luxembourg.

Mr Gusty GRAAS (Luxembourg, ALDE): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

Our daily life is poisoned and suffers from several evils. Racism and xenophobia are the main obstacles to the proper functioning of our society. It is a phenomenon that tends to normalise hatred towards people based on characteristics of skin colour, nationality or ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation or religion.

In the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg – my home country – almost 50% of the residents do not have Luxembourgish nationality. Thanks to a very favourable legislation, the acquisition of our nationality is not particularly problematic. As a result, a large proportion of Luxembourgers obtain their nationality as a result of immigration.

And yet, despite this great diversity, discrimination remains a problem for our common life. According to the latest activity report of the Centre for Equal Treatment, 60 cases out of 245 submitted were motivated by discrimination originating in the ethnic background of the person – that is one case out of four, a trend that is unfortunately increasing.

A better integration of the non-indigenous population can only be achieved by an increased participation in political life. For this reason, our Parliament will soon vote on an amendment to the electoral law concerning the municipalities, which aims to abolish the five-year residency clause. Every citizen will be able to participate in the municipal elections as soon as he or she enters Luxembourg, provided that he or she is registered on the electoral roll.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Racism is a global problem, especially in countries with large migratory flows. A liberation of the word is noted at the level of the extreme right. Some political parties – regrettably also in our organisation – contribute to this promotion. The proliferation of social media favours an unscrupulous environment.

So who is responsible for combating and challenging these thought patterns? The answer is simple: it is up to all of us, to the associations, to the institutions, and especially to the political parties.

Political parties must set a good example. The actions and words of the former President of the United States demonstrate how ignorance of political responsibility can lead to degeneration. It is up to political parties to promote social inclusion through parliamentary debate, diversity charters and a legal framework.

It is also up to political parties to define the red lines that cannot be crossed. And it is up to the political parties to raise awareness in order to identify any racist or discriminatory acts.

The approval of a new Charter for a non-racist society is an exemplary tool to tackle the scourge of discrimination. This is why I support any effort to build a more equitable society with more respect.

I would like to congratulate Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW for his excellent report.

Thank you.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Ms Ada MARRA from Switzerland.

Ms Ada MARRA (Switzerland, SOC): Thank you, Madam President.

This resolution and its contents address a specific point among the mediators of democracy that are the parties. Indeed, they are the intermediary bodies of popular expression in their content, but these parties also have the responsibility to maintain the conditions for democracy to live. One of these conditions is not to confuse freedom of expression with going beyond what the law allows. While there is, of course, the law to sanction comments that go beyond this red line, to say what is legal and what is not, the parties cannot do without internal debate and supervision of their members.

It is not moralistic to say, on the one hand, that not everything can be said and, on the other hand, to ask for a minimum of exemplarity from people who have assumed responsibilities. It is not a question here of moral values and moralisation. The private life of party members or elected officials, for example, is of no interest to anyone, unless of course it contravenes the law. It is a question here, and this has been said several times, of the protection of the course of public debates and of the incitement or not to hatred of the other.

Yes, to be a member of a party is to have one vision of the world and not another. It is to believe in values and political actions, even sometimes in a desire for territorial separatism, for example. The partisan plurality that we defend in these very places implies a degree of confrontation. In any case, we cannot apply the adage "all means are permitted to achieve our ends".

Of course, this report and this resolution do not solve everything. They do not define the different concepts of rejection, and they do not enter into the discussion of what is freedom of expression. They alert each and every one of us, members of political parties, that not everything is allowed, that we are weakening participation in political life by not putting a stop to openly aggressive behaviour, because this will prevent good wills from getting involved. Basically, why would fellow citizens leave a quiet life to come and expose themselves to racism, xenophobia, and so on?

These questions of incitement to hatred are not individual problems: the responsibility is collective and societal. If society is violent, it is the duty and responsibility of intermediary bodies, whoever they may be, even political interest groups, to pacify them and not to incite them. It is in this sense that this report is interesting, not out of propriety, but out of a concern to provide a framework and to create the conditions for a good democracy in healthy institutions.

Since I have 30 seconds left, I would like to praise the political parties, since this report talks about political parties. Every time we have tried to say that there is neither right nor left, we have had the extreme right, whether in France, Italy or other countries, giving life to dictators and authoritarians of all kinds. It is the responsibility of the political parties to give a correct image to the citizens in order not to leave the door open to the emergence of this extreme right.

Thank you.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

In the debate I will call next Ms Lynn BOYLAN from Ireland.

Ms Lynn BOYLAN (Ireland, UEL): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I welcome today's debate because I think there is no doubting that Europe has a problem with racism and discrimination. It is also correct to say that there are many political parties, and not just those on the far right, that do stoke the flames of racism.

Years of austerity and the wars in Syria and elsewhere have seen political parties pit vulnerable or minority groups against one another in competition for underfunded services and resources. It is absolutely the role of political parties, their leaders, and its activists, to be actively anti-racist.

The first step is accepting that racism and discrimination is a reality and that we all have a responsibility to be open to examining our own unconscious prejudices and stereotyping.

For example, in Ireland there are many politicians who will stand up against racism, against migrants and refugees, who will show solidarity to the Black Lives movement, yet we'll see no problem in voting against the provision of housing or services for members of the Traveller community.

Anti-Traveller discrimination continues to thrive in Ireland. In a recent study that found that 55% of those asked would not have a Traveller as a community member, 75% would not have a Traveller as a co-worker, and 83% of those asked would not employ a Traveller.

We have to accept that there is no acceptable form of racism or discrimination. That is why I welcome the rapporteur's expansion of the types of discrimination to include anti-Gypsyism, Afrophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and against the LGBTQ+ community, because also our LGBTQ+ community are under sustained attack for the last number of years. The Human Rights Commissioner was right to call our politicians who are shamelessly targeting that community for political gain.

I would also urge caution to all of us who see ourselves our view ourselves as opposed to discrimination, to not fall foul to the the manufactured debate that is taking place. We know that the tactics of the far right is to dress up so called reasonable debates as a Trojan horse for hate and division. It is a well-worn tactic as they try to roll back fundamental rights gained after hard fought battles.

The United States Family Research Council are now talking openly about that tactic to separate the "T" from the LGBT, to roll back LGBT rights, to stoke up fears about women's rights by targeting trans rights. We as politicians must see through the tactics and resist attempts to disrupt social cohesion.

The Charter for a non-racist society is a positive step to put words into action, to allow ourselves as politicians to be held accountable for our words and our actions. No one is trying to close down freedom of speech or expression, but we have to be accountable for what we say and expect to be challenged on what we say.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Mr Héctor VASCONCELOS from Mexico.

No, it seems that he's not here.

The next speaker is Ms Sibel ARSLAN from Switzerland.

Ms Sibel ARSLAN (Switzerland, SOC): Thank you very much, Madam President, colleagues,

"The freedom of the individual ends where the freedom of the other begins". I'm sure you all recall that quotation from Immanuel Kant and if today we discuss freedom of expression and we like to express discrimination, racism or hate speech under the freedom of expression, then we are committing a big mistake. It is not only wrong, but it is very dangerous - dangerous for the individuals who are affected by it. It is like a cancer. If we feel a cancerous tumour, then it is of no use to us to just feel it. It has to be diagnosed and treated. If we feel that people are affected by it, but do not do anything about it, then we are complicit and fail to assist. We see that people are obviously affected by it, but they are not heard.

Hate speech in social media can have serious consequences and may even lead to young people committing suicide as a result. There are serious consequences of racism. A lot of young people from migrant backgrounds have committed suicide as a result of hate speech. I am particularly sensitive to their concerns as I too come from a migrant background. As a result, I listen exactly to what these people say and try to take up their concerns.

What can we do? By discussing this here today, we show we take self-regulation seriously. While it is a good idea, it, possibly, does not go far enough. The political parties that are involved have to shoulder their responsibilities in Switzerland.

In Switzerland, we know that, for example, in those parties where women are much more on the lists, more are elected, and more women run for office there.

In those parties where women are perhaps not elected as often, they also run for office less. Parties can do something with this lever and say that they do not tolerate racism, discrimination or hate speech. They can take the lead here and this report is consequently something that we can take home.

I would like to thank the rapporteur very much. It is a small step but an important step and it says to the parties; you have it in your hands to change something. This step will be an important one.

Thank you very much.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Next in the debate is Ms Nerea AHEDO from Spain.

The floor is yours.

Ms Nerea AHEDO (Spain, ALDE)*: Thank you. Good afternoon.

First of all, I would like to thank the two rapporteurs for the reports today. In the speech of political parties, it is obvious that there are problems with hate speech, as other speakers have said, and also criminal activities. We cannot drop our guard. We need to keep an effort going to raise awareness and also a culture of tolerance and respect, a culture of diversity, dignity and of rights. Politicians and political groups and parties play a vital role, which should not just be just one more tool amongst others. We must address this speech. Our role is crucial not just in rejecting or condemning such speech, we also need to show an example and be proactive in showing positive behaviours.

A revised charter, we think, is important, on one hand, in increasing the number of ratifications but also, and above all, in ensuring compliance. We should not forget, as others have said, that while there are parties who back the Charter in its implications, we also, supposedly, share our space with parties who are sensibly tolerant but they are very often perpetrators of xenophobic and divisive speech under the banner of freedom of expression. All freedoms have their limit, and freedom of expression does, too. We see in these parties – and we all know who they are in our various places – we see fundamentalism in their speech and radicalism in their principles – if you can call them principles, their dogmatism. I believe what is also necessary is to put a check on this – it is not enough to condemn their behaviour – and to adopt a charter and advocate good behaviour and principles.

We need to go much further. We have an obligation, which is not to authorise intolerant speech and not to whitewash parties who are only democratic in form and in some cases, in Spain, these parties have even got into government. Thanks to the signature of this Charter, some of them may be seeking to stop others from governing. Others may wish to distort governance, and that is truly dangerous. There is a step back in rights, so we cannot allow these parties with such speech to reach the government. We cannot be complicit.

We are facing a global phenomenon that simplifies and distorts reality. I do not think that any truly democratic party can tolerate it.

Thank you.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you. [in Spanish]

The next speaker is Ms Christiana EROTOKRITOU from Cyprus.

Ms Christiana EROTOKRITOU (Cyprus, SOC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, let me than the rapporteurs for this excellent report we are debating today.

Dear Colleagues,

As we navigate the 21st century, Europe is still experiencing a steady increase in various forms of intolerance and overt discrimination against vulnerable and oppressed social groups. Although civil society and political parties are increasingly combating the reproduction of hurtful stereotypes and the expression of hate speech, discriminatory acts continue to occur in every walk of everyday life.

Political parties can and should play an important role in fighting discrimination and in promoting equality, inclusion, and diversity. These principles should be set high in the agenda of political parties' youth organisations. These are topics that should be included and promoted by the political parties themselves as priorities in their political agenda. Young people in our societies should be made aware and have the opportunity to debate the need for inclusion and, therefore, come to their own conclusions as to the necessity of achieving this target. It is there, in young peoples' minds, where most of grassroots principles of inclusion and openness is happening.

Dear Colleagues,

Political parties across the Council of Europe member States should empower, promote, and support the participation in the political process of people from all the underrepresented groups in society. More diverse and inclusive personalities are more likely to drive action for change within the party, thus generating a feeling of belonging and meaningful participation to all civil society groups, especially the more marginalised.

Thank you.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I call next in the debate Ms Sona GHAZARYAN from Armenia.

Ms Sona GHAZARYAN (Armenia, ALDE): Dear colleagues, I highly appreciate the report, very well planned and very much on time.

Political parties, among other actors, are responsible for combating hate speech, racism and xenophobia. However, what we often see today is that political parties instead build their electoral campaign, rhetoric sometimes, even actions, on hatred, racism and xenophobia. This happens in Europe and this happens beyond Europe. And then sometimes these political parties and their leaders find themselves in their own trap. They build up and build on a hate so much that they do not know how to control and deal with the amount of hatred they have created themselves.

This is especially dangerous when hatred is proliferated towards the society living in a close proximity towards a neighbour. And even more dangerous when there is an unresolved conflict in need of a robust peace process. This is the case in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and systematic Armenophobia in Azerbaijan.

You know too well the case of a trophy park in Baku that glorifies war and depicts Armenian soldiers in captivity, degrading human dignity and dehumanising Armenians. This was a case of state-sponsored hatred and racism. The mannequins of Armenian soldiers were taken down only after Armenia filed a case at the International Court of Justice based on the convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination.

The International Court of Justice has already produced an interim decision in which it calls Azerbaijan to take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of the racial hatred and discrimination, including when it's official and public institutional targeted at persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that International Court of Justice has stated that this is the official and public institutions in Azerbaijan that incite and promote hatred towards Armenians. I believe that the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly should also be very vocal and direct, calling state-level hate speech, racism and xenophobia by name. And we should all together combat this because hatred is a poison similar to mercury. It is very hard to collect once it spills over.

Thank you.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you. The next speaker is, sorry for my bad pronunciation, Ms Etilda GJONAJ from Albania.

The floor is yours.

Ms Etilda GJONAJ (Albania, SOC): Esteemed Chair,

Esteemed colleagues,

I wish to congratulate the rapporteur, Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW, for his report. As a representative of the national delegation of Albania, I strongly support his proposals on a revised Charter of European political parties for a non-racist society.

In Albania we face a polarised public communication on political parties. Furthermore, among other forms that promote intolerance, very common are hate speech, particularly online, or gender-based harassment instead of constructive dialogue, tolerance and inclusiveness.

Albania has still a lot of work work to do to foster a political correct dialogue in communication that promotes diversity and inclusion. Nevertheless, much has changed. The Albanian Parliament is a member of the parliamentarian alliance against hate speech (No Hate Parliamentary Alliance) established by PACE. We have taken a lot of positive steps including the approval in 2018 of the code of conduct for the Albania in peace, embracing the best principles of the Council of Europe.

Therefore, I particularly value the call on the national parliaments of Council of Europe member states to endorse the Charter, and on the political groups and national delegations in the Assembly to promote it among their members. I appreciate it and consider as an important tool to ensure that our political parties strive towards the same goal of rejecting all forms of racism and intolerance, hate speech, incitement to racial hatred and harassment. I vow to make use of it and promote it within our national parliament.

Considering the fact that inclusion and anti-discrimination are part of our ideas and values, I fully agree that as national political parties we have to act more responsibly and take very good care of not taking the political discourse a step too far which unfortunately is still the case. Sometimes because it's not awareness that speaks, but reaction, but we are the main drivers of the political discourse and we have to be aware all the time.

I fully support Sir Tony LLOYD in his proposal to ensure that the Charter is widely shared throughout Council of Europe member states and is signed by as many political parties as possible. Only this way we can aim the impact needed to address this utmost important matter that has shaped our societies in the past and will do so in the future.

Thank you.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Now I call Mr George LOUCAIDES from Cyprus.

Mr George LOUCAIDES (Cyprus, UEL): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would also like to start by thanking and congratulating our rapporteur for this excellent report.

Dear colleagues,

We fully endorse what the charter for a known racist and inclusive society stipulates amongst others, namely that we remain deeply concerned about the resurgence of rhetoric presenting migrants and refugees as a threat to and embedded to society, which increases negative reactions among the public to immigration and immigrants. This is something happening in all our countries, unfortunately – presenting immigrants and refugees as a threat.

Racism and intolerance are unfortunately growing at an alarming rate in Europe and constitute a major challenge both in Europe and the rest of the world. The Council of Europe has useful tools to tackle this and can assist member states in this respect. The remarkable work of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance and the No-Hate Parliamentary Alliance are such examples.

Anti-discriminatory legislation condemning racism and intolerance in all its forms is of course crucial. Equally important is to combat the root causes of racism and intolerance, namely poverty, persisting inequalities, dismal working conditions, and the lack of sufficient cultural and educational opportunities.

Political parties, dear colleagues, play a central role in defining what is acceptable and what is not, and in fostering a culture of tolerance and respect for human dignity. Through their action plans, they are able to promote policies aimed at social inclusion, social justice, and equality, participatory democracy and diversity. Valid political arguments demonstrating the primacy of democracy, as well as showing zero tolerance to all expressions of hate, are the best way to rid our societies of racism, xenophobia and fascism.

In this framework, the least all democratic parties can do is to adopt the Charter for a non-racist and inclusive society and align themselves with its provisions. But more importantly, the Charter must be applied in practice and its objectives met. It is therefore imperative that through the adoption of an effective monitoring mechanism, the PACE, together with national parliaments, should be able to monitor and coordinate that political parties have adhered to the Charter and are effectively implementing its provisions.

Thank you.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I call Ms Lise SELNES from Norway.

The floor is yours.

Ms Lise SELNES (Norway, SOC): Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, the Rapporteur, for an excellent Charter.

All political parties are responsible for preventing racism and hate speech. As representatives of democratic political parties this is our responsibility. Despite continuous efforts over the last decades, racism and intolerance has not decreased, the situation is rather the opposite.

The current situation in Europe and the world is unfortunately fostering more racism, making it even more difficult for us as parliamentarians to prioritise. The difficulties we are facing in Europe are resulting in a debate where different groups are pitted against each other. This is a dangerous path. Human rights and respect for diversity create hate speech instead of inclusion. When the economic situation is worsening, people in general have fewer resources, and we see hate increasing.

Political parties have a special responsibility for how debates are conducted not only in traditional media but also on social media. This comes down to the words we use when we talk about different political issues, but also the words we use in our characterisation of political opponents. The discussion climate during elections is especially important. The membership of political parties are far off representing the diversity of the European societies they represent. If the membership and leadership of political parties were more diverse, it could in itself contribute to decreasing racism and hate speech.

When we succeed in diversity and inclusion, the debate on human rights will be more effective. We must be able to raise our concern when the practices of, for example, religious groups are not in line with human rights. This is not racism or hate speech. It is how we must take responsibility so that everyone has the right to live their lives in a society were human rights are fundamental rights.

The right to free speech is also a fundamental right. When we discuss, we must keep in mind that all people have value and must remain respectful of our opponents.

Dear Colleagues, President,

As parliamentarians we must lead. We must stand up for diversity and inclusion. This renewed charter gives direction that we must follow.

Thank you.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Now we will again try to have someone from Mexico.

The floor goes to Ms Gabriela BENAVIDES COBOS.

The floor is yours.

Ms Gabriela BENAVIDES COBOS (Mexico)*: Thank you Madam Chair.

It is an honour for me to be present in this Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe representing Mexico, which is a permanent observer in this Assembly.

Firstly, I wish to congratulate the rapporteur, Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW, and the members of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, and all those who contributed to this report whose main purpose is to encourage political parties to sign the recently named Charter of European political parties for a non-racist and inclusive society, with the objective of contributing to this fight against racism and intolerance.

And a legislator, I can say it is very significant to talk about the role of political parties in fostering diversity and inclusion. Since although it is undesirable, there are attacks on vulnerable groups around the world and by all possible means of communication and it is crucial to react to this.

Neither Mexico nor Europe are an exception in this situation.

I wish to share with you the fact that the inclusion of women in public life in our country was halted by the political parties, since notwithstanding the legal provisions which impose on them, women candidates, they always find a way of avoiding and eluding that responsibility.

Today, thanks to the work and demands of civil society, and past and present legislatures, they've reformed the federal Constitution in order to impose on the political parties an obligation to include women to the tune of 50% of their candidates.

Furthermore, the electoral authorities made it mandatory for women to be made candidates in places where their parties stood a chance of winning.

Moreover, the electoral court paved the way for women to enter congresses. They all understood that women should be included.

And today, we have equally represented men and women in our Congress, in the Chamber of Deputies 48% are women, and in the Senate 49% are women. And there's also the crucial role of political parties in respecting fundamental rights.

The role of civil society is crucial if you are to bring about inclusion.

Since the political parties have to oversee compliance with non-discrimination and ensuring that there is equality and preventing hate speech.

Thank you.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Ms Petra STIENEN from Netherlands.

Petra, the floor is yours.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Ms Heike ENGELHARDT from Germany.

Ms Heike ENGELHARDT (Germany, SOC): Dear Madam President,

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you to the rapporteur Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW for this excellent initiative.

It is very good and important that we renew the 1998 Charter on the role of European political parties in promoting a non-racist society. The report addresses many political and social challenges. It relates them to the political and moral responsibility of parties to work for diversity and inclusion.

It is important to address these changes. It is especially important to talk about how we as members of different European parliaments want to deal with them. Where, if not here, in the Council of Europe, do we need to discuss this? Here, we need to actively work on making our European society more inclusive. That is why the change in the title is so important. We are now talking about the Charter of European Political Parties for a non-racist and inclusive society. We must not tire of saying again and again: human rights are universal and not divisible.

The changes in our political life since the 1998 Charter have been abundantly mentioned by the previous speaker. Certainly the additional digital space in politics and, in general, in our society is one of the biggest visible changes. We must take action against hate speech and insist on respect and tolerance in the digital world as well.

Just because the context changes, our human rights conditions must not change. Today we are discussing forms of discrimination that were not included in the previous version: Afrophobia, antigypsyism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, exclusion of LGBTTIQ people and about sexism. Today, I would like to give my voice especially to a group that has often been forgotten or marginalised in the past: the people who count themselves as LGBTTIQ.

It is likely that many here are aware that this month is Pride Month. During this month queer people make their sexualities and identities more visible. They fight for others who have not yet achieved this visibility, and they point out the difficulties queer people face.

"Pride" stands for tolerance, for pride, inclusion, acceptance and self-confidence. Pride stands against discrimination, exclusion, homophobia and transphobia. I also stand up for queer people in the German Bundestag and strongly support an inclusive German society.

It is frightening that not all parties stand for the acceptance of queer people. This is another reason why democratic parties must not compromise with populist parties. Politics, and here especially the parties, should – and here I use the words of Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW – oppose racism, intolerance and hate speech while promoting diversity, variety and inclusion.

The Council of Europe is a good start for this. Let us engage together in a political dialogue with mutual respect and the goal of establishing better human rights conditions not only for a small part of the population, but for all.

For a non-racist and inclusive society.

Thank you.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Dear colleagues, I remind you all that the speaking time is 3 minutes. Stick to 3 minutes.

The floor now goes to Ms Nicole DURANTON.

Madam.

Ms Nicole DURANTON (France, ALDE): Thank you, Madam President.

My dear colleagues,

First of all, I would like to thank our colleagues Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW and Sir Tony LLOYD for their work which reminds us of our responsibilities as politicians. Our organisation has a history: it was born in the aftermath of the Second World War, which was largely provoked by the hate speech of the Nazi leaders. We are here to prevent history from repeating itself.

Political parties, by their very function and given the media interest they receive, are formidable tools for relaying ideas. Unfortunately, it turns out that, sometimes, they convey dangerous stereotypes, on the one hand for the targeted persons and on the other hand for democracy.

It is therefore legitimate for the Council of Europe to examine tools to encourage political parties to be vigilant against hate speech and intolerance. One such tool is the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist and Inclusive Society.

Since the late 1990s, this Charter has served as a compass for political parties in their fight against hate speech. It is now necessary to update it to adapt it to the challenges of our time. The addition of an explicit reference to online communication seems to me to be indispensable. Indeed, hate speech must be combated, regardless of the means by which it is expressed. Our Assembly has already expressed itself on many occasions on these digital issues.

I am convinced that political parties can do more to prevent the spread of hate messages. Today, the rise of populism and nationalism is causing some politicians to use hate speech in an attempt to win elections. Political parties have the right to intervene to guide these politicians. The parties have significant influence over their members, particularly in the nomination process. The revised Charter also provides that parties undertake to sanction politicians who incite hatred, which I believe is an effective measure.

At the same time, democratic parties that respect human rights must demonstrate their opposition to racism by refusing to partner and cooperate with any political party that incites racial and ethnic prejudice or racial hatred.

But a Charter is of no use if it is not implemented, and I share the idea of monitoring the implementation of this Charter.

Thank you.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Dear colleagues, unfortunately I must now interrupt the list of speakers.

Sorry, Mr Stefan SCHENNACH, I really tried.

The speeches of members and the speaker's list who have been present during the debate but have not been able to speak may be given to the Table Office for publication in the official report.

I remind colleagues that typewritten text must be submitted electronically no later than four hours after the list of speakers is interrupted.

Now I call Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW, the rapporteur, to reply to the debate.

Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW, you have five minutes.

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

Let me start by thanking you all for your kind words and support and for showing that you are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive Europe, which I think is the entire objective of the Charter. Rather than reactive, it is proactive.

We want people to reflect on these issues and change our culture. Human rights applies to all, regardless of your background. I come from a city where we have 183 nationalities represented in the city. As a member of parliament it is my responsibility to empower each and every one of those people to reach their maximum potential and be the best they can be. That's my responsibility.

You can ask the question: what do you win when you spread hate? What do you win when you perpetuate racism? In my opinion, nothing. You just divide the community and everybody loses. There is a comment that mentioned that we, with this Charter, mentioned the question of censorship and infringing on free speech.

It is important to know that freedom of expression does not include hate speech, it does not include hate speech. If you're going to fight so hard to maintain the right to spread hate, then maybe this is not the assembly that you should be in. This Assembly was established once upon a time mainly to fight against hate, to empower people, and for the respect of human rights. That is what it is about.

I have a mentor who told me this story about having two seeds of the same kind. You saw them at the same place and the same time with few metres apart. You build a wall in between these two seeds. On one side of the wall you have sunlight, you have water, and you have photosynthesis. This seed would grow and bear fruits. On the other side, even though that seed was certainly of the same quality, it will struggle to grow, not because it is of lesser quality, but because it does not have the necessary conditions to grow and blossom.

When we break this wall and build bridges, both seeds will grow and blossom, and everybody wins.

When you vote today, you will have to make a decision what side you want to take. Are you going to be a part of that group that would continue building on this wall and making it impossible maybe a potential doctor who would find medicine to cancer not built that potential because he is building bridges?

Are you going to fight so hard to continue building this wall so that that person that might even be the next Nelson Mandela would not have the potential? Or are you going to be like most of us here today, break down this wall and build bridges so that everybody can reach their potential and be the best they can be? That is our role as politicians.

At least for me, that is why I went into politics. I went into politics to make people's lives better. I went into politics to empower people. The language we use matters, because words have meaning! That is why it is important that we encourage each and every one of you that is here to take your responsibility and do everything that you can to encourage everybody who lives in Europe, in your communities, in your countries to be the best that they can be. You cannot do that by spreading hate, you cannot do that by perpetuating racism, and you cannot do that by going against the very principles that this institution stands for.

That is why, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am encouraging you. I trust that you will support this resolution and adopt it with all the strength of your political responsibility and good will.

Let me also, before the time is finished, take this time to thank Sir Tony LLOYD for his amazing support. Let me thank ECRI, the Venice Commission, the Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI), the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, and special thanks to Mr Giorgio Loddo, who has been really absolutely amazing in supporting me to write this report.

Last but not the least, we shall be judged not by the eloquence of our words but rather by the power of our actions. I hope when we vote today, we cannot just stop here, and we will make sure we implement what is on this Charter.

Thank you so much.

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does Mr Fourat BEN CHIKHA the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee wish to speak?

I believe so. You have three minutes.

Mr Fourat BEN CHIKHA (Belgium, SOC, Third Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear Colleagues,

Racism and intolerance are enemies deeply rooted in our society and difficult to eradicate.

It is often said that we must join forces to fight this scourge. This is what we have done in the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination throughout the preparation of this report and the new Charter for a Non-Racist and Inclusive Society. We have indeed co-operated closely with a plurality of actors within and outside the Council of Europe in order to include in the Charter the views of experts and, of course, of policy makers.

First of all, we want to recognise the initiating role of ECRI, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, within the Council of Europe, which launched this idea already some years ago during the celebration of the 25th anniversary of its creation. The Assembly supported this idea and appropriated it with the 2019 resolution on the role and responsibilities of political leaders in the fight against hate speech and intolerance. Subsequently, our Committee formally sought the advice of ECRI and reflected it in the final wording of the Charter.

We have co-operated closely with ARDI, the Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup of the European Parliament, which we have involved through several hearings and other exchanges. We believe that regular and intense co-operation with the European Parliament should be a priority for our Assembly in the hope that the Parliament will formally approve and support this Charter.

The Venice Commission has also contributed to the drafting of the document thanks to its expertise not only on democratic institutions, but also on the life and functioning of political parties.

I can only welcome the strong support that the Political Affairs Committee has given us, as the rapporteur Sir Tony LLOYD explained in his opinion.

Finally, I can only underline the role of the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance in the preparation of this text and the important role it could play in its follow-up.

I thank and congratulate the rapporteur, Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW, for having carried out this work and for having found a synthesis between the elements that must be taken into account and the former Charter of 1998: the development of European societies and their political world, new technologies and the need to face an upsurge of racism, intolerance, and hate speech in Europe.

I call on the members of the Assembly today to support this text in a strong and convincing way.

Thank you.

Mr Mikko KINNUNEN (Finland, ALDE): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Madam President, dear European friends,

This is a special moment for me as it is my first time at an Assembly meeting. We live in peculiar times. Russia's attack on Ukraine has united Europe. The war and the pandemic have put this unity at risk. Yet, they challenge us to stay and act as a team, a European family, that defends our values of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental and human rights.

As this report rightly suggests, we must unite in tackling racism and hate speech. Such crimes are accelerated by social media that spread fake news and conspiracy theories to undermine the citizens' confidence in democracy, decision makers, authorities and the rule of law. The aim is to create division, tensions and conflict among us. As we face challenging times such attempts to deter democracy have increased.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the changes in the security environment have affected our psychological resilience. Education, culture, arts and sports help us endure difficult times. In its broad concept, civilization is imperative in strengthening resilience at the individual and national levels.

Europeans of all age groups should be able to develop their media literacy skills as a means to strengthen security in our societies, psychological resilience and democracy. We must educate our children and youth to be critical towards social media messaging and learn to separate between facts, opinions and fake news. We must focus on improving media literacy through European cooperation, at all levels, from early childhood into adulthood. We also need a system and cooperation of life-long learning to teach new skills needed for work and for life in general.

I dream of a Europe, where we act as a team and where we can learn and educate ourselves throughout our lives. This is especially important in times of economic turmoil. Faced with soaring prices, we must lower our living standards and learn to give up things for the benefit of those more in need. But isn't that what Europe is about, that we keep everyone on board.

Tackling racism and hate speech starts with ourselves. Instead of fighting each other we should compete in respect for others. Let's embrace education and culture and let's remind ourselves that all people are equally valuable.

Ms Yuliya LOVOCHKINA (Ukraine, SOC): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear colleagues!

I really appreciate Mr. Jallow's timely report dealing with the issue of fighting racism and xenophobia in European societies.

Indeed, the role of political parties in promoting diversity and inclusion cannot be overestimated. It's political parties that formulate their ideologies and enact certain legislation and policies when they come to power. Leaders of political parties often act as role models — both good and bad. Thus, it is crucial to buttress practices of diversity and inclusion.

It is important to realize that racism is a structural problem that is being exacerbated by actors seeking to spread seeds of hatred and discord.

Some notable work has been done before. The cornerstone here has been the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society, launched in 1998. At the same time, I fully support the revision of the Charter.

We should keep in mind that an inclusive society requires the promotion of social equality, since, as it has been rightly noted, structural factors are one of the root causes of racism and ethnic hatred. It's also critically important that political parties don't tolerate the promotion of racism and xenophobia within their own ranks. If we want to promote a democratic diverse society, then political actors ought to set an example of such behavior. It is very important that a clear set of rules has been established to ensure accountability and sanctions for non-compliance with the requirements of the charter.

To sum up, this struggle for equality, equity, diversity and tolerance cannot be won without the active role of civil society. The concerted action of both political and civil societies can bring about the changes and breakthroughs to achieve inclusive society we all strive for.

Thank you for your attention!

Mr Éctor Jaime RAMÍREZ BARBA (Mexico): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Mr. President,

I congratulate Mr. Momodou Malcolm for integrating the text that is being debated today for two reasons:

The first, for showing us that listening and dialoguing with various actors over and over again, with patience and prudence, continues to be a very effective method that helps polish, model and shape the most complex ideas such as those written in your motion for a resolution, that today serve to debate in this chamber, where after an inherently dialectical activity, progress is made with its approval in a text with soul and hope, which is disseminated and adopted by us and the political parties in order to achieve the desired non-racist society and inclusive.

The second, for making visible in just seven points, principles of good practice to defend basic human rights, democratic principles, rejecting all forms of racism and intolerance, speech and racial incitement to harassment and hatred. I invite you, dear colleagues, to your appropriation and approval.

As a political institution with a long democratic tradition in Mexico, the National Action Party agrees that open, firm and proactive positions must be adopted against racism, xenophobia, hatred and intolerance for these reasons in any of its forms of manifestation, avoiding the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or a group of people for reasons of race, color, ethnic descent, social origin or sexual orientation.

As Mexican observers of a humanist political party, we have committed ourselves to dealing responsibly and fairly with issues related to said groups, preventing our members, officials, political allies and leaders at all levels from expressing negative stereotypes or stigmatizing their speeches and verbal or written manifestations, including the social networks that are so popular today for information and communication.

I tell you that we have created within the National Action Party the "Secretariat of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Peoples" and the "Commission for Attention to Political Violence" to promote their inclusion and know their worldview, as well as to prevent and punish acts or grievances such as those cited in this debate.

On behalf of Marko Cortéz Mendoza, National President of the PAN, we commit ourselves to endorsing and disseminating the "Charter for a non-racist and inclusive society."

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Selin SAYEK BÖKE (Türkiye, SOC): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Citizens are politically more interested in democracy, more inclined to vote and to abide by the law if political trust exists. Political trust is nothing but the citizen's confidence in political institutions. It is what gives politics legitimacy.

Trust is only established if words we speak are in line with the actions we act. Trust requires sincerity.

This is where this report comes in. This report is an opportunity for us as politicians to build political trust, to strengthen our democratic political institutions.

Through this resolution we as the Parliamentary Assembly will be endorsing the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist and Inclusive Society.

This report and the revised Charter serve as an important benchmark to make sure that political parties strive towards the common goal of fighting all forms of discrimination, hatred, and violence. It allows us to put words into deeds, by making our very own institutions inclusive and diverse first and foremost!

There are three critical issues that this revised charter does which gives grounds for a strong support.

First, the scope of the charter has been expanded significantly, taking into account the intersectionality of discrimination and its multidimensional nature. It not only includes discrimination based on ethnic origin but also on religious belief on sexual orientation, gender identity, on social origin. As such it is very powerful.

Second, it seeks to not only rewrite the rules but also makes a concrete call for change. It invites political parties to create mechanisms of “accountability”, where within political parties a complaint mechanism is established and where instruments including but not limited to sanctions are considered when the Charter is violated.

Finally, it does not turn a blind eye to the fact that discrimination feeds from the socio-economic structure. Our current economic model creates extensive socio-economic inequalities. And instead of tackling the structure of the system to overcome these inequalities the populist leaders divert the public attention by dividing society based on identities. This divisiveness gives grounds for discrimination. Discrimination becomes an instrument in the hands of the populist to hide the socio-economic inequalities and to kill the public demand to change in the socio-economic model. As such, a strengthened reference to the European Social Charter is commendable.

Supporting this report is supporting the ideals of a more equal, a more inclusive, a more prosperous future that will come to being by political parties and institutions taking these goals by heart and giving soul to them today in their own existence. As such I congratulate Mr. Jallow and call for a strong support to the report.

Ms Mònica BONELL (Andorra, ALDE): *Speech not pronounced (Rules of Procedure, Art. 31.2), only available in French*

Ms Eva LÓPEZ (Andorra, ALDE): *Speech not pronounced (Rules of Procedure, Art. 31.2), only available in French*

Vote: The role of political parties in fostering diversity and inclusion: a new Charter for a non-racist society

Ms Elvira KOVÁCS (Serbia, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The debate is closed.

The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination has presented a draft resolution, Document 15535 to which one amendment has been tabled.

I remind you that speeches on amendments are limited to 30 seconds.

I understand that the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination wishes to propose to the Assembly that the amendment to the draft resolution, which was unanimously approved by the Committee, should be declared as agreed by the Assembly.

That is the case.

Does anyone else object? If so, please ask for the floor by raising your hand. That is not the case. I declare that the amendment to the draft resolution has been agreed.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in Document 15535 as amended. Members present in the Chamber should use the hemicycle voting system.

The vote is now open.

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

The draft resolution as amended is adopted. Congratulations to the rapporteur.

Dear colleagues, the Assembly will hold its next public sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. with the Agenda which was approved this morning.

The sitting is adjourned.