



Provisional edition

Thursday 22 June 2023, afternoon

Official report of debates

Opening of the sitting No. 18

Joint debate under urgent procedure: Political consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine / War of aggression against Ukraine – Participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics?

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): The sitting is now open.

The next item is our joint debate under urgent procedure.

We will first hear the presentation by Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS of the report of the Political Affairs and Democracy Committee, entitled "The political consequences of the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine" (Doc. 15797).

Next, Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND will present the report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and the Media on the "War of aggression against Ukraine - Participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games" (Doc. 15795).

We are due to finish examining these texts, including votes, at 5:30 p.m. We shall, therefore, interrupt the list of speakers at around 5:05 p.m. so that we can hear the Committee's reply and proceed with the necessary votes.

The rapporteurs will each have 7 minutes to present their report and 3 minutes to reply to speakers at the end of the general discussion.

I now give the floor to Mr ZINGERIS, rapporteur of the Political Affairs and Democracy Committee on the first text.

Mister ZINGERIS.

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.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): *"Thank you very much, Mister President. Dear friends," [said in French]*

I would like to say that today we are facing 500 days that we have been witnessing Russia's illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. Five-hundred days that Ukrainians have been defending the values of Europe, not only on the frontline, Mister President, but by voting inside of their parliament. The Istanbul Convention passed through. The other extremely important conventions and bills are approved by the parliament during the daily bombings of Kyiv, Odessa, and other major cities and villages.

As the Ukrainians advance and liberate areas of their territories, now illegally occupied by the Russian Federation, we fear new evidence of war crimes will emerge. The current destruction of the Kakhovka dam confirms the barbarism of Mr Vladimir Putin's war machinery, war crimes, and ecocide. In defending the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of their country, Ukrainians are protecting our values, the values of the Council of Europe, and of the Charter of the United Nations.

One of the main political consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is that it has forged a renewed bond among democracies in support of Ukraine not only here in the Council of Europe but in all of the democratic world. The recent Summit in Reykjavík, which was extremely successful, is the expression of this unity around common values of the resolve to support Ukraine for as long as it takes. The Summit in Reykjavík shows that for the Council of Europe and its member states, supporting Ukraine is a political imperative in everyday life.

For Council of Europe member states, supporting Ukraine is important not only for the issues of rule of law and international justice, dear friends, but also to protect democratic security and stability here in Europe. To turn this commitment into reality, stepping up the assistance to Ukraine is of the utmost importance now. We must complete a comprehensive system of international accountability of the Russian Federation. We welcome, all of us, the register of damage for Ukraine as a historic result, and we will implement it very soon in reality in The Hague. We must keep pursuing full accountability and the establishment of a special tribunal for crimes of aggression. We must ensure this full accountability includes those military and paramilitary groups who participate in the Kremlin's aggression against Ukraine and actually, Mister President, in the aggression in other places like Syria or Africa. They must be declared international terrorist groups. I am talking about the Wagner and Kadyrov groups.

Dear colleagues,

Today we will vote in favour of all the points mentioned by me and mentioned by you. Thank you for being extremely inclusive during all stages of the preparation. Thank you for your amendments in the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy. I would like to say that our report will cover issues from migrants to energy, economic leverage to elite capture, ecocides created by Russia.

Actually, we just have, Mister President, we just have Mr Volodymyr Zelenskyy's statement two hours ago that the prepared provocation from the Russian side on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is now in preparation. He has warned the whole world. We will try to react to this new fact of disinformation to energy blackmail, the kidnapping of Ukrainian children, the putting down of the whole Russian democratic society and Mr Aleksandr Lukashenko, who is on the side of this criminal war, on the side of Mr Vladimir Putin, putting down, we just heard, Ms Svitalana Tsikhanouskaya, democratic society and their fighting for democracy in Belarus. The Ukrainian war will affect Belarusian society, too.

To conclude,

I would like to encourage you to build resilience in your society against Russian aggression every day. Whether the events in Ukraine are on the front page or not, do not forget that Moscow is mocking and humiliating all our sanctions.

In every pocket, they have 110 ways of avoiding the sanctions. We will try to, we will build a wall of shame for those banks and those firms, even those countries who are supporting and avoiding the sanctions declared by the European Union, by all of our countries, and by the United States.

Thank you so much.

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

Now I call Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND, rapporteur for the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Mediato present the second report.

Linda, you have 7 minutes now and 3 minutes at the end to reply to the debate.

You have the floor.

Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND (Norway, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): Thank you, Chair.

Dear colleagues,

Ukraine continues to stand up against the Russian aggressor with resolve and determination.

They are on the frontline for democracy and our European values.

At the same time, the International Olympic Committee is considering lifting the ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes from participating in the Paris Games next year.

It's deeply worrying and disappointing.

Our debate and this resolution are therefore very important.

We are not just debating sport and participation in the Olympics. We are also debating how to defend our values. Values we share with the Olympic movement: life, human dignity, and peace, as enshrined by the Olympic Charter.

I hope the International Olympic Committee and the Olympic movement are listening to our debate today.

I hope the International Olympic Committee is ready to take responsibility.

The Olympic movement plays a fundamental role.

Their decisions have huge resonance and a deep global impact.

In February last year, the International Olympic Committee condemned Russia's breach of the Olympic Truce, and decided to ban Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials from participating in international competitions.

They urged all international sports federations to relocate or cancel events planned in Russia or Belarus.

Our Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media welcomed and supported this call.

But 16 months later, knowing that the war of aggression is still ongoing, knowing that the suffering of the Ukrainian people is worsening, the International Olympic Committee is considering allowing Russian and Belarusian athletes to participate as "neutral" in the Paris Games.

As a human rights organisation, we must raise our voice against this.

Why would the International Olympic Committee change its position?

It has been argued that the ban is (1) a possible infringement of the fundamental rights of Russian and Belarusian athletes to participate in sports, (2) not in coherence with Olympic values, and (3) inconsistent and self-centred in a turbulent world.

Also, it has been argued that a call on the International Olympic Committee from the Assembly to maintain the ban is in conflict with the autonomy of sport.

As I have explained in the report, none of this is true.

Firstly, a ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes from the Paris Games is not an infringement on athletes' right to participate in sports. It is not a fundamental right to participate in the Olympics, an international competition.

Secondly, when the International Olympic Committee decided to ban Russian and Belarusian athletes, they said it was "because the Russian invasion of Ukraine represents a blatant violation of the Olympic Truce". This has not changed.

The war of aggression against Ukraine is still a blatant and ongoing violation of the Olympic Truce. It is still a major threat to peace and human dignity. The situation has in fact worsened since last year.

Thirdly, to the argument that the ban is inconsistent and self-centred, I will say the following: this war of aggression is of a totally different nature and scale than other ongoing conflicts. A superpower has threatened nuclear escalation. Russia is challenging the existing international legal order.

And lastly, regarding the issue of the autonomy of sports: it is not an issue.

We are urging the International Olympic Committee to make the right decision. And I must say, these are core principles of great value: peace, global stability, safeguarding the international legal order.

Dear colleagues,

We have the right to voice our opinion. We cannot silently endorse a decision to lift the ban, when the destiny of Ukraine and the human rights of its people are at stake.

Russian and Belarusian participation in the Paris Games is therefore unthinkable. Their participation would *de facto* prevent others from participating. Ukrainian athletes would not participate.

Finding acceptable criteria for Russians and Belarusians participating as “neutral” is nearly impossible. It is inevitable: they will be linked to their countries.

We must therefore call on the International Olympic Committee to maintain the ban. There is no such thing as a neutral athlete.

We must urge national International Olympic Committee representatives, as well as national and international sports federations, to stand up against the International Olympic Committee's proposal to allow participation under a “neutral” flag.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam Linda Hofstad HELLELAND.

Now in the debate, we first go to the five speakers on behalf of the political groups.

First in the debate I call Mr Caspar Van den BERG from the Netherlands, who speaks on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Caspar.

Mr Caspar Van den BERG (Netherlands, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Dear Chair,

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe wants to express its heartfelt gratitude to the rapporteurs of today's debate, Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS and Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND. They have done an impressive job working on a topic that is, or should be, the highest priority to everyone here at the Council of Europe, namely Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Thousands of civilians have been killed alongside the tens of thousands of Ukrainian military who have died protecting their country, and over 14 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes. The Russian army has committed heinous acts of savagery and war crimes, including the expulsion of Ukrainian children.

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe strongly condemns, once again, the Russian Federation's full-fledged attack on Ukraine, with the Belarusian regime's complicity.

While politics usually is primarily the realm of politicians and public authorities, in the face of such a fundamental attack on the core values underpinning our societies, societal institutions, including the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and its constituent sports bodies cannot look away. Instead, they should bring the weight of their moral authority and renown to the public consciousness, and should not allow the Russian Federation and Belarus to be represented in the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games for as long as the war of aggression continues. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe thereby underlines the resolution of the Committee of Ministers of 26 October last year.

There is no doubt that participation by athletes from these countries would be used as a propaganda tool by the regimes. We have seen the Russian and Belarusian authorities do this over the past period. Their participation would hinder other athletes, not least Ukrainian athletes, from competing.

Allowing for these athletes to participate as neutral, individual competitors offers no solution, because it will not provide the required safeguards and will not be a response worthy of the Olympic spirit.

Moreover, as we know that Russian and Belarusian elite athletes receive state salaries, there is no realistic way thinkable that they could demonstrate their neutrality or distance themselves from these regimes.

If for nothing else, it should be out of respect for the nearly 300 Ukrainian sportsmen and women that have to date lost their lives in the war, and the children whose lives have been cut short and who will never have a chance to excel at sports, that the sports world should stand up for the basic values of liberty and democracy.

Thank you.

[Applause]

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

Now Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO from Ukraine is going to speak on behalf of the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance.

Oleksii, you have the floor.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Mister President, and special thanks to the rapporteurs, especially to Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS for the great job done. Thank you very much for such powerful and important reports.

Now we're speaking about sport. We are speaking the word "neutral". I want to take this point and to go ahead. What is really neutrality? Can we really be neutral in the world? You know, when I hear that, it is not just from sportsmen. It is culture people, artists. We see people in Monaco, Courchevel, Vienna, Geneva sitting in restaurants and saying, "You know, I am Russian, and I am neutral". No! You are not!

If you want to be Russian not with the word "bad Russian", you just need to name evil as evil. You just can't be silent. No. You just need to speak; you just need to talk. In this case, you can be just Russian. In all other cases, you are a bad Russian, because you carry responsibility for what your country is doing.

Now I'm speaking about Russian citizens. We are not Nazis like they are. We're not speaking about Russians as an ethnic group, because there are ethnic Russians in Argentina. They have nothing to do with Putin's Russia. They can be neutral. There are ethnic Russians in Ukraine, and they are good Russians because they're fighting for Ukraine, shoulder to shoulder with Ukrainians, Jewish people, Crimean Tatars, and others for our values, for our country.

If you are a citizen of Russia, no matter of what ethnicity, and you are silent, it means that you support Putin. When we're speaking about sport, the Olympic Games is not just about whose muscles are bigger. No, it's about the spirit. First of all, you should be human. When you're human you can't be silent when you see how the Russian Federation, your country, is killing children, is destroying the Kakhovka dam, is destroying the planet completely, and is nuclear blackmailing the whole world.

You just need to speak!

In this case, if you're doing it publicly, you can be just Russian.

If you want to be a good Russian, there is an easy way to do it. Who is a good Russian? Mr Vladimir Kara-Murza is a good Russian, because he is detained in prison and because he fought against the war in Russia.

Who is a good Russian? Good Russians are those who are fighting in the Russian Volunteer Corps today, in the Belgorod Oblast of the Russian Federation to liberate Russia from Putin's regime. They are good Russians! It's not about Tchaikovsky. It's about those who are playing Tchaikovsky for the tyrant, and then they try to say, "You know, I am neutral". No, you are not.

If you want to be a good Russian, welcome to Ukraine, welcome to the Russian Volunteer Corps. Do what you can to stop the evil. In this case, you are really a good Russian. Everything else is just hypocrisy and we need to stop it and prevent it spreading in our societies. Evil should be named as evil.

Thank you very much.

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

Next in the debate, I call Mr George KATROUGALOS from Greece. He speaks on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left.

George.

Mr George KATROUGALOS (Greece, UEL, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Tiny.

Dear colleagues,

Our group is not unanimous on the issue of the athletes.

Some of us are following the opinion of their rapporteur. Some others have a different opinion.

Take note that I'm not speaking about a majority.

We didn't put that to the vote, because we did not want it to be a divisive issue diverting us from supporting the values of this Organisation and supporting Ukraine.

But this is exactly my point. The discussion with this report is very divisive. Not among us, not just between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

It brings an important bridge, a schism, within the bloc that supports Ukraine.

The recent G7 statement is the following, I quote, "we are focused on ensuring that Russian and Belarusian athletes are in no way appearing as representatives of their states".

President Emmanuel Macron, the host of the next Olympic Games, said, I quote, "sport should not be politicised. These major events are meant to allow athletes from all countries, sometimes including countries at war, to bring sport to life".

More importantly than all, we are now in confrontation with the United Nations.

Both the special rapporteurs of the United Nations in the field of cultural rights and on contemporary forms of racism have said clearly that they consider that a blanket ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes would be discriminatory, a flagrant violation of human rights, and would raise, I quote: "serious issues of non-discrimination".

Not that it is factually correct what the rapporteur has said that the International Olympic Committee has lifted the ban on Russian and Belarus.

Russian and Belarus as states continue to be banned.

Russian teams or Belarusian teams are not going to be present in the Olympics.

We are not going to see a Russian hockey team or a Russian basketball team.

Individual athletes who are supporting the war are also excluded.

Athletes who belong to athletic groups of the army or the police are going to be excluded.

So again, it was a very bad decision to bring this item on the agenda of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

It is going to give an easy propaganda victory to the Russian regime because the International Olympic Committee is not going to hear what we are going to say.

President Thomas Bach of the International Olympic Committee has already lamented, I quote, "unfortunately a few countries, in particular European ones, are going beyond this very strict International Olympic Committee recommendation".

It is a mistake, dear colleagues, that we should definitely avoid for the future.

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

Next in the debate, I call Ms Agnes Sirkka PRAMMER from Austria, who speaks on behalf of the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group.

Agnes.

Ms Agnes Sirkka PRAMMER (Austria, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Mister President.

It has now been almost 18 months that the Russian regime started its large-scale invasion on Ukraine.

Since the very first day, the Council of Europe member states have been supporting Ukrainians in defending their sovereignty, their independence, and the territorial integrity of their country, because by doing so they're at the same time defending the basic principles and values of the Council of Europe, they are defending the principles of democracy and rule of law.

This war is not only fought with tanks and rockets, it is also fought with energy blackmail, with nuclear blackmail, and disinformation.

And this leads me to the second resolution. Olympic and Paralympic Games have always been more than sports events. They are a platform for athletes to perform, but also for nations to showcase their athletes. It starts at the opening ceremony and continues in victory ceremonies, with flags being raised and anthems being played. Medals are being counted nationwide. Athletes are always competing for their countries. And that is what Russian propaganda will make of it, even if under a neutral flag. The message will be, "We are part of peaceful games. We are part of the Olympic family. We are level with all others; we are not bad".

Yet, as a person involved in sports, it breaks my heart to watch games knowing that there are athletes who have been training for years to get into shape to qualify for the participation of the Olympic or Paralympic Games, and now cannot do so because their regimes started and continue a terrible war.

But this is not about sports heartbreaks; it is about hundreds and thousands of Ukrainian and also Russian hearts that stopped beating. This is about crimes, war crimes being committed every day. This is about large amounts of soil and natural resources being destroyed on purpose. This is about people being tortured and murdered, about women being raped, and about children being kidnapped.

What national governments and international institutions can and shall do to stop the Russians Federation's aggression on Ukraine is listed in the resolution.

In summary, it is to show the Russian regime and the world that the Russian leader has put the country outside of the community.

What the International Olympic Committee can do is simply not to give the Russian, and also the Belarusian regimes, the opportunity to use the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris as a platform to transport the very opposite of what the community of states has agreed.

The International Olympic Committee has to make it clear that there is no space on the pitch for those not playing by the rules.

Thank you.

[Light applause]

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam Agnes Sirkka PRAMMER.

Our last speaker on behalf of the political groups is Mr Aleksander POCIEJ from Poland on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party.

Aleksander.

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

We are debating the possible exclusion of Russian and Belarusian athletes from the Olympic Games.

The International Olympic Committee and some of us share the idea that Olympism is about sowing peace and that athletes have nothing to do with either regime, so the decision to deprive them of the Games in Paris is inhumane.

As a solution, we are offered their participation under a neutral flag. No, no and no.

First of all, in ancient times, when the Olympic idea was born, all armed conflicts had to cease. Remember how the Russian forces waited until the end of the Olympic Games in Beijing in winter? Why? They were afraid. Did the Committee receive such a declaration for 2024? No.

Neutral flag. I recently watched the French Open tournament on French television. The commentators, at least 50 times during a match, called Mr Daniil Medvedev, whom I adore as a tennis player, "Russian athlete". Are commentators in Paris going to say, during soccer matches, "the neutral team won against Iran"? No.

So where is this neutrality?

They say: the athletes have worked so hard. Didn't the Ukrainian athletes work hard? Did they have the same training conditions as the others? No. So where's the equality?

They say they have nothing to do with the regimes. No, they're wet up to their ears. And the colleagues who are going to speak, who are going to follow me, are going to explain why.

I ask you: in 1940, before all the atrocities of the war in Poland, did anyone want to organise the Olympic Games? No.

So, what's more, I'd like to point out that this is the strongest sanction imaginable. Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS is going to talk about the political consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine: one major consequence is the disinformation being spread by pro-Russian forces in the countries most committed to helping Ukraine.

Just two days ago, you saw a debate on the Bolshevik Commission set up in Poland to fight not real Russian allies, but the opposition. I was stunned to see this chorus... *[interrupted by the President]*

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

Mr Aleksander POCIEJ (Poland, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): I was amazed to see this Choir, Mr Oleksandr MERZHYNSKYI and Mr Barna Pál ZSIGMOND singing: let's unite to support the creation of such a commission.

My advice to you, and I want to send you both the texts of this law, is that you use this first at home.

Thank you both.

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

The next speaker is Mr Piero FASSINO, from Italy.

Mr FASSINO?

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC): *"Thank you, I will speak in Italian, on Channel 4."* *[spoken in English]*

Mister President,

The war, as we all know, continues. The suffering, the destruction, the casualties continue. There are increasing calls to stop the weapons, to try to start peace negotiations.

There are many initiatives: the Vatican, African presidents, Mr Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, China, and many others. But these efforts to seek a peace settlement are thwarted by Vladimir Putin's choice to annex the Donbas territories and Crimea.

You see, there is a difference between militarily occupying a territory and annexing it, because from an occupied territory one can always withdraw on the basis of an agreement. From an annexed territory one no longer withdraws, because if you annex a territory, you say, "that is mine, and I don't intend to give it back".

Therefore, to all those who call for negotiations, I say, beware that the object of negotiation is not there, because Mr Vladimir Putin has annexed the territories, and he does not intend to give them back. The Ukrainians legitimately claim that those territories belong to their sovereignty.

I think we have to be very aware that only Russian withdrawal from the annexed territories can create the conditions for peace. This is inevitable.

Yesterday, the Vatican Secretary of State Mr Peter Parolin, who certainly is very much involved with the Vatican peace initiative, said that he sees no immediate prospects for stopping the weapons and prospects for negotiations. It is significant that he said that.

I believe that we have to support Ukraine in every way and keep the pressures strongly.

Among those pressures, in addition to sanctions is how to prevent sport from being a showcase for the Putin regime.

Now, we know that Russia, when it goes to the Olympics, goes there with a team of strong athletes in every discipline.

If we look at Olympic medalists, Russia is always in the top three countries in terms of medals won, which means that Russia will try to make its sporting strength evident this time as well. That becomes an argument for enhancement, for emphasis that Mr Vladimir Putin will use on the international stage.

I think that's why we have to try to prevent Russian athletes from being able to participate in the Olympics, not because we have anything against these athletes and their right to sport discipline, but to prevent them from being used as a propaganda tool by Mr Vladimir Putin.

Finally, a very last consideration.

We here put as the title of our first report "Consequences of the Ukraine War." Beware that the consequences are many.

I am thinking, for example, of the fact that there is more and more of a West-rest opposition, and we have to convince the world instead that the Russo-Ukrainian war is not just a problem for Europe and the relationship between Europe and Russia.

Let's think about the consequences in the Mediterranean, where Russia is very present because of historical relations with Egypt, with Algeria, because it is in Syria, because it is in the Sahel with Wagner, because right now in the Mediterranean, Russia has the largest fleet it has ever had in that sea.

Here, I think we should evaluate everything and know, therefore, that continuing to support Ukraine is essential for Ukraine but also for international stability and peace.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister Piero FASSINO [*spoken in Italian*].

[*Light applause*]

Next in the debate, I call Mr Reinhold LOPATKA from Austria.

Reinhold, you have the floor.

Mr Reinhold LOPATKA (Austria, EPP/CD): Dear President,

Dear colleagues,

Of course, we all fully support Ukraine in the war against Russia. On the other hand, I also fully support the point of view that we have to respect the autonomy of sporting organisations.

I am a strong defender of sport's right to make its own choices without government interference. If governments or parliamentary forums try to decide which outlets can take part in which competitions, it would mean, for me, the end of world sport as we know it today.

Sport is very important as an independent bridge builder. We should respect and we should accept the independence of sport.

The Olympic Charter clearly states that the goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

The Russian war of aggression is an indisputable crime against humanity, of course. The responsible perpetrators of these crimes shall be brought to justice, but do young sportsmen have influence in the decisions in Russia? I think they have no influence at all.

Here, of course, this young sportsman, this young sportswoman are being misused by the Russian Federation for the purpose of propaganda. I see this problem.

On the other hand, I think we have to respect that the world sport associations, they have to make their decisions.

As politicians, we should not interfere. We should not move in a direction taking away the responsibility from the sport world federations.

We have so many dictatorships on this planet. If we as the Council of Europe open a door here, what would we do when many of these dictators are misusing their young sports people more and more?

I don't know how the International Olympic Committee can move on.

I think the only way is that we respect that it is in the hands of the International Olympic Committee, and it is in the hands of the sport world federations how they decide.

I respect this.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Good morning to you all.

Thank you to Mr Reinhold LOPATKA.

I now give the floor to Mr Roland Rino BÜCHEL from Switzerland.

You have the floor, Sir.

Mr Roland Rino BÜCHEL (Switzerland, ALDE): Esteemed Vice-President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Esteemed colleagues,

I have a lot to do with athletes professionally. I have been doing this all my life. It is part of my professional path. Yesterday and today I had phone conversations with athletes. One of them told me in no uncertain terms: as a gold medalist at the Olympics, I want to win against the best, against the best in the world. I want to be the best of all in the world. The best of all, in fact the best of all honest athletes in the world, the best of the athletes who don't cheat, who don't dope. In this sense, I am in favour of excluding athletes from the Olympic Games if they are cheaters, if they manipulate sport, if they dope.

Now this Parliamentary Assembly wants to exclude athletes for other reasons. This Assembly wants to politicise the Olympic Games. Do we really want to force the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to violate its charter?

What is the IOC, after all?

The International Olympic Committee is a private international organisation, founded as an association and headquartered in Lausanne. I'll come back to the IOC in a moment.

First, a few sentences about the sport ministers of our member countries.

Ten years ago, at the 5th UNESCO World Conference of Ministers of Sport, they affirmed in the so-called Berlin Declaration that everyone must have the opportunity to access and participate in sport as a fundamental right and regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, cultural and social background, and so on.

If we in this Assembly now demand that Russian and Belarusian athletes be excluded, then we are demanding that the sport ministers violate the Berlin Declaration.

Let us return to the Olympic Charter mentioned at the beginning. Among other things, the following principles are laid down there, and I quote:

"The practice of sport is a human right. Any form of discrimination against a country or a person on the basis of race, religion, politics, gender or on any other grounds is incompatible with membership of the Olympic Movement."

Under Chapter 1, the International Olympic Committee must even act against any political or commercial abuse of sport among athletes. It is, therefore, an active obligation of the International Olympic Committee to prevent interventions of politics in sport, and this regardless of whether they pursue their goals or not.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am convinced that sport must be a politics-free space.

If this Assembly wants to exclude athletes, it is asking the International Olympic Committee to violate its own legal foundations. Do we really want to do that? I don't.

The Olympics, a privately organised sporting event, ladies and gentlemen, a privately organised sporting event should not and must not be politicised.

Athletes want to win against the best, and they want to do so regardless of who is currently the head of state in the country of their opponents.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The best should be Olympic champions.

Thank you very much.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr BÜCHEL.

I now give the floor to Ms Olena KHOMENKO from Ukraine.

Sorry, Mrs KHOMENKO, Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS has asked for a point of order.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD, rapporteur): Thank you, dear friends and colleagues.

Don't forget we have today a discussion about two extremely important reports.

Please, if we have a joint presentation by two committees, please, speak about both reports.

That's my comment to you. Please, thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr ZINGERIS, but this is not a point of order.

I now give the floor to Ms Olena KHOMENKO from Ukraine.

Ms Olena KHOMENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA): Dear colleagues, let me congratulate both rapporteurs on the excellent reports.

We are living through a watershed era, and the world will never be the same after 24 February 2022.

Russia attempts to reshape the current international order driven by their imperial vision.

The democratic world played the business card. They were naive about Russia's real plans, and all along became more dependent on the natural resources of the Russian totalitarian regime.

But it keeps getting worse.

Russia uses scorched-earth tactics. They plunder and destroy and try to wipe out Ukraine. They mined and destroyed the Kakhovka Dam. They took as a hostage the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. They mined the Crimean Titan plant and shelled the ammonia pipeline.

They exceed any expectations from the notion of madness, and feed on the weak reaction of their opponents.

They wish we never existed.

Well, we are here. And here we are still fighting fiercely.

But on our side, is naivety over? I'm not sure about that.

Perceptions change drastically only after horrors of war are seen with your own eyes. It converts into support against the aggressor for the cause of just self-defence, but way too slowly. The main burden is still carried by Ukrainians. And knowing about the vast human resources of Russia, their insane disregard for human rights and human life, we cannot scream enough how urgent it is to scale up defence spending for all, how urgent it is to make our democracies capable of producing and maintaining necessary capabilities.

Because without that you cannot defend the very basic human rights cherished in this organisation. Without that your insane neighbour may question even human dignity and no one would be empowered to stop.

This report, Political consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, reiterates many important components to bring lasting peace, like strengthening the sanctions to cripple the war machine destroying Ukraine, and setting all the necessary accountability mechanisms.

On this background, we salute the Estonian government for setting up principles of the use of frozen Russian assets and hope for the adoption of the respective law soon.

All European governments should follow this lead.

It is popular nowadays to portray someone as a peacemaker or someone can portray himself or herself as a peacemaker. All peacemakers may take note from this resolution, from the resolution on political consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine.

Only steps re-establishing the rules-based international order would bring true peace.

And we are all eager and acting to see that day.

Thank you, dear colleagues.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam KHOMENKO.

Mr Maksim VUČINIĆ of Montenegro has the floor.

Isn't he here?

Mr Bernard FOURNIER of France has the floor.

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

Ladies and gentlemen,

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine prompted us to reaffirm our values at the Reykjavík Summit on 16 and 17 May. At this Summit, it was decided that support for Ukraine should be a political imperative for the Council of Europe and its member states.

This support is all the more necessary as the outcome of this war will determine the future of our democratic values and the stability of our continent. If Ukraine fails to push back Russia, the latter will tomorrow attack the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, which are already the target of attempts at political destabilisation.

The Russian Federation is already helping to foment demonstrations against the government in power in the Republic of Moldova. It is also conducting large-scale online disinformation campaigns and cyberattacks against this government. The situation in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has also deteriorated further, with increasing pressure to integrate these two regions into the Russian Federation. Finally, a Russian victory would mean a political status quo in Belarus for many years to come.

It is therefore essential that we rally around the values of our Organisation, while supporting Ukraine's right to defend itself. The European Union, the United States and the United Kingdom are providing Ukraine with military assistance, supplying it with the advanced weapons it needs to carry out its counter-offensive.

I would like to stress the importance of the effort this represents for our states, in financial, industrial and logistical terms, but it also reminds us that defending our values comes at a cost.

At the same time, the crimes committed by the Russian Federation continue to be documented and catalogued. This work is essential if we are ever to bring to justice those responsible for the crimes committed in this war of aggression.

A register of war damage was created at the 4th Summit, the first step towards an international compensation mechanism for victims of Russian aggression.

While many organisations are working to establish the various responsibilities, our Assembly must continue to advocate that those responsible for Russian war crimes, including those at the highest level of government, be tried and sentenced. When the time comes, they will have to answer for their crimes.

Finally,

While I am delighted to see that support for Ukraine is generally unanimous among Council of Europe member states, I regret that this is not the case worldwide.

We need to ask ourselves why this support or benevolent neutrality towards Russia at United Nations Security Council meetings, given what is at stake in spreading our values.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister FOURNIER.

I now give the floor to Ms Liisa-Ly PAKOSTA from Estonia.

Ms Liisa-Ly PAKOSTA (Estonia, NR): Thank you.

Dear colleagues,

Let me begin with a memory from my childhood in Estonia, its capital city Tallinn occupied by Soviet Russia. In 1980, Tallinn was the venue for the sailing regatta of the Olympic Games held then in Moscow. Children remember this event very well because, for a few days, it was possible to buy chewing gum and bananas, which nowadays would be hard to believe, that even these were not available under occupation. In fact, the Olympics were designed wholly as a propaganda event by Soviet Russia, even kids understood that. In order to oppose the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, democratic countries boycotted the Olympic Games in my home city. Even as a child, I was very proud of all the countries that boycotted Russia because this was the only right thing to do.

Dear friends,

We can do it right today as well. It is absolutely clear, that if we want to follow the Olympic principles, the Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials must be banned from international sport, including the Olympic Games. The Ukrainian fight for freedom is our fight. The murdered Ukrainian children are our children. This should not be forgotten or overlooked.

We know well how Russia continues to use sport for propaganda purposes. Many Russian athletes have publicly expressed their support for the war. Russian sport authorities use sportswashing in their internal propaganda. It was just a few days ago when the President of the Russian Wrestling Federation, Mr Mikhail Mamiashvili, expressed his readiness to drive the Russian team to the Paris Olympics on tanks. We have to tell him, "You are not welcome; please stay home with your tanks".

I thank the rapporteurs, Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS and Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND for their reports. This Assembly shall be clear in our messages:

We express our full solidarity and support with the Ukrainian people. We support the ban of Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials from international sport, including the Olympic Games. We urge the national International Olympic Committee (IOC) representatives and national and international sport federations to express their opposition to the IOC's proposal to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to participate in the upcoming Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Therefore, the report and the draft resolutions have my full support.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam PAKOSTA.

I now give the floor to Ms Sibel ARSLAN from Switzerland.

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

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the rapporteurs very much, because times are very difficult, and we have to continue to deal with all these difficult issues. We have to deal with them, because time is necessary, that we have to look for alternatives, for solutions, how we should also deal with authoritarian statesmen.

Therefore, the Russian war of aggression is not only an attack on Ukraine. This war is an attack on all of us, on our values, on our next generations, with all this environmental damage that a war also causes, it will also occupy the next generations. All these perpetrators who bear responsibility should, therefore, as we discussed in Reykjavík, be able to be punished before a special court, which is why the establishment of such a court is still very important, also in the obligation of the next generations. What is added, of course, is the question of the Wagner Group, precisely such war troops, who everywhere again and again try with all this war machinery to provide assistance, should still be prosecuted.

I believe that to demand peace in times of peace is easy. To stand up for peace in times of war and to look for alternatives for that is still very important for all of us. A few words about the proposals regarding athletes, whether they should be allowed to participate in the Olympic Games now or not.

My colleague from Switzerland, Mr Roland BÜCHEL, pointed out that sport is indeed something that creates links between people, and it should be a space of freedom.

What we see again and again is that the players in the respective countries, especially by the authoritarian states, are also exploited so that they can make propaganda in the country itself, so that they can also say that they do not have to expect any consequences at all.

It is also important to see that often athletes are supported as long as they are close to the governments of these very regimes. All the others who are critical, who have perhaps spoken out about what is happening to Ukraine on the part of Russia, are not supported.

I would like to give an example here. Think of the Iranian athletes who were abroad, one who climbed without a headscarf in competitions abroad. She was then arrested by the mullah regime when she returned home, and we had to fight for her release.

Therefore, it is important that we, I think, can also show consequences, and make demands on sport, especially because they are privately organised. It is important that we send this signal from here and that the private organisations here can also send a signal to the respective authoritarian states.

Thank you very much.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam ARSLAN.

I now give the floor to Ms Ingjerd SCHOU from Norway.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD): Thank you, Madam President.

This is an important debate. I congratulate Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND on her work and call on you all to support the draft resolution.

Now I would like to start with the conclusion.

As long as there is war in Ukraine, Russian and Belarusian athletes cannot be allowed to participate in the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris next year.

Allowing them to participate under a neutral flag or banner is not acceptable either. Our Assembly must take a clear position on this issue and we must use our voices to stand up for Ukrainian athletes. Their right to participate in sports is violated by the Russian aggressor.

Madam President, ideally, sports and politics do not mix but we all know that this is not the case. Sports and politics are tightly linked together. During the hearing on this issue in April, President Tiny KOX underlined that sport is a powerful tool. It has the capacity to transmit values and principles to society as a whole, not only to those taking part in it. I could not agree more.

The international community has shown remarkable unity and strength in its response to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. I encourage the world of sport to do the same and not disengage itself from the rest of the international community. Taking a clear stand, Madam President, on this is not disrespecting the autonomy of sports and sporting organisations. Our Assembly fully respects the autonomy and the competence of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) but you cannot remain silent if the IOC decides to withdraw the ban. We cannot silently endorse such a decision.

As Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND states in her report, there are core principles of greater importance than the autonomy of sport. What is at stake here is the preservation of peace, global stability, the safeguarding of the international legal order. There is the destiny of a country and the human rights of the Ukrainian people. We all have an obligation to uphold them.

Madam President and colleagues, in addition to supporting Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND's report, I encourage you to reach out to your national IOC representatives and national sports federations, urge them to express their opposition to the IOC's proposal to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to take part in the upcoming Paris Olympics. It is the right time to do so, Madam President.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam SCHOU.

The last speaker Mr André GATTOLIN from France has the floor.

Mr André GATTOLIN (France, ALDE): Thank you, Madam President.

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I'd like to extend my warmest congratulations to our two rapporteurs, Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS and Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND, for the quality of the two documents they have delivered to us, and also for the amendments that have been added, notably by our Ukrainian colleagues, and which we will be debating.

The rapporteur Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS has obviously invited us to deal with both subjects. It's true that the two subjects are eminently linked and I would say that, in the end - and this is going to be a little difficult for our translators - but the question is that, in view of all the crimes already committed against humanity and far beyond by Russia, Russia should be banished from the family of nations: banishment. One such ban is the question of their presence and that of their Belarusian allies at the Olympic Games.

And then, from this banishment, we'll have to move on to the dock. It's the same word in French, the same sound, but it's about arguing the charge, and here we are in both these trends.

If I had to make another link, I'd say that, unfortunately, the Russian Federation is already a gold medallist, the absolute record-holder - since the restoration of international law after the Second World War - of the multiplication in seventeen months of all violations of international law, humanitarian law and the laws of war.

So yes, Russian and Belarusian athletes must not be allowed to take part in the Olympic Games, and especially not under the mystification that would consist in putting them under a neutral banner. Can you imagine a soccer match between Belarus and the Russian Federation? "The neutral team has just scored a goal against the neutral team, that's great! The neutral team has won!"

But soon, moreover, all athletes, all countries will want to play under the neutral banner because they'll be sure to win. Perhaps we'll return to the real Olympic Games, with the fundamental human values we must respect.

The arguments against this neutral banner are also obvious: we know that a large proportion of Russia's top athletes are soldiers and are on state-paid military teams. Can you imagine these people keeping their mouths shut? They haven't done so in recent months. The ones who went to salute the bravery of the people who were supposedly adopting poor Ukrainian orphans who had been forcibly deported, the ones we saw at Mr Vladimir Putin's rallies.

So I know, my government doesn't agree with what I'm saying: that's not my problem. My problem is that I'm a Parisian, I'm French; the Olympics are coming up; I defend values and I'll defend those values to the end. I'd rather be European than French, and I'd rather defend fundamental values than European values when they're no good.

I'll end by quoting Mr Pierre de Coubertin, one of my compatriots, who founded the Olympic Games in 1896. He said: "The important thing is not to win, the important thing is to participate".

In this case, we need to win; Ukraine needs to win and the Belarusians and Russia need to stay out.

Thank you very much.

Ms Beatrice TIMGREN (Sweden, EC/DA): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

I want to start by saying that I fully support the exclusion of Russian and Belarusian athletes from international competitions.

We live in a time where sports have the unique ability to unite us and promote positive values. But we cannot ignore the challenging situations that affect us around the world. One of these situations is the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which has had a devastating impact on people's lives.

That's why we are gathered here today to defend the principles of peace and justice that sports represent. We firmly say no to the idea of allowing Russian and Belarusian athletes to participate in future Olympic Games. Doing so would signal a normalization of the aggression war and show a lack of respect for international law. That's not the message we want to send to the world.

We have listened to sports ministers from 35 countries, all of whom have condemned Russia's and Belarus' warfare against Ukraine. We agree that athletes and leaders from these countries should not be allowed to participate in international competitions as long as the conflict continues. We stand strong in our solidarity and commitment to justice, and we refuse to let political interests jeopardize peace and security.

We understand that the final decisions lie with the International Olympic Committee and other sports federations, but let's be clear about our united stance. We support the continued exclusion of Russian and Belarusian athletes. Let's show the world that we do not accept aggression and that we take these actions seriously.

Let's strive to build a sports world that stands for peace, justice, and unity. Let's remember that our dedication goes far beyond the arenas, and that we have the power to bring about change.

Mr Georg GEORGIEV (Bulgaria, EPP/CD): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Mr President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me thank the rapporteur for the prompt work on this report. As per the political consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine, they'll have long-term echoes. Today, I'd like to make three points, which I think need our forward-looking attention.

First. Russia's been devoted in asserting itself as violator of international law. We could trace this infamous record to its imperialistic history. But more recently, we recall its aggression in Moldova (1992) and Georgia (2008). Then the illegal Crimea referendum, and the annexations of Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine. Others throughout the world, in Europe, notably the Balkans, have, too, suffered its destabilizing meddling. The current Russian war against Ukraine, however, marks a distinct tipping point. This war is an unacceptable escalation. It's, at once, the most brutal perpetration against rules-based order since WWII, a full-scale assault on millions of lives, and a direct attack against a future of peaceful coexistence.

Russia's uninterrupted track-record being such, I come to my second point. It's now that we all have got to guarantee Ukraine's success, and prominently - that Russia is stopped. Should we fail, consequences will be overwhelming for decades. It's no secret that Russia isn't the only actor seeking to twist international order away from the might of law and towards the law of might. For its war against Ukraine and the crimes it commits, Kremlin's regime bears full responsibility. We must employ all proper legal instruments to hold it fully accountable. This regime is the maker of its country's political and economic isolation. Against the interests of its people, it single-handedly took Russia out of the European family. Russia starts where Europe ends. Russia starts where repressions against protesting citizens, media, church representatives, against dissent begin. In the CoE we'll always support the oppressed against the oppressors.

I come to my final point, directed at each of our countries and to the question are we doing enough to ensure Ukraine succeeds and Russia's stopped. I'm pleased to share Bulgaria has a new government, committed to European unity, to support for Ukraine, and to active dialogue with partners throughout world. I call upon all CoE members to muster support for Ukraine without hesitation or ambiguity. Solidarity's the beating heart of Europe, and Ukraine's fully entitled to it. We've no option but to defend our recently reaffirmed in Reykjavik, CoE values, so that they persevere.

Mr Jeremy CORBYN (United Kingdom, SOC): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

I totally condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the appalling consequences of the war, which mean we're debating these reports today.

Sporting boycotts are a difficult area for any organisation to be involved with – and if we persist with a sporting boycott that prevent Russian and Belarusian athletes from competing in international events, then we will be debating sporting boycotts for any other incident around the world in the present and future, and so we should be cautious of doing so. Perhaps it is better that the sporting organisations involved make these decision themselves.

Report 15797 quite rightly references the horrors of the war in Ukraine and the massive loss of life there. We are witnessing ecocide; the latest dam disaster shows how devastating war is for our environment. There is a terrifying danger of the war spiralling out of control into nuclear confrontation. The vulnerability of nuclear power stations puts Europe at immense risk. The report also rightly draws attention to the economic consequences of the war for many parts of the world.

However, it is surprising that in paragraph 13, which talks about the Reykjavik Declaration, and also the role of the UN in trying bring about a peaceful future, it fails to mention either the Declaration made by Pope Francis calling for a ceasefire, or the delegation of African leaders led by President Ramaphosa to both Kyiv and St Petersburg in order to encourage a ceasefire and a process to bring about lasting peace. It is disappointing that their calls are not even referred to in this report.

It also fails to draw attention to the statement made by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva at the G7, in which he too rightly condemns the Russian aggression and occupation, and called for a ceasefire and negotiators to bring about a peace process.

The Council of Europe should be open to calls made by popular opinion outside Europe and North America in order to bring an end to the appalling loss of life brought about by Russia's appalling invasion of Ukraine.

Mr Don DAVIES (Canada): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

In Ancient Greece, an "Olympic Truce" allowed athletes and spectators to travel to and from the Olympic Games in complete safety. Wars were halted during the Games, creating peace during the period of competition.

I believe everyone in this Chamber hopes that this profound spirit might manifest itself today.

In its absence, we ask ourselves whether athletes from Russia and Belarus ought to be banned from Olympic participation to express our collective disapproval of their government's actions.

We must resist such proposals.

There are few international venues like the Olympic Games that allow nations to come together in a spirit of mutual respect. In times of political conflict, these mechanisms are more important than ever.

As the UN Special Rapporteur on cultural rights has found, this proposal violates fundamental human rights and constitutes discrimination. By failing to distinguish between individuals, to apply the least intrusive measure to attain its goal, and by its disproportionate impact, this violation cannot be justified.

As a blanket ban based on nationality, it constitutes a form of collective punishment of people who have committed no offence.

Selective and inconsistent application of this measure makes it impossible to justify in a body that believes in the rule of law.

There are many nations who have committed, and are currently engaged in, flagrant acts of aggression and violations of international law whose athletes are not subject to expulsion.

Such double standards breed cynicism and disrespect for international norms, the opposite of the aims of bodies such as this.

It is asserted that the situation in Ukraine is unique. Respectfully, I must disagree. As real as the suffering in Ukraine and the violation of its sovereignty are, they are not different than that occurring in Yemen by the Saudis, Palestine by the Israelis, or in any number of countries by the Americans.

I understand the sincere intent behind this measure, trying to use every conceivable means to condemn Russia and Belarus for their roles in the war against Ukraine.

However, we must find lawful and justified ways to express these sentiments.

Adopting the current proposal would penalize innocent civilians, violate human rights, produce inconsistency in global standards, and be contrary to the principles of the Olympic movement.

Instead, let us invoke the noble ideals of the original Olympiad and raise our voices to call for immediate, enduring and just peace for everyone, before, during and after the Games.

Mr Oleksandr MEREZHKO (Ukraine, EC/DA): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

As we all know, the Olympic Games are also about peace. But not for Russia. It's no coincidence that Russia had started wars against Georgia in 2008 and against Ukraine in 2014 right after the Olympic Games. Russia has always been using the Olympic Games in the same way as these Games were used by Hitler.

Sport in totalitarian Russia has never been beyond politics. On the contrary, it has always been about politics, it has always been an integral part of Russian propaganda. Russia has always been weaponizing everything, including sport, music, literature, everything.

Russia needs sport not as a value related to peace and friendship on this planet, but for two goals: first of all, as a soft power, to be more precise, as a propaganda aimed to show that totalitarian Russia is better than democracies in the world; and second - as a part of the war machine. Sport in Russia is being cultivated to prepare young people for the "defense of mother-Russia".

If Russian and Belarusian athletes are allowed to attend the Olympic Games while Russia is waging a genocidal war against Ukraine, then Russian propaganda will present it as an approval by the world of its aggressive war and its crimes against Ukraine. We shouldn't allow this to happen.

One more thing. Russia has been officially recognized as a terrorist regime, and let me ask you: how can a terrorist regime be represented at the Olympic Games? Isn't it against the very idea of the Olympic movement?

Lord George FOULKES (United Kingdom, SOC): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

The illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia, with the active support of Belarus, has become even more brutal in the past few months.

As well as the killing of innocent civilians, women and children, and the forced deportation of parentless children to Russia, there has been the most degrading torture of captured Ukrainian soldiers.

The Sunday Times reported last week of two young men who were castrated so they could not have kids and the psychological as well as physical consequences.

The war will inevitably end with a victory for Ukraine with our increased support, but there will be many more deaths, many more atrocities if it continues as before.

Or it could, and it should, end by Putin calling a halt to the invasion. But, of course, he will not do that voluntarily and might do it only from pressure from within Russia.

And Russians will only put pressure on him if they are deprived of what they value most. Mothers who have lost their sons are already doing so. Oligarchs who are denied access to their wealth, their yachts and travel abroad, because of the escalating sanctions, are getting increasingly restless.

But sport is big in Russia. And athletes have clout. If they face being denied the medals for which they have trained for years they will also put pressure on Putin to rethink.

They argue that sport should not become political but we can reply that it is already inextricably linked and will become increasingly so.

Putin has already used hosting sporting events and success in tournaments to burnish his reputation and enhance his regime.

Now is the time for the IOC to threaten a total ban on Russian and Belarussian athletes from the Paris Olympics unless he halts his aggression. It is not a compromise to say Russian and Belarussian athletes can compete individually- without the flag as they will still be used by Putin, and Lukashenko, as propaganda.

So let's make it clear to our friends in the IOC that this body as the guardian of Human Rights expect them to agree a ban, and to do so now.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Mr President, Dear colleagues,

The original Olympic oath was sworn at the opening ceremony of the Olympic games in Antwerp in 1920. It read:

"We swear. We will take part in the Olympic games in a spirit of chivalry, for the honour of our country and for the glory of the sport."

This oath actually explains everything about why Russian and Belarusian athletes shouldn't be allowed to compete in the Olympic games, not even under a neutral flag.

In Russia and Belarus sport and politics are closely intertwined.

How can Russian and Belarusian athletes be considered neutral when they are financed by the regimes of Putin and Lukashenko?

Do you know what CSKA - means - the army's central sports club, a name which remains from the communist times and shows the strong connection between Russian athletes and the Russian army.

It doesn't matter what the Russian athletes' clothes look like, they will still represent an outlaw state and the Olympic games will be transformed into an arena for propaganda. For Putin's regime.

They will still represent a country that wages a horrible war against Ukraine. A country that deserves nothing else but condemnation and contempt for the reckless murdering, rape and pillaging.

That honour mentioned in the oath is reserved for the Ukrainian heroes that fight for their and our freedom. And for the hundreds of Ukrainian athletes and coaches that have fallen victim in the war and will never be able to partake in any competitions ever again.

I speak on the behalf of the whole Swedish delegation when I say that it's remarkable that the IOK is even considering allowing Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete in the upcoming Olympic games.

By doing this the IOK is normalizing the Russian war of aggression and in fact does not honor "the glory of the sport". The Swedish PACE delegation is proud that the Swedish sports community have acted clearly on the matter and demand that Russian and Belarusian athletes should not be allowed to compete.

Mr Percy DOWNE (Canada): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

In 2014, when Russia violated Ukraine's territory, we felt directly involved in Canada because of our close bilateral relationship with Ukraine.

In the years that followed, Russia used disinformation campaigns, hybrid and cyber operations, and military build-ups in and around Ukraine to try to destabilize the country in the lead-up to its full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022.

On another front, Russia has been providing diplomatic, financial, military, and intelligence support to the dictatorship in Belarus.

There has been a significant build-up of Russian troops in Belarus in addition to military equipment and capabilities.

Moreover, Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was orchestrated in part from Belarus. We know that the Belarus government helped make this happen.

The war has caused widespread damage to Ukrainian infrastructure and property and killed many Ukrainians, including a great number of civilians.

The most recent example is the destruction of the dam in Ukraine, which has been condemned in the strongest terms by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the President of the Committee of Ministers, and the President of this Assembly.

In light of these events, I understand why some members of this Assembly oppose the participation of athletes from Russia and Belarus in the Paris 2024 Olympics.

My colleagues see the International Olympic Committee's decision regarding a neutral flag as an attempt to legitimize decisions taken by Russia and Belarus and to divert attention from the war against Ukraine. They believe it would provide yet another opportunity for these two countries to spread their propaganda.

In the motion for a resolution, it is recommended to ban Russian and Belarusian athletes from international sport. It notes how, since February 2022, over 200 Ukrainian athletes have been killed and thousands of sporting facilities destroyed. It also highlights that many Russian athletes have publicly expressed their support for the war and emphasizes the strong links between Russian athletes and the military.

I agree with my colleagues' arguments that we should not allow Russia and Belarus to use the Olympics and international sport as platforms for their propaganda, especially when we see their athletes publicly expressing support to the war in Ukraine.

We have a similar problem with the National Hockey League in North America where some Russian players continue to support Putin and the NHL takes no action.

Let us all stand together and deny these war criminals an Olympic platform.

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

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mr GATTOLIN.

We must now interrupt the hearing of speakers.

Registered speakers who have been present during the debate but have not been able to speak may submit their typed statements to the Table Office within 4 hours, for publication in the minutes. Texts must not exceed 400 words and must be submitted electronically.

I now call for the Committee's reply.

Mr ZINGERIS, you have 3 minutes to reply to the speakers.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): *"Dear Friends," [said in French]*

Dear Friends and colleagues,

I have been here since 1993 just when it was celebrated. Thank you for the participation, 30 years of Lithuanian membership in the Council of Europe, Estonian membership of the Council of Europe and Slovenian membership of the Council of Europe.

I remember the entry of Russia in 1996. Among their obligations was to withdraw Russia's 14th Guards Army from Moldova, to pay compensation for the Baltic peoples deported to Siberia and the Gulag, and many others. Most of those conditions were not implemented even in the time of democratic Russia. The Chechen War started – the Russian war against Chechnya. After that, all the atrocities against Georgia, against Ukraine started. Now we have the war against Europe.

You can understand how alone Ukrainians are, how alone Ukrainians are now on the frontline. We do not have our troops there. We are not defending our freedoms shoulder-to-shoulder. They are defending our freedoms. They are voting for our values. That is the reason why in my report I have absolutely clearly included the Wagner Group as a terrorist organisation and the Kadyrov Group as a terrorist one. I ask international governments to impose an Interpol Red Notice against every member of those two huge criminal entities.

From another point of view, we have the mockery of, the avoidance of, the inconvenience of the sanctions. We will create a wall of shame under our register and ad hoc task force to understand which banks and companies are benefiting from the war and the blood of Ukrainians. Certainly, we will finally be going to establish an international special tribunal against war crimes and against Russia's aggression on Ukraine.

For that reason, I would like to ask you to be together, united, and vote in favour of the report and all amendments in my reports and properly support the reports of my neighbour.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr ZINGERIS.

Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND, you have 3 minutes to reply to the speakers.

Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND (Norway, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you, colleagues. Thank you so much for your support!

Our voices are clear, Russian and Belarusian athletes have no place at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris next year.

By lifting the ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes, the International Olympic Committee becomes a tool for the Russian propaganda machinery.

As Ms Liisa-Ly PAKOSTA said, just a few days ago, the president of the Russian Wrestling Federation made an appalling declaration.

"Russian athletes should go to Paris in tanks", if they are not allowed to compete under the Russian flag.

This is what I am talking about, this is propaganda.

Many athletes have been used in propaganda to support the ongoing war.

And this week, dear colleagues, I received this letter from the "Global Athletes".

More than 600 athletes have signed a letter to the IOC President.

They are calling for a ban.

We must support the athletes.

All major organisations and institutions acting in the public and private sphere must stand up and bring the weight of their moral authority and appeal to the public consciousness for a deep global impact.

This includes the sport world with its immense economic, social, and political leverage.

Today, dear colleagues, proclaiming the Olympic values, Mr Thomas Bach gave a speech where he criticised the Ukrainian government.

His so-called athlete-centered, values-based approach is simply an excuse to not take a strong stand against the ongoing war.

The world of sport, which we love so much, cannot end up on the wrong side of history.

With their actions, the International Olympic Committee is undermining sport and the values of the Olympic movement.

We are not trying to punish Russian and Belarusian athletes, but our Assembly must do everything in its power to stand by Ukraine.

The International Olympic Committee cannot just ignore international condemnation and sanctions and the responsibility they have under the Olympic Charter.

What is at stake is the preservation of peace, global stability, safeguarding the international legal order, the destiny of a country, and the human rights of the Ukrainian people.

So again, we cannot allow the sport world to end up on the wrong side of history.

Let's use our voice as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe representing 46 European countries.

Let's stand united and vote in favour of this Resolution.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam HELLELAND.

Does Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO wish to reply on behalf of the Political Affairs and Democracy Committee?

You have 3 minutes, please.

Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD, Representative of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Dear colleagues, I think it's very special that we have these two reports together.

On behalf of our Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, we are focusing on democracy.

But our other committees, our colleagues, are talking about something very concrete that results from the absence of democracy and democratic governance by one aggressor, who started the war.

And on behalf of the Committee, we welcome the report prepared by Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS because we believe that this is the key priority of our organisation.

Now, that goes along together with the priorities that we discussed at the Reykjavík Summit and yesterday.

What does it mean?

It means that we need to make sure that democracies really work and they are protected. And this report sets the steps to the roadmap, on what tools and what things we must do to make sure that democracy is protected.

What do I mean by that?

With the Russian aggression we see how much of the areas are affected in our democracies. Not only in Ukraine, but also in your member states. Energy security, environment, food security, financial security. Everything is affected. And we absolutely welcome recommendations that are in the report regarding Ukraine which sets the clear mechanism on creating the register of the compensation of the damage, and an important, very important note on sanctions and what policies should be created that will serve as international guidelines now for the member states.

The report also sets clear recommendations on having verification and a tracking system of sanctions, goods, and other things that shouldn't be entering the global markets.

And all of these areas are so much affected. This report is about the Russian aggression in Ukraine, but in fact it is much wider than that. It refreshes our purpose as the Council of Europe. It also speaks not only for the member states of the Council of Europe. I am absolutely convinced that it is an incredibly important report also for Latin American countries, for African countries, where the Russian aggression is very much in action.

It means that our democracies are in danger.

I welcome that this report sets something very important, that we should have the follow-ups together in our next session: what have we done in all these areas that we mentioned, so that our democracies in our members states are protected and that we are united and we have all the necessary tools and policies for that.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO.

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, do you wish to reply on behalf of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media?

You have 3 minutes, please.

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE, Chair of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media): Thank you, Madam President.

Thank you, dear colleagues.

I do not need to give more details, because Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND's report is very comprehensive and the position is very firm, strong, and we have a swift stance of this Assembly. We have to show the swift stance of the Assembly in favour of the ban of Russian and Belarusian athletes. And I would have to underline that after all the discussions were held in the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media at the end of the day we received unanimous support for this report, and we have to show this unanimous support in this Assembly as well.

And of course we had the discussions, as we had discussions here, but during these discussions, we found out that this sense of neutrality that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) proposes doesn't work already.

We already saw Russian sportsmen going to pre-championships and they belong to army clubs. Already those who won were congratulated by Mr Vladimir Putin two hours after they were on the pedestal, saying this was the great sport school of judo, or whatever sport it was.

So this is the reality that we face.

And also we need to give a wake-up call to the International Olympic Committee. Yes, they are completely independent in their decisions, but we cannot be silent and we have to call to international federations, to national federations. Sportsmen are a moral compass. They always were the authority; they were the people who young people would follow. They need to stand up. I'm very thankful for the letter of these 600 sportsmen that called on us to support the ban, because probably they also do not want to compete with Russian and Belarusian athletes on the same territory.

So, I really hope that our Committee's unity will be here in the Assembly and just imagine: At this very same time, when we are discussing whether Russians and Belarusians should be in the Olympics, there is a great hazard of nuclear attack in Zaporizhzhia. You probably saw it. Some of the people said it, and it is in the report of Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS. Imagine the scale and how ruthless the war is still after 500 days.

So, please, on behalf of the Committee, I ask you to support the Resolution of Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam KRAVCHUK.

The general discussion is closed.

We now come to the first report entitled "The political consequences of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine" (Document 15797).

The Political Affairs and Democracy Committee has presented a draft Resolution to which nine Amendments have been tabled.

I understand that the Chair of the Political Affairs and Democracy Committee wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendments Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8, which were adopted unanimously by the Committee, be deemed adopted by the Assembly.

Amendments Nos. 7 and 9 were also adopted unanimously, but as they are the subject of oral sub-Amendments, we will examine them in the usual way.

Is that correct, Madam YASKO?

Vote: Political consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine / War of aggression against Ukraine – Participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics?

Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD, Representative of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): "Yes." [*off mic*]

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Any objections?

None.

Amendments Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, and 8 to the draft Resolution are, therefore, declared definitively adopted.

We now come to the discussion of the other Amendments.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would remind you that the speaking time for each Amendment is limited to 30 seconds.

I have also been informed by the Chair of the Political Affairs and Democracy Committee that Amendment no. 6 was rejected by the Committee by a two-thirds majority of votes cast.

Is this the case, Madam YASKO?

Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD, Representative of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Yes (*said off mic*).

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Are there any objections? None.

I consider Amendment No. 6 definitively rejected.

The following oral Amendment has been submitted to the Chair by Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO:

At the end of Paragraph 10, add the following sentence:

"The Assembly expresses its gravest concern about the possibility that the Russian Federation is planning to carry out a deliberate attack or cause a deliberate accident at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, as mentioned by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on 22 June. This would risk escalating the war and lead to a radiation leak with devastating consequences for Europe".

Under Article 34.7.a of the Rules of Procedure, the Chairman may, in exceptional circumstances, declare an oral Amendment or oral sub-Amendment admissible if he considers that it is intended to provide clarification, take account of new facts or enable conciliation.

I consider this oral Amendment to be admissible under the criteria of the Rules of Procedure. However, it cannot be taken into account if at least 10 representatives or substitutes object and stand up.

Are there any objections to this oral Amendment being taken into account? There are none.

We shall, therefore, proceed to vote on the oral Amendment.

The vote is open.

Mr George KATROUGALOS (Greece, UEL): A point of order. Can you repeat, please, the oral Amendment? And also the opinion of the rapporteur? [*off mic*]

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO has the floor to support the oral Amendment.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA): Dear colleagues,

It is very important. The fact is that after the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy already made decisions and amendments, an urgent event happened. The President of Ukraine, Mr Volodymyr Zelenskyy, announced today the fact that Russia is preparing a terror attack and explosion on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is the biggest nuclear power plant in Europe, the third biggest in the world.

That is an extremely dangerous situation. We cannot ignore it, especially when we are working on the consequences of this awful aggression.

That is why now I propose this oral Amendment. I am very thankful to Madam President that she supported it, that it could be now decided by our respected Assembly to support it or not.

Now on the congratulation of Mr George KATROUGALOS, I just want to repeat exactly how we propose – what is my proposition – for the oral Amendment. At the end of Paragraph 10, add the following sentence:

"The Assembly expresses its greatest concern that the Russian Federation may be planning to carry out a deliberate attack on or cause a deliberate accident at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant as mentioned by President Zelenskyy on 22 June. This would risk provoking an escalation in the war and lead to a radiation leak with devastating consequences for Europe".

That is the exact wording. I ask everybody to support it. We need to react to such threats.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr GONCHARENKO.

Does anyone wish to speak against the oral Amendment? That does not appear to be the case.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): I'm extremely in favour, especially to the fact that it was new evidence and, looking at our internal rules, if you have new evidence we can have a vote for that. So, I'm in favour.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr ZINGERIS.

We shall now proceed to the vote on the oral Amendment.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call now for the result to be displayed.

The oral Amendment is adopted.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO has the floor to support Amendment No. 4.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA): Thank you very much.

I think this is an extremely important Amendment, because it is about nations colonised by Russia in North Caucasus, the Chechens, Circassians, Ossetians, Tatars, Buryats, Kalmyks. Russia is the last colonial empire in Europe.

And under our eyes they are destroying the human rights of these people. In reality they are doing genocide of these people, sending them to die to Ukraine, to kill Ukrainians and to die themselves. So we need to speak about this and this Amendment of mine was not supported by the Committee just by several votes, and the rapporteur is in favour.

So I want to ask all of you to support this Amendment saying that our Assembly should support the right of the colonised ethnic minorities in the Russian Federation.

We should do this, we should not turn a blind eye to what Russia is doing with these nations.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister GONCHARENKO.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

Mister KATROUGALOS, you have the floor.

Mr George KATROUGALOS (Greece, UEL): Thank you, Madam President [said in French].

The amendment is clearly out of the scope of the resolution, but above all is extremely dangerous and contrary to what we have decided till now as the Council of Europe. It calls for self-determination of ethnicities within the Russian Federation. In other words, it asks for a dissolution of Russia, the breakup of Russia. This is butter to the bread of Russian propaganda, which portrays exactly the war as a kind of effort to destroy Russia.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD, Representative of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Rejected with a simple majority.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): We shall now proceed to vote on the Amendment.

The vote is open.

No, it's the Committee (in response to Mr ZINGERIS).

The Amendment is not adopted.

The following oral Amendment has been submitted to the Chair by Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV:

In Paragraph 21.1, replace the words "Ukrainian refugees" with the words "refugees and displaced persons from the war against Ukraine".

The procedure is the same. Under Article 34.7.a of the Rules of Procedure, the Chairman may, in exceptional circumstances, declare an oral amendment or oral sub-amendment admissible if he considers that it is intended to provide clarification, take account of new facts or enable conciliation.

I consider this oral Amendment to be admissible under the criteria of the Rules of Procedure.

However, it cannot be taken into account if at least 10 representatives or substitutes object and stand up.

Are there any objections to this oral Amendment being taken into account?

None.

Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV has the floor to support the oral Amendment. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV (Ukraine, EPP/CD): Thank you, Madam President.

We just want to qualify this oral sub-Amendment in order to see how it is in our other resolutions. According to previous resolutions, we have the same term as I propose for our voting, because only a small part of Ukrainians are refugees. All others have different statuses that we can have according to this Amendment. I want to support this Amendment.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister SOBOLIEV.

Does anyone wish to speak against the oral Amendment? That does not appear to be the case.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD, Representative of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Unanimously approved.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): We shall now proceed to the vote on the oral Amendment.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I request the results to be displayed.

The oral Amendment is adopted.

The Committee has tabled an oral sub-Amendment to Amendment no. 7.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO has the floor to support Amendment no. 7.

You have 30 seconds, please.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA): Thank you. Thank you, Madam President.

That is about an important thing about which I spoke today.

That, yes, there are really good Russians. But, it is not those people who are sitting somewhere hiding their money, Russian oligarchs who are saying they have nothing to do with what Mr Vladimir Putin is doing. Good Russians are those who are fighting against this war. Not so many, unfortunately, but there are. And one of them is Mr Vladimir Kara-Murza, and he is illegally detained and tortured by the Russian regime.

So, the proposition is to add those who are responsible for these illegal actions against Mr Vladimir Kara-Murza to be sanctioned.

Thank you very much.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister GONCHARENKO.

The Chair has received the following oral sub-Amendment from the Political Affairs and Democracy Committee:

In Amendment No. 7, replace the word "prosecution" with the words "arbitrary prosecution".

I consider this sub-Amendment to be admissible under the criteria of the Rules of Procedure.

However, it cannot be taken into account if at least 10 representatives or substitutes object and stand up.

Are there any objections to this oral sub-Amendment being taken into account?

None.

We will, therefore, consider this oral sub-Amendment.

The rapporteur has the floor to support the oral sub-Amendment.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): Madam Speaker, dear friends,

It is very important to understand that our colleague and friend Mr Vladimir Kara-Murza was arbitrarily sentenced and arbitrarily prosecuted.

That is a crucial issue, while the court was ruled from above, from the Kremlin.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

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

This is not the case.

What is the opinion of the author of the Amendment, Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, on the oral sub-Amendment?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA): Certainly, I support it.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

The Committee's opinion is naturally favourable.

We shall now proceed to the vote on the oral sub-Amendment.

The oral sub-Amendment is adopted.

We now return to Amendment No. 7.

Does anyone wish to speak against Amendment No. 7 as sub-amended?

This is not the case.

What is the Committee's opinion on the Amendment as amended?

Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD, Representative of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Unanimously approved as sub-Amendment.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

We shall now proceed to the vote on Amendment No. 7, as subamended.

Amendment No. 7, as amended, is adopted.

Amendment No. 9 has been the subject of an oral sub-Amendment by Mr Piero FASSINO.

Ms Olena KHOMENKO has the floor to support Amendment No. 9.

You have 30 seconds.

Ms Olena KHOMENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA): Dear colleagues, the text of this Amendment speaks by itself and we are all aware of and we are observing the inability of the United Nations to counter the Russian aggression against Ukraine. And the Assembly reiterates this concern which is expressed early in other resolutions. And we would like to support all efforts and discussion seeking to unblock this situation and to stop Russia from abusing its veto power.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam KHOMENKO.

The Chair has received the following oral sub-Amendment from Mr Piero FASSINO:

In Amendment No. 9, after the words "with regard to", delete the words "the inability of the United Nations and the Security Council to oppose Russian aggression due to".

I consider this sub-Amendment to be in order in terms of the criteria laid down in the Rules of Procedure.

However, it cannot be taken into account if at least 10 representatives or substitutes object and rise.

Are there any objections to this oral sub-Amendment being taken into account?

None.

We will, therefore, consider this oral sub-Amendment.

Mr Piero FASSINO has the floor to support the oral sub-Amendment.

Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC): My apologies.

I think that expressing censure of the United Nations Council in the text of a Council of Europe resolution is not a good choice. It's an interference that I don't think is useful.

That's why I proposed deleting the lines the President read out.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister FASSINO.

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

Mister ZINGERIS? You have the floor for 30 seconds.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): Just a moment, I need a one-second consultation.

(He speaks off mic)

So, I remember our discussion in the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, the Amendment was supported in favour of our Italian colleague.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): I haven't yet asked for the Committee's opinion. I asked if there was anyone against the oral sub-Amendment.

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

This is not the case.

What is the opinion of the author of the Amendment on the oral sub-Amendment?

Madam KHOMENKO, you have the floor.

Ms Olena KHOMENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA): I support this sub-Amendment.

Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD, Representative of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Unanimously approved as sub-Amendment.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

We shall now proceed to the vote on the oral sub-Amendment.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I request for the result to be displayed.

The oral sub-Amendment is adopted.

We return to Amendment No. 9.

Does anyone wish to speak against Amendment No. 9, as sub-amended?

This is not the case.

What is the opinion of the Committee on the Amendment, as sub-amended?

The mic, please.

Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD, Representative of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Yes, it is approved as sub-amended.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you for your attention.

We shall now proceed to the vote on Amendment no. 9, as subamended.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

Amendment No. 9, as amended, is adopted.

We shall now proceed to vote on the draft Resolution contained in Document 15797 (amended). A simple majority is required.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The draft Resolution contained in Document 15797 (amended) was adopted.

We now come to the second report entitled "War of aggression against Ukraine - Participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games" (Doc. 15795).

The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and the Media has submitted a draft Resolution to which three Amendments have been tabled.

I understand that the Chairwoman of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and the Media wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendments 2 and 3, which were adopted unanimously by the Committee, be deemed adopted by the Assembly.

Is this the case, Madam Chairman?

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE, Chair of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media): Yes, that is the case.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Is there any objection?

There is none.

Amendments 2 and 3 to the draft resolution are, therefore, declared definitively adopted.

We now come to the discussion of the last Amendment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I remind you that speaking time is limited to 30 seconds.

Amendment No. 1: I understand that Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO wishes to withdraw Amendment No. 1 in favour of an oral conciliation Amendment from the Committee.

Is this the case, Mister GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA): Sorry, Madam President, may you repeat the question?

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Do you wish to withdraw Amendment No. 1 in favour of an oral conciliation Amendment from the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA): Yes, sure, absolutely. Thank you.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Does anyone else wish to support the Amendment?

This is not the case

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

We'll move on to the oral Amendment.

The following oral Amendment has been submitted to the Chair by Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND:

In the draft resolution, at the end of Paragraph 8, after the word "propaganda", insert the following words: "thus creating a narrative of acceptance and normalisation that would minimise the gravity of the acts committed by the Russian and Belarusian Governments."

Under Article 34.7.a of the Rules of Procedure, the Chairman may, exceptionally, declare an oral amendment or oral sub-amendment admissible if he considers that it is intended to provide clarification, take account of new facts or enable conciliation.

I consider this oral Amendment to be admissible under the criteria of the Rules of Procedure. However, it cannot be taken into account if at least 10 representatives or substitutes object and stand up.

Are there any objections to this oral Amendment being taken into account?

This is not the case.

The rapporteur has the floor to support the oral Amendment.

Ms Linda Hofstad HELLELAND (Norway, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): Yes, I support that oral Amendment.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Does anyone wish to speak against the oral Amendment?

I have not.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE, Chair of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media): Unanimously in favour.

Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

We shall now proceed to the vote on the oral Amendment.

The oral Amendment is adopted.

We shall now proceed to vote on the draft Resolution contained in Document 15795 (amended). A simple majority is required.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I now ask for the results.

The draft Resolution contained in Document 15795 (amended) was adopted.

Debate: Ensuring free and safe access through the Lachin Corridor

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): The next item on the agenda is the debate on the report titled "Ensuring free and safe access through the Lachin Corridor". You will find it in Document 15796, presented by Mr Paul GAVAN on behalf of the Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons Committee.

In order...

Sorry, could we leave the first row now to rapporteur Mr Paul GAVAN? Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS, could we have the first row for the next rapporteur?

In order to finish by 8:00 p.m., I will interrupt the list of speakers at about...

This is not correct. I will have to interrupt the list of speakers. So, not everybody will be able to participate to allow time for the reply and vote on the draft resolution.

Please, ladies, please, gentlemen, would you clear the first row?

I now call Mr Paul GAVAN, rapporteur.

Mr Paul GAVAN (Ireland, UEL, Rapporteur): Thank you very much.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): You have 7 minutes, Paul.

Sorry, but we had some some traffic conjunction, it's called like that.

I call rapporteur Mr Paul GAVAN.

You have 7 minutes now, Paul. And 3 minutes for replying at the end of the debate.

You have the floor.

Mr Paul GAVAN (Ireland, UEL, Rapporteur): Thank you very much, Mister President.

So thank you, colleagues.

Firstly, I want to begin by saying what this report is not about. It is not about the wider political situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. I have been given a very specific mandate to talk about the Lachin Corridor and that is what I focused on in this report. I also need to briefly talk about terminology, because a number of amendments seek to remove the term Nagorno-Karabakh. I oppose these amendments because the term Nagorno-Karabakh has always been used in all previous reports, and indeed, is being used currently by the Monitoring Committee and I believe my report should be consistent in this regard.

So, colleagues, I was asked by my Committee, the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, to investigate the issue of free and safe access through the Lachin Corridor. The Committee recommended that I visit both Armenia and Azerbaijan and crucially, that I travel through the Lachin Corridor to see for myself.

While I was able to visit Armenia, I was regrettably not invited to Azerbaijan and I was denied access through the Lachin Corridor. Now there is no small irony in this event, given that the government of Azerbaijan has consistently insisted that there is no problem accessing the Corridor. I could not get access.

Colleagues, the key finding of my report is that there is neither free nor safe access through the Lachin Corridor, and indeed, this is in line with the judgment of the International Court of Justice and indeed the interim measures from our own Court here in Strasbourg.

So why do I say this? Well, because this is the clear message that I have consistently received from people living in Nagorno-Karabakh and from NGOs operating and working with people exiled from Karabakh, from senior medical staff at the hospital in Stepanakert/Khankendi who explained that the only way that patients are being transferred to Armenia is through the Corridor was via the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and that this method has been shut down now completely for over a week. It was also shut down for a number of weeks in April and May.

Colleagues, please think about this. How can Azerbaijan tell us there is free and safe access through the Lachin Corridor, when they themselves admit that hospital patients have to use the services of the ICRC to travel? How can this be described as free access?

So, the lack of access has been the case since 12 December last when a group of so-called eco-activists set up a blockade on the Lachin Corridor, apparently making claims of illegal mining. I say so-called eco-activists because, in fact, many of these environmental protesters have been identified as members of the Azerbaijan military with government backing. Some of them are members of the Grey Wolves, an extreme fascist group, and all of this has been documented in the British Parliament by a Conservative MP, Mr Tim Loughton, on 24 January of this year.

Colleagues,

There is a growing humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The current situation is simply not sustainable for the local population. The crisis manifests itself in many ways, enforced family separation, enforced isolation of an entire community and the fear and panic that that engenders. Access to food, access to medicines, access to medical care, access to education. Schools were

closed for months during the winter because of the inability to heat them, and this was due to the deliberate cutting off of electricity and gas to the region. Electricity cut off since 9 January. Gas cut off on several occasions, and then indefinitely since 21 March. So, the only means of travel was for people who were sick, and that was through the ICRC, but that has been completely shut down now.

So, I want you to take a moment to imagine the situation that the community finds itself in. Cut off and, to their minds, forgotten by the international community.

Then there is the hate speech, which comes from the very highest levels of the Azerbaijan government.

President Ilham Aliyev himself has referred to the population of Nagorno-Karabakh as the "contemptible, loathsome and hated enemy". He also made a speech in Lachin itself just a couple of weeks ago and he sent this message to his Armenian neighbours. He said, "let them know that we can see Armenian villages from here. We can see those villages, so they should not forget about that". And one further example, the foreign affairs committee in the Azerbaijan Parliament actually referred to the Armenian diaspora as a "cancer on the body politic of Europe".

Colleagues, please, I hope we can all agree that this language is entirely unacceptable.

So, my report makes a number of key recommendations. We should open the Lachin Corridor. We need to see it open. We need all parties to abide by the trilateral agreement. Crucially, we need a fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh. This is really the elephant in the room and it is a particularly large elephant.

No one, I cannot get access through Lachin, but neither can our Human Rights Commissioner, neither can the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, neither can UNESCO. I have to ask the question. What is it that Azerbaijan are afraid that we will see?

I call for gas and electricity to be restored immediately. I call on both countries to work with the Council of Europe to adopt key protocols regarding the protection of minorities, i.e. the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Colleagues,

To conclude, the current situation is simply not sustainable. There has actually been no access to food or medicines or anything for over a week now. We know the Corridor is blocked. I am saying that having done as much thorough research as I can and without being able to access the Lachin Corridor because that was denied.

As we head towards the winter, they are expecting more power cuts. They are literally running out of the ability to produce any energy, because the hydroelectric dam they have is now running out of water. The situation is not sustainable. A human rights crisis is developing and continues to worsen. We need the support of this entire Assembly.

I ask Azerbaijan and Armenia to do everything in their power to address this situation, to help those people on a humanitarian basis, and build a better future for everyone.

Thank you.

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

In the debate we now are going to listen to the speakers on behalf of the political groups.

And first in the debate I call Ms Elisabetta GARDINI from Italy speaking on behalf of the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance.

Elisabetta, you have the floor.

Ms Elisabetta GARDINI (Italy, EC/DA, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, President,

Dear colleagues,

We are talking today about an area, the Caucasus, that is a strategic crossroads in terms of global connectivity. It is a region with incredible potential that can only be fully realised, however, with real co-operation between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

On the one hand, we are encouraged by the intensification of contacts between the parties and, as the resolution also highlights, we welcome the mutual recognition of territorial integrity by Armenia and Azerbaijan. This is certainly an important first step toward resolving a conflict that has lasted far too long. Such recognition should allow the people to live in peace and security within their borders.

Right now, as has been mentioned, we are all very concerned about the situation in the Lachin corridor. We have been following closely the news about the developments on the ground as well as the debate in the Committee these days. We are aware that we are faced with two opposing narratives.

In this regard, we cannot help but recall that under the 2020 tripartite agreement, the corridor is supposed to be controlled by a peacekeeping contingent from the Russian Federation, and that precisely because of this agreement, Moscow has once again assumed an important geopolitical role in the area.

After all, the persistent clashes that have resulted in thousands of casualties and refugees for both peoples have always been of great concern to the international community and represent the main obstacle to peace and stability in the area, facilitating expansionist aims on the part of third-party actors who might put their economic and political interests ahead of the well-being and peace of the area.

In any case, let us remember that the Lachin corridor must allow the passage of people and goods, but must absolutely not be used for military purposes.

We, therefore, expect both countries to increase their efforts toward a de-escalation of tensions, with a constructive attitude aimed at fostering truly peaceful co-existence, based on respect for the international principles contained in the UN Charter: sovereignty and territorial integrity and, more generally, the prohibition of the use of armed force in international relations.

We hope that the talks expected to be held next week in Washington will yield encouraging results, just as we support the EU Mission Field Observation (EUMA) and European facilitation efforts aimed at a comprehensive settlement.

Allow me also as an Italian to mention that my nation has historic and important relations with both Azerbaijan and Armenia. By virtue of these strong ties with both sides, Italy is truly motivated to promote the long-awaited path to normalisation and stabilisation in the region.

Similarly, Mister President, we hope that this house will support with all the tools at its disposal this process of normalisation of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan – two countries, two peoples who are close to our hearts and who have every right to live in security and peace.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Elisabetta. [Spoken in Italian]

I call Mr George LOUCAIDES from Cyprus on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left.

George?

Mr George LOUCAIDES (Cyprus, UEL, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Mister President.

Dear Colleagues,

I wish to thank our rapporteur, Mr Paul GAVAN, for his well, accurate, and thus impartial report. We fully support the findings and the recommendations made by Mr GAVAN and hope that this report is given serious consideration in order to guarantee human rights and ensure conditions of peace and security for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The current blockade of the Lachin corridor is putting thousands of people's lives at risk, forcing them to live in conditions of acute shortages in food, medicine, and fuel, and impairing their access to healthcare and education. These circumstances, dear colleagues, are creating the danger for ethnic cleansing as the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh are driven to abandon the area and their homes.

Mr GAVAN's recent visit to Armenia was valuable in assessing the situation on the ground. It is regrettable that he was not invited to, likewise, visit Azerbaijan. The country's leadership should acknowledge the humanitarian consequences and the serious human rights violations resulting from the current situation and allow this Assembly and other international bodies, such as the Red Cross, UNHCR, and UNESCO, to visit the Lachin corridor and Nagorno-Karabakh the soonest.

In addition, it is vital to fully respect the terms of the Trilateral Statement signed in 2020, and comply with relevant decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and the International Court of Justice, calling for the restoration of freedom of movement in the Lachin corridor and removing all barriers to the provision of essential commodities.

The situation currently developing is a reflection of the complex and long-lasting conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, which requires a permanent and peaceful political solution. At present, both nations need to engage in constructive dialogue through the ongoing negotiations, under the auspices of the European Union and the United States of America.

Dear Colleagues,

Confidence-building measures and further concrete initiatives should be welcomed, including assistance and support offered by the Council of Europe, to foster co-operation on issues of mutual concern. Of course, the first step is the immediate restoration of free and safe access through the Lachin corridor, the de-escalation of tensions, and the elimination of any imminent risk of facing another catastrophic humanitarian crisis.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, George. Next in the debate I call Mr Stefan SCHENNACH from Austria on behalf of the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group.

Stefan?

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

It is always very regrettable when small problems develop in the slipstream in the shadow of major conflicts, such as the war in Ukraine. The whole region of Nagorno-Karabakh is a situation that has been simmering for decades. Not only Nagorno-Karabakh, but also the other seven illegally occupied territories, which are now back in Azerbaijan.

All the more Azerbaijan should actually be generous here, because, after all, this agreement, this peace agreement, signed by three presidents, the presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia, on 10 November 2020, has led to the fact that prisoners of war and dead are exchanged, that there is a ground force, Russian peacekeeping force for five years, and that there are just two so-called accesses. One is to Nagorno-Karabakh and the other connection is to the enclave of Nakhichevan, which is also separated. All this would be good, and it worked for a while. Convoys passed through the enclave, accompanied by Russian peacekeepers.

Then it came as it had to come. It was in the middle of December 2022 that disguised eco-activists blocked their road. Conversely, in order to prevent this conflict from degenerating again, the Russian peacekeepers then blocked theirs. Since then, we have a humanitarian disaster, namely with food, medicine, energy, services, family reunification. All that is interrupted. The humanitarian aid that the Red Cross and Russian peacekeepers are providing is nowhere near enough. This is an area where 130 000 people live and about 30 000 children.

Now I have to appeal to the Azeri delegation. Nobody doubts that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of the territory of Azerbaijan. You also have a responsibility for the lives there. The International Court of Justice of the United Nations said this year, again, the enclave must be passable.

I appeal here, too, that the power outages, the gas stoppages, all of that has to stop. The broken power line, it must finally be allowed to be repaired. In this sense, I appeal to the Azeri delegation to be generous here in terms of a humanitarian attitude.

Thank you.

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

Next in the debate, I call Mr Birgir THÓRARINSSON from Iceland on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party.

Birgir?

Mr Birgir THÓRARINSSON (Iceland, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Mister President, I would like to thank the rapporteur Mr Paul GAVAN for his excellent work under difficult circumstances.

He has shown great will in monitoring the grave situation despite the obstructions he met in his work.

The rapporteur has emphasised neutrality in all his work and I find that to be of great value.

The ongoing blockade by Azerbaijan of the Lachin Corridor, a lifeline to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, has put the entire population in a state of total isolation for the last six months.

Critical infrastructure of Nagorno-Karabakh has also been deliberately disrupted: national gas, electricity, and mobile communication.

For the last 10 days, no food, no medicine or other goods have been allowed from the outside world. And citizens in need of urgent medical assistance are not allowed to pass through.

Mister President, this is totally unacceptable.

These actions of Azerbaijan are a clear violation of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh agreement, which the President of Azerbaijan has signed. And a violation of a binding decision of the European Convention of Human Rights and the International Court of Justice.

The ones that are suffering are innocent people.

What would Azerbaijan do if they were facing a blockade themselves?

The people of Nagorno-Karabakh are no different than other people, no different than the people of Azerbaijan, no different than us parliamentarians. They want to live a normal life.

Mister President, the rapporteur was denied access to the very important information, denied access to Nagorno-Karabakh, denied access to Azerbaijan. That brings up questions.

What is the status of Azerbaijan within the Council of Europe? Are they not willing to take part in important monitoring obligations on behalf of the Council of Europe?

Does this mean that Azerbaijan is no longer committed to the Council of Europe?

I do not wish for that, and I hope that Azerbaijan will change its course and start showing that they have nothing to hide, start showing real humanity to their neighbours, start showing that they care for the needs of innocent people.

Mister President, I call on Azerbaijan to ensure free and safe access to the lifeline, to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and lift the blockade immediately.

Thank you.

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

The next speaker is Mr. Bertrand BOUYX from France, on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Bertrand, you have the floor.

Mr Bertrand BOUYX (France, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Mister Chairman.

Dear Colleagues,

This is a very important debate. We can never say it often enough. The Lachin corridor is a lifeline for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. This route linking the territory to Armenia provides access and supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh.

In accordance with the trilateral declaration of 9 November 2020, the Republic of Azerbaijan has undertaken to guarantee the safe movement of people, vehicles, and goods along the Lachin corridor, in both directions.

The International Court of Justice reminded Azerbaijan of its obligations in clear terms in its decision of 22 February: "The Republic of Azerbaijan must, [...] in accordance with its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, take all measures available to it to ensure the unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and goods along the Lachin corridor in both directions". Our institution, founded on democracy and the rule of law, can only support this wording and urge its unconditional implementation. The illegal blocking of the corridor must end. This is a prerequisite.

However, we are aware that beyond the human and even humanitarian issue, this is first and foremost a political question to be resolved.

Our Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe supports all initiatives aimed at resolving a conflict that has gone on for far too long. On the sidelines of the European Political Community Summit in Chişinău on 1 June, and at France's initiative, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pachinian and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met with French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and European Council President Charles Michel. A further meeting will take place in Brussels on 21 July. Our American partner is also making mediation efforts. We need to co-ordinate closely. It seems to me that we are making progress. Prime Minister Nikol Pachinian recently made a gesture of appeasement. We hope that this outstretched hand will be seized in Baku.

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe also warns against Russia's murky game in the area. Russia, which has traditionally played the role of mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but whose method of keeping conflicts open in order to seize opportunities for territorial gains when the time comes is now well known.

This is why this conflict must be treated as an emergency. Freedom must be guaranteed to everyone, not only the Azerbaijani population, but also the Armenian population, regardless of where they live.

I, therefore, call on the countries of our continent to make a strong commitment to resolving this conflict.

Thank you very much.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): *Thank you, Mister Bertrand BOUYX.*
[spoken in French]

[Light applause]

I deplore that I have to announce that I now can only give four more colleagues the floor due to the enormous amount of amendments that have been presented in the Committee.

Sorry for that, but we have to vote.

That means that in, say 12 minutes, we will start with the vote.

First in the debate now I call Ms Christiana EROKOTRITOU from Cyprus.

Christiana, you have the floor.

Ms Christiana EROKOTRITOU (Cyprus, SOC): Thank you Mister President.

Dear Colleagues,

First of all I would like to congratulate the rapporteur Mr Paul GAVAN, whose meticulous work, although impeded and unjustly hindered, as is explained in his report, as he was not able to travel to the Lachin corridor, has not managed to prevent him from accurately finding facts and producing this excellent report.

It is inconceivable for a member state of this Organisation not to allow a rapporteur to visit its territory on a fact-finding mission.

What would the Council of Europe become, if every member state refused entry in their territories of rapporteurs on fact finding missions?

We are here, dear colleagues, to uphold our values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These values cannot be upheld if any of us are afraid of the truth, try to hide the truth, manipulate the truth, or all of the above.

I am deeply alarmed by the contents of this report, particularly by reading in paragraph 71 that children in Nagorno-Karabakh are, in essence, denied access to healthcare. That additionally, children in hospital had to be gathered in one ward to keep them warm, regardless of their illness, due to power cuts.

I was alarmed to read that adequate nutrition for children is a pressing problem.

I was alarmed, dear colleagues, to read in paragraph 53 that access to food, hygiene, healthcare, medicine, and education have affected Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh, and that, on top of what in essence constitutes an economic blockade, they are receiving threats from people masquerading as eco-activists.

The aim of this is, clearly, to force all Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh to abandon and flee their ancestral homes in order to achieve ethnic cleansing.

As it is rightly pointed out in the report, the Council of Europe and its member states must use all possible leverage to ensure that the commitments undertaken by Azerbaijan when it joined the Organisation are fulfilled.

The standards of democracy, human rights and the rule of law must be respected in order to alleviate the suffering of Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Council of Europe has the tools to ensure that all member states don't just pay lip service to our values of democracy, human rights and rule of law, but actually practice them.

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

The next speaker will be Mr Ruben RUBINYAN from Armenia.

Ruben.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): Thank you Mister President, dear colleagues,

It's ironic that the rapporteur on ensuring free and safe access through the Lachin Corridor wasn't ensured free and safe access to the Lachin Corridor, isn't it?

Indeed, this is not a coincidence.

For months, the people of Nagorno Karabakh have been under a blockade.

For more than a week, they have been under a complete siege, because if before there was still a possibility to send some humanitarian aid, basic food and medical equipment to Nagorno Karabakh through the International Red Cross. Now, it's completely impossible.

Moreover, two hours ago when we were debating the amendments in the committee, Azerbaijan was installing concrete barriers at the beginning of the Lachin Corridor, so now it's closed off physically and permanently.

And of course, of course our Azerbaijani colleagues are going to deny it again.

We are used to this, but I am very happy that at last the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly, has been able to verify the situation on the ground. I want to thank Mr Paul GAVAN for his words. I confirm all his words, or rather he confirms all our words.

Dear colleagues,

We have to understand why this is happening.

I think it's not hard to understand that on one side, we have a government that is sieging a whole people, cutting the electricity supply, the gas flow, not allowing any access for these people to the outside world.

On the other hand, we have a government that names these people as the loathsome enemy, cancer, which calls them to leave.

Well, we have seen things like this happening in the history of Europe, of this continent as well.

We all know how it ends. We all know how it ends when a government calls a group of people very different things, negative things, and which confines them in small territories.

We have to stop this.

Speaking of Armenians being called "the cancerous tumour of Europe", as Mr Paul GAVAN mentioned. Well Mr Paul GAVAN, the Chair of this Committee of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijani Parliament is here with us actually today, it is Mr Samad SEYIDOV.

Let's hear from him, after this, why he called us "the cancerous tumour of Europe". Let's hear his justification for calling Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh, and everywhere, "the cancerous tumour of Europe". But of course he's going to deny everything. But Mr Samad SEYIDOV

[Interrupted by the President]

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Would you conclude, Ruben?

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): ..with the speech for you in his 1984 book. You can just stand up and say "war is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength". Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Mister RUBINYAN?

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): "War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength."

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

Next in the debate, I call Mr Caspar Van den BERG from the Netherlands. Caspar.

Mr Caspar Van den BERG (Netherlands, ALDE): Dear Chair,

First of all, many thanks to rapporteur Mr Paul GAVAN for his excellent work on the report. The Dutch liberal party acknowledges that conflicts between two states that are both member states of the Council of Europe are sensitive issues in this house. The Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict is one of them. Yet, at this moment, when the humanitarian situation affecting the people of Nagorno-Karabakh is dire, my party strongly supports the need for this conflict to be addressed in this Parliamentary Assembly in unequivocal terms.

Free and safe access through the Lachin Corridor is vital to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh for humanitarian, medical, and economic reasons. Moreover, the current blockade forms a potential danger for escalation of the conflict in the future. Therefore, the current obstruction of the Lachin corridor is a very concerning matter for the Dutch Liberal Party.

We are glad that the issue is on the EU's agenda, by way of the leadership of the President of the Council Charles Michel, who is playing an active role in the matter, and we fully support the EU's mediation efforts. My party remains decisively committed to finding a settlement to this conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan through negotiations. All efforts should be directed at de-escalation and – in time – at bringing back peace, stability, and trust between the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan, however far removed we are from that state right now.

And in the meantime, we want to stress that both parties are individually responsible for their own actions and need to be accountable for those actions. Azerbaijan should be accountable for its blocking of the corridor and for its detainment of prisoners of war. Azerbaijan's actions go against the values of this organisation and are causing great suffering in the region.

At the same time, we also take note of Armenia's role where it appears to allow Russia to circumvent sanctions currently in place. For instance in the field of certain categories of electronics that are key to making modern weapons. In a time when Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is threatening the core values of the Council of Europe and the whole European multilateral order, sanction evasion on either side of the conflict has to stop, or it will jeopardise foreign commitment to mediation efforts in this conflict, as well.

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

The last speaker in this debate will be Mr Samad SEYIDOV from Azerbaijan. Samad.

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

How united are those who try to disrupt the peace? For the first time in the history of the region, two nations are so close to each other. Two nations are looking for peace, and they have done, actually, a lot in order to reach this peace. With this kind of discussion, I think that would not be so easy. This is really counterproductive to those who are living in the region.

Mr Paul GAVAN said at the very beginning that his report is not about politics. His report is about humanitarian questions. He started from the political point. He said that Nagorno-Karabakh is included as terminology in his report, which is exactly a political point, because there is no Nagorno-Karabakh. There is a Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, independent Azerbaijan, which was accepted to the Council of Europe as an independent state. This has put under suspicion the integrity of the country. You are fighting against that.

I ask my colleagues, dear friends, you have heard a lot of accusations against Azerbaijan. Have you ever seen even one picture of starving children in Karabakh? No! That is impossible, because this is propaganda from Mr Ruben RUBINYAN. Have you ever seen that the Red Cross did not have access to the region? No, never! Because they have full access to the region. Have you ever seen those who are living in Nagorno-Karabakh or those who are living in Azerbaijan are against negotiations? No! The Parliament of Azerbaijan has accepted the special representative in order to communicate with Armenians. These are our citizens. By accusing me, by accusing Azerbaijan, by complaining to the Council of Europe, by begging international organisations, Armenians ran out from the negotiations. Do you know why? The answer is obvious. They wanted to speak about peace, but they do not want to achieve peace. They just want to demonstrate their intentions because of these problems, of this pain, they are seeing at the parliament. They are so acceptable, they are so hurt, and they are able to present their positions.

That is why, Mr Paul GAVAN, you are not sincere. You were in Azerbaijan in 2021. You went to Karabakh. You went to the Aghdam region. You saw with your own eyes what they did against Azerbaijanis. I asked you during your visit to Azerbaijan, to please reflect in your report that Ganja was destroyed by Armenian rockets. Please accept that Barda city was completely destroyed during the war by Armenians. You promised me; you said, "I will do that". Then you said, "No, I am not able to do that". Then, with all this knowledge, you became a rapporteur and tried to present Azerbaijan in that manner. That is not fair

We are for Armenians. We are for peace, and we will achieve peace despite these kinds of accusations.

Thank you.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Mister President,

I'd like to thank Mr Paul GAVAN for his excellent work.

The humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh is escalating.

Unfortunately, the government of Azerbaijan has shown disregard for the pleas coming from institutions such as the European Parliament, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the Commissioner of Human Rights, as well as the orders issued by the European Court of Human Rights and the International Court of Justice.

There is a Turkish proverb that aptly describes the situation in the Lachin corridor: "The dog barks, and the caravan moves on." Regrettably, this proverb reflects the current state of affairs.

The Lachin corridor, which serves as the sole road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, has been under blockade since December.

Just recently, even the transport operations conducted by the Red Cross, which was previously able to deliver emergency food and medicines, have been halted.

Behind this blockade, one hundred thousand people are enduring immense suffering. The plight of these individuals from Nagorno-Karabakh deserves greater attention. However, above all else, they deserve to have their fundamental human rights respected.

Dear Azeri colleagues,

I implore you not to dismiss the existence of this blockade. You know that it exists!

In February, Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN and I visited the region and personally witnessed the plight of the people.

We met individuals who were unable to return to their homes in Nagorno-Karabakh due to the blockade. We encountered elderly widows who were sorrowful over their inability to visit the graves of their husbands.

We encountered women yearning to be reunited with their grandchildren, and men anxiously concerned for their ailing parents, left without any assistance on the other side of the Lachin corridor.

Therefore, I pose the following question once again: What steps must be taken to ensure that Azerbaijan fulfils its commitments as a member of the Council of Europe?

Moreover, what actions are necessary to ensure that Azerbaijan respects the human rights and to stop conducting ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh?

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

Mr Jeremy CORBYN (United Kingdom, SOC): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

I want to take this opportunity to thank Mr Paul GAVAN for the huge amount of work he's done as our rapporteur on issues facing Azerbaijan and Armenia, notably surrounding the Lachin corridor and Nagorno-Karabakh.

It is outrageous that he was denied access to the Lachin corridor in order to prepare a proper report for us on this subject.

His diligence, supported by the very efficient Migration Committee team resulted in a very comprehensive report.

The fact that the Lachin corridor is now effectively closed is outrageous, and its electricity and gas supplies are cut off, as are many other essential services for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

I hope this report is accepted by the necessary two-thirds majority, and that it is immediately followed up with a further delegation to visit the Lachin corridor, in order to encourage the Azerbaijan government to reopen it in the proper manner, and to engage in long term peace talks to bring about a peaceful future for all of the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Mr Armen GEVORGYAN (Armenia, EC/DA): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Mister President,

Today I am taking the floor to ensure that no one claims "how could we know?" in the future.

Due to the obvious inaction by many governments, civil society groups and political circles in the democratic Europe, the authoritarian regime of Azerbaijan very openly and almost daily creates conditions for the Armenian people in Nagorno-Karabakh, making civilian life there impossible.

Today, 120 000 Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh are *de facto* isolated from the civilised world and face the risk of extermination.

We cannot tolerate that the indigenous people and their European Christian heritage are wiped off the heavenly land of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The historical heritage of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh is indeed a treasure of all humanity and Christian, European civilisation, isn't it?

Over and above, other notable representatives of my people, such as Mr Charles Aznavour, Mr Henri Verneuil, Mr Calouste Gulbenkian, Mr Giorgio Armani, the Armenian Catholic congregation Mekhitarists in Venice and Vienna, and many others elsewhere have been and are still crafting heritage that belongs to the Europe as a whole. They were convinced that Europe, that once became their new homeland, would step in

to prevent new genocides of the Armenian people. To avoid new human calamity in Europe, we have to make sure that Nagorno-Karabakh is integrated into the international community, so that the heritage of these people becomes the heritage of wider community of nations.

Mister President,

Let me put forward two main reasons why it is important to vote in favour of this resolution and the recommendations.

First,

It clearly demands from the authorities in Azerbaijan to end the 170-day inhumane blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh and live up to their international obligations.

Second,

The recommendation takes note of the unacceptable language and rhetoric employed by Azerbaijani leadership against Armenians, which I hope the Committee of Ministers will hear.

Dear colleagues,

Everyone knows how much effort the delegation of Azerbaijan made to fail today's debate. They seek shelter at this Organisation to undermine the others and the decisions of reputable international courts.

Despite two international court orders, the blockade is still there.

For many years, we have been presenting that Azerbaijani state policy aims to ethnically cleanse and otherwise spread hatred and discrimination against Armenians. Now the UN Court has testified to that. That is why, it is important that our Organisation would avoid the factually incorrect and historically inaccurate claims that could present Nagorno-Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan, and the future of this region being as a domestic affair.

Dear colleagues,

For thousands of years, Armenians have kept their national dignity and identity. We witnessed the demise of many other empires and ethnicities. This time around too, we will be able to overcome the challenges that my people is facing. I hope also with your support.

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

In the light of the ongoing negotiation process between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the normalisation of interstate relations, unfortunately, the current report is untimely, unfair and inaccurate.

The report contains numerous baseless and unacceptable accusations against Azerbaijan and does not reflect the real situation in the region, as well as around the Lachin road.

In the first place, the claim of “absence of free and safe” passage through the Lachin road does not correspond at all to reality on the ground.

Besides ensuring security in the region, Azerbaijan provides all conditions for an unimpeded, safe and transparent passage through the border checkpoint.

As repeatedly brought to the attention of the rapporteur, also from publicly available sources, the Lachin road continues to be used by local Armenians, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Russian peacekeeping contingent.

As for the establishment of the border checkpoint, which appears to be presented in the report as “a unilateral action by Azerbaijan in contradiction to the Trilateral Statement of 10 November 2020”, it must be underlined that the border security and management is exclusively within the sovereign right of each state, and nothing in the Trilateral Statement implicitly or explicitly contain any derogation by Azerbaijan of this right.

Furthermore, regretfully, the report overlooks the consistent efforts that Azerbaijan has been making since November 2020 with respect to addressing the rights and security of Armenian residents living in its territory.

At the highest level, Azerbaijan expressed its determination to reintegrate these residents as equal citizens into Azerbaijan's political, legal, economic, social system.

Most recently, Azerbaijan designated a special representative for the dialogue with local ethnic Armenians, who has already conducted the first round of talks on 1 March 2023.

Instead of acknowledging these and other efforts and encouraging further steps, the report passes over them in silence and replicates one-sided accusations stemming from the false and unsubstantiated narrative of Armenia, which serves to denigrate Azerbaijan's efforts to this end.

In addition, hate speech is a serious problem and by no means unique to any single society. Therefore, the differentiation and value judgment made in the report in this respect is unwarranted, counter-productive and does not help to tackle the problem. Even more, the report will be undoubtedly used for hateful anti-Azerbaijani propaganda, due to its selective and biased approach.

On a particular note, while recognising the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, unfortunately, the report uses old and incorrect toponyms referring to the sovereign territories of Azerbaijan.

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

The previous speakers reflected enough on the humanitarian crisis caused by the blockade of Lachin corridor.

I will not touch upon that particular topic in my speech.

The thing I am going to speak about is the unacceptability of the flagrant disrespect of the Council of Europe member State Azerbaijan towards our Organisation, our rules, towards international organisations, international courts.

It is clearly mentioned both in the draft Resolution and the draft Recommendation that the rapporteur on the report Mr Paul GAVAN was rejected access not only to the Lachin corridor, Nagorno-Karabakh to observe the humanitarian situation on the ground, but also to Azerbaijan.

What does this mean?

The Bureau makes a decision on the preparation of a report, a rapporteur is appointed, we authorise the rapporteur to visit the affected area to understand what is going on - and he is refused access? Is it acceptable for us, colleagues? I think it shouldn't be.

Likewise Mr Paul GAVAN, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Ms Dunja Mijatovic is not given access to the conflict zone to assess the situation with human rights in the area.

Other international organisations, UN agencies, UNHCR, UNESCO are refused access to the region. Is that acceptable for us? I think it shouldn't be.

It has been exactly four months since the International Court of Justice delivered its binding order obligating Azerbaijan to ensure unimpeded movement along the Lachin corridor in both directions. So far Azerbaijan has not implemented this binding judicial act. Moreover, Azerbaijan set up a checkpoint on the Lachin corridor exactly two months ago, and today we were informed that they have started installing concrete barriers on the corridor.

Another manifestation of disrespect is ignoring the interim measure exposed by the European Court of Human Rights against Azerbaijan, again obligating the latter to ensure safe passage through the Lachin corridor.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is banned from travelling to Nagorno-Karabakh to implement its mandate. Is it acceptable for us? I believe it shouldn't be.

Dear colleagues,

This kind of disrespect is not only the problem of Armenia or Nagorno-Karabakh. It is the problem of any of you, it is the problem of our Organisation, it is the problem of every country in the world.

Because if we allow one state to ignore all the international mechanisms, all the internationally accepted rules without serious consequences, this can be a green light for the others as well.

Thank you for your attention.

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

Azerbaijan's creation of a border checkpoint on the Lachin road is based on international law.

With this, Azerbaijan controls the entry to and exit from its own territory. This is a necessary procedure applied by all countries. Those coming from Armenia and leaving Khankendi are checked and registered in an orderly and polite manner. It can be said with certainty that it stops transportation of weapons to our territories by Armenians.

At the same time, it prevents the transportation of mines through the Lachin road.

The extraction of natural resources from Karabakh and their transportation to Armenia is prevented.

As it is known, weapons and mines were transported to Karabakh, and a rotation of military personnel was done through the Lachin road.

As a result of mining actions, which is a clear example of international crimes committed by Armenia in the last 30 years, 3 377 Azerbaijanis were harmed, 358 of them children and 38 women.

Since 10 November 2020 until today, 301 people have been killed or suffered various degrees of physical injuries as a result of a mine explosion.

Since August 2022, 3 000 mines, which were produced in Armenia in 2021, have been discovered in the direction of Kalbajar and Lachin. These mines entered Azerbaijan through the Lachin road.

The creation of a checkpoint also prevents Armenian terrorism.

Allegations made by Armenian officials regarding the blockade of the Lachin road are nothing more than another [piece of] false propaganda.

Recently, peace negotiations have intensified. In such circumstances, talking about the supposed blockade of the Lachin road is a huge blow to peace.

Azerbaijan insists on the integration of ethnic Armenians in Karabakh into our society.

A few months ago, in Khojaly, a meeting was held with Azerbaijani citizen Armenians living in Karabakh. The issue of integration of Armenians was discussed. While we are having all these processes, I invite all people present here to support building peace and security in the region, but not to support baseless claims about a blockade that sabotages peace.

Mr Ahmet YILDIZ (Türkiye, NR): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear Chair, dear colleagues,

I believe that after the Second Karabakh War, we now have a genuine opportunity for restoring peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

But there are some conditions that would enable parties to restore the order and peace in the region.

Firstly, third parties need to keep an equal distance and avoid biased statements. We need to make sure that this Assembly has an impartial attitude toward the dispute.

Secondly, we have dependable reports and footage showing the illegal transportation of arms and troops to Karabakh. Karabakh is an integral party of Azerbaijan according to international law.

Misuse of the Lachin Corridor for the purpose of transferring weapons and ammunition and illicit extraction of natural resources clearly contradict the Trilateral Statement, and should cease.

I believe that we need to recognise Azerbaijan's legitimate concerns regarding the security of the region and its own borders.

Therefore, I believe that the border control point established by Azerbaijan was a rightful necessary security measure.

As a third condition for restoring peace, considering its share in the misuse of Lachin Corridor, I believe that the Armenian side should also assume responsibility and comply with the international law.

Dear colleagues,

If our purpose is to build peace and stability in the region, the Armenian side should also bear the responsibility for easing tension in the region.

Lastly, as reported by our Azerbaijani colleagues, we understand that the Lachin corridor is open for humanitarian and civilian access. People living in the region have no difficulty in access to the region.

Finally, I would like to ask the members of this Assembly to consider this report and the dispute over the Lachin corridor impartially in the light of these facts.

Thank you.

Ms Zeynep YILDIZ (Türkiye, NR): *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear Chair, dear colleagues,

I agree that the situation in the Lachin corridor merits attention.

However, what we expect from this Assembly and the Committee who adopted the report is to address the issue in an impartial and objective manner.

I regret that this report adopts an approach that hurts the impartiality of this Assembly. Such an approach would not serve for the peace and stability in the region.

To begin with, Azerbaijan exercises its sovereign right to control the movement of persons, vehicles and cargo to and from its territory, as all member states do.

While doing so, it does not violate the Trilateral Statement and its obligations arising from other international instruments.

In fact, Azerbaijan fulfils its obligations by allowing the passage of people, goods and vehicles through the Lachin corridor, and thus ensuring their security and safe passage.

Despite the fact that Azerbaijani authorities face provocative acts such as opening fire on the road, the Azerbaijani authorities continue to provide security for those using the road.

We support the calls for further dialogue among the two states.

However, we should also call on the Armenian side to fulfil its own obligations by putting an end to their illegal activities such as the transfer of arms, and also respecting the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, which is internationally recognised.

If our purpose is to ensure a rapid advance in the normalisation process among these states, we need to respect Azerbaijan's legitimate security concerns and to stop misuse of Lachin corridor.

If the trilateral agreement is taken into consideration, it is obvious that there are articles not implemented by Armenia.

That's why the best way to proceed is to encourage the two sides to do so impartially, and sign a peace treaty based on the territorial integrity with internationally recognised borders. Biased interference is just prolonging this process. The same mistake has been committed over 30 years under Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territory.

Thank you.

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

As I announced, due to the large amount of amendments presented, I deplore that I now already have to interrupt the list of speakers.

Speeches of members on the speakers' 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.

I now call Mr Paul GAVAN the rapporteur to reply. You have three minutes.

Mr Paul GAVAN (Ireland, UEL, Rapporteur): Thank you very much, Mister President.

I regret I have to begin with an urgent update that I have received just in the last 20 minutes from the EU Monitoring Commission at the Lachin Corridor and they confirmed that this afternoon Azerbaijan have installed concrete blocks, obstacles of approximately knee height, across both lines of the road so it is not possible to pass on the road by vehicle. They installed them behind the permanent Azerbaijan checkpoint, the green tent.

On a day when we are debating this issue, to hear that news is frankly incredibly depressing. And it really flies in the face of a lot of very positive comments. And I want to thank all of the speakers. Because I think there has to be a roadmap to solve this, there has to be a positive response that will solve this issue. And of course it must involve the Council of Europe. It must involve access.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV said on Monday in a very positive speech. He said "come to the region". But he didn't allow me to come. And he didn't allow anyone yet to come through the Lachin Corridor. Isn't that at the heart of this issue?

The humanitarian crisis that we are facing, I believe, is extremely serious. People have not been able to access any food or supplies over the last week. There are massive issues, as have been pointed out by speakers, in terms of health and welfare for children, they are facing into prolonged power cuts, they are facing into a winter that frankly I can't see how they can manage.

And the only conclusion I can come to, and it is a matter of deep regret that I've to come to this conclusion, it looks as though, unless things change, that the intention is to force the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan to leave.

And surely, that just cannot be acceptable to any of us.

Colleagues, I just want to briefly mention the Amendments, as you see there's quite a few of them.

I want to ask for your support in relation to 4, 7, 11 and 46, but I have to say to you, the rest of the Amendments are of such a fundamentally different character that if they're passed they will change the nature of this report entirely.

So, if they are passed, in those circumstances, I'll actually call on you to vote against the report.

I still have to hope that together, acting in unity, we can give a strong message of solidarity in terms of the humanitarian crisis, that is facing and growing daily and weekly into the Nagorno-Karabakh region because, and I reiterate this, the Lachin Corridor is closed.

And I once again call on our colleagues from Azerbaijan to reopen the Corridor, to reconnect the gas and electricity, to get engaged in constructive dialogue. And I call on Armenians to do the same so that we can all move forward together.

Please, support the report. Please, reject these amendments that are going to fundamentally change the character of what I've written.

Thank you.

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

Does Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons wish to speak?

Oleksii, you have 3 minutes.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Thank you very much Mister President.

On behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, first of all, I would like to thank Mr Paul GAVAN, rapporteur, for a very important and courageous report.

I would also like to thank the Secretariat of the Committee for all work done.

I would also like to thank all members of our Committee. Today, we had a long and big debate and I think it was fruitful, so I want to thank everybody for this.

The most important thing which I want to mention, is that important negotiations are going on between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The fact that both countries, both countries, recognised each other's territorial integrity is already huge progress. That's the most important thing. We all want to see peace in this region and that is so important for all of us.

The draft resolution and recommendation that you are asked to adopt today can provide a real roadmap for our Organisation, precisely to support the building of trust between Armenia and Azerbaijan with a view to ensuring lasting peace.

So I want to ask everybody, on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, to support the report.

What I also want to tell you, is that our aim is really to have peace. We hope that it will happen.

We know that there is just one country that wants war, and this is the aggressor and a former member of our Organisation, the Russian Federation. Our aim is to ensure that we will have strong peace in all of the countries of the Council of Europe and in general in our region.

Thank you very much, and again thanks to the rapporteur.

Vote: Ensuring free and safe access through the Lachin Corridor

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

The debate is closed.

The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons has presented a draft resolution which you can find in Document 15796, to which 55 Amendments have been tabled, and a draft recommendation which you will find in Document 15796, to which 7 Amendments have been tabled.

We will begin first with the Amendments to the draft resolution, which were unanimously agreed.

I understand that the representative of the the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendment 11 to the draft resolution, which was adopted unanimously by the Committee, should be declared as agreed by the Assembly.

Is that so Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Yes, absolutely.

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

Does anybody object?

I do not see any.

Then the Amendment is agreed.

We will now consider amendments to the draft resolution, which were rejected by two-thirds majority. I understand that the representative of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendments 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12 to 45 including 45 and 47 to 55 including 55 to the draft resolution (Doc. 15796), which were rejected by the Committee with a two-third majority, be declared as rejected.

Is that so, Mister GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Yes, Mister President.

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

Is there any objection against this proposal?

Mr Samad SEYIDOV.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Mr President, we have an objection.

We think that these Amendments should be discussed, despite the result which we got at the level of the Committee.

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

In this case, if there is an objection I have to ask if this objection is supported by at least 10 members. Who is objecting?

I count 11. Is that correct?

13.

That means that the Amendments will be debated.

I now know call Mr SEYIDOV to support Amendment 4.

You have 30 seconds.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Can you repeat the amendment number?

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Amendment 4.

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

Actually I already did, within my speech, mention that there is a Karabakh region in Azerbaijan, and a former Russia or Soviet presentation of this region is absolutely wrong.

There was a Democratic Republic of Germany, and then after unification we had United Germany. And that's why we are calling it Germany. And now we have Karabakh. And that's why of course I am favour of that.

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

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment, Mr Paul GAVAN, rapporteur?

Mr Frank SCHWABE.

Mr Frank SCHWABE (Germany, SOC): Thank you very much, Mister President.

This Parliamentary Assembly is not to make political games. It is very clear that there are other majorities and you are just playing games here with the support of the Chair of the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance. We have to know it. So I ask you to reject this Amendment because it is just to prolong the debate here and to criticise it and do so with others willing to follow their rapporteur Mr Paul GAVAN.

Thank you very much.

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

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mister GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee has rejected with a vast majority.

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

I shall now put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

No point of order during voting.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): The Committee was in favour of this Amendment.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Sorry.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Yes, that's my mistake.

The point of order of Mister SEYIDOV is absolutely right.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Sorry.

Mr Paul GAVAN (Ireland, UEL, Rapporteur): If I could just have to floor, Mister President, just to say I do not accept the arguments that Mr Samad SEYIDOV has made. However, in this specific sentence, we are in favour.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Yes, my apologies. That's my mistake. The Committee supported this Amendment with the vast majority.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister GONCHARENKO. These things can happen.

I will now will put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can the results be displayed?

The Amendment is adopted.

That means that Amendments 5 and 6 fall.

We come to Amendment 7.

I call Mister SEYIDOV to support Amendment 7.

You have 30 seconds.

Please, support the Amendment. You have 30 seconds.

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you very much, Mister President.

Even though the terms "conflict" and "dispute" are interchangeably used, they have different meanings in the legal context. "Disputes" are generally used in the personal freedom and the rights context. However, when there is military aggression, when there is occupation, the correct for interstate relations is "conflict".

Therefore, I ask our colleagues to support it. Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much. Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

What's the opinion of the Committee, Mister GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee supported it with a vast majority.

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

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Amendment 7? The Committee supported it with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Amendment 7 is supported with a vast majority.

I now shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The Amendment is adopted.

We come to Amendment 8.

I call Mr SEYIDOV to support Amendment 8.

You have 30 seconds. Please.

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you very much, Mister President.

According to the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, the European Parliament, and also this Assembly, Armenia kept 20% internationally-recognised territory of Azerbaijan under the occupation for almost 30 years.

In order to give some historical contexts to the report, we would like to add the following paragraph to paragraph 1.

Thank you.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority. Thank you.

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

And I shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 9. I call Mr.... Madam, you have the floor.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Yes, amendment No. 9.

We would like, in the second sentence, after the words "it notes that", to add the following words:

", following the 28 years of fruitless internationally-mediated talks,"

Because, clearly, international organisations failed their job when it came to the occupation of Azerbaijani lands. With this type of extremely biased reports, the distrust of the intentions of this organisation will even deepen.

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

Does anybody speak against the Amendment?

What is the opinion of the Committee? Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

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

I shall now put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The Amendment is rejected.

We now come to Amendment 10.

Please, Madam.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Yes, Amendment 10 in the draft resolution, paragraph 2, second sentence, we would like to replace the word "regained control parts of" with the word "liberated". Because for 30 years, the lands of Azerbaijan were occupied by Armenia. There are UN Security Council resolutions this Assembly approved that dozens of other documents, and I do not really understand why are we saying "regained control" instead of "liberated" which is a fact.

Thank you.

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

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mister CORBYN?

Mr Jeremy CORBYN (United Kingdom, SOC): Very briefly, Mister President, this is irrelevant to the report.

The report is about the Lachin corridor.

I think that all these amendments are clearly designed to delay and, hopefully, with their views, to try and destroy this report.

I think we should reject this and all the subsequent amendments.

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

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mister GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): It is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I now shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results displayed?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment... this was unanimously approved, yeah? We come to Amendment 12. Who is going to support it?

You have the floor, 30 seconds.

Mr Erkin GADIRLI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Mister Chairman.

Paragraph 3 refers to the end of a conflict, which is only a tactical goal. But the strategic goal is to achieve peace.

For that reason, we suggest to replace the words "the end of" with the following phrase:

"the establishment of a lasting peace between the two neighbouring countries are leaving behind" and only then "a conflict".

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment? Mr Stefan SCHENNACH.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC): Peace is more than only ceasefire, and I think to have peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, more has to be done than is being done at the moment. And I think there is too much hate between the two states that we can speak about peace.

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

Mister GONCHARENKO, what is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

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

I shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to amendment No. 13. Who is going to support amendment No. 13?

Sir, you have the floor.

Mr Erkin GADIRLI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Mister Chairman.

Paragraph 4, we suggest to include the following phrase:

"acting in accordance with the relevant norms and principles of international law".

This is actually the statement of the inherent right of Azerbaijan under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

Thank you.

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

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

I cannot see anyone.

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

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

I put the amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The amendment is rejected.

We come to amendment No. 14. Who is going to support it?

Mister Erkin GADIRLI.

Mr Erkin GADIRLI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Mister Chairman.

This is also a suggestion to replace the word "reclaim" with "liberated" because, as Azerbaijan's areas were occupied, they always belonged to Azerbaijan. They were not reclaimed; they were just simply liberated.

Thank you.

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

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see anyone.

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

The votes is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The amendment is rejected.

We come to amendment No. 15.

Who is going to support amendment No. 15?

Mister HUSEYNOV.

Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV (Azerbaijan, ALDE): In this paragraph, we propose to replace the word "force" with "fighting against the occupying military force of Armenia". In light of the ongoing negotiation process between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the normalisation of interstate relations, unfortunately, the current report is untimely, unfair and inaccurate. In this phrase, this is a historical background or the conflict. The context should be given to readers accordingly.

Thank you.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see any.

I do see Mr Stefan SCHENNACH.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC): We should not forget about the reason of this resolution. It is the closed corridor, which is a humanitarian act. This has nothing to do with this amendment, which makes it only longer in the text. We have to act for humanitarian reasons.

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

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mister Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

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

I put the amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The amendment is rejected.

We come to amendment No. 16. If adopted, amendment 17 will fall.

Who is going to support the amendment?

Mister Rafael HUSEYNOV.

Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV (Azerbaijan, ALDE): In this paragraph, we propose to replace the phrase with the new wording. The current text arbitrarily overlooks the consistent efforts that Azerbaijan has been making since November 2020 with respect to addressing the rights and security of ethnic Armenian residents of the conflict-affected territories. Azerbaijan has consistently expressed its determination to reintegrate these residents as equal citizens.

Thank you.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the amendment?

Mister Stefan SCHENNACH.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC): This sounds like a fairy tale. I do not see where the efforts of the reintegration of Armenian residents are.

I think it sounds a little bit dangerous as it is written here. Do not force them to be as if they gave back their citizenship, as we know, which is discussed in your country.

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

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The amendment is rejected.

We come to amendment No. 17.

Who is going to support amendment 17?

Mister Rafael HUSEYNOV.

Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV (Azerbaijan, ALDE): In this phrase we propose to delete the words "that country's leadership has not made any effort to reassure" and after the words "this territory" add the words "not reassured yet".

The report contains numerous baseless and unacceptable accusations against Azerbaijan and does not reflect the real situation in the region as well as around the Lachin Corridor.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against this Amendment?

That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mister GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we have the results be displayed?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 3.

I call Mr RUBINYAN to support it. He withdrew it? Does anybody else want to move it?

Not the case.

We come to Amendment No. 18.

Who is going to support Amendment No. 18?

Madam Nigar ARPADARAI.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): In the Resolution, Paragraph 4, second sentence, we would propose to add the following words after "Trilateral Statement": "including the continued illegal military presence of Armenia on the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan, the transfer of weapons and ammunitions (most probably landmines) thereto, the illicit extraction of Azerbaijan's natural resources, and the misuse of the Lachin corridor for those purposes in breach of the Trilateral Statement".

This will make the paragraph more comprehensive because this is all the facts.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against?

Mister Stefan SCHENNACH.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC): That is the wording to try to describe why the corridor is now broken.

Madam, you know, as we know both, that there is no transport of weapons and ammunition in this area. We should not continue with some fake news.

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

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mister GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we have the results displayed?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No.19.

Who wants to support Amendment No. 19? Nobody. If nobody moves Amendment No. 19, then it falls.

Let me come to Amendment No. 20.

Who wants to support Amendment No. 20?

Madam, you have the floor.

Ms Parvin KARIMZADA (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Mister Chairman.

In this Amendment we propose to replace the words "subsequent deliberate cutting" with the following words: "interruption".

Because claiming that cuttings were deliberate is unfounded and based on poor speculations spread by Armenia and therefore it should be rectified.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see anyone.

What is your opinion of the Committee, Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority, Mister President.

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

I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can I see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 21.

Madam.

Ms Parvin KARIMZADA (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): In this Amendment, we propose in the draft Resolution, at the end of Paragraph 4, to add the following words: "as a result of infrastructure failures".

Because here we won't clarify that the reasons for possible cuttings were related to infrastructure failures, and not deliberate cuttings, as it claims currently.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam. Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mister SCHENNACH.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC): To turn off the gas and close the gas for three days is not the feeling that this is the infrastructure failures. In the electricity it is right, but Azerbaijan forbid to renew the infrastructure for electricity. But in gas, it is not true.

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

Mister GONCHARENKO, the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 22. Who is going to support it?

Madam?

Ms Parvin KARIMZADA (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): We propose to replace the words "struck by" with the following words: "concerned by".

Because here we believe that "struck by" is not an appropriate expression.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against this Amendment?

I don't see any.

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mister GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 23. Mister SEYIDOV?

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

Our leadership and government is really very serious about all the questions which we faced.

That's why we can see that in the report Mr Paul GAVAN tries to present that the Government of Azerbaijan is not serious, that's ridiculous.

Of course, we are against. I think for everybody it is clear that this situation in the region is a very serious one.

That's why all parties, Azerbaijan and others, are very serious.

That's why we are in favour of deleting the wordings we can see.

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

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see anyone.

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mister Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority, Mister President.

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

I shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can I see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 24. Who is going to support Amendment 24?

Mister Samad SEYIDOV.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Mister Chairman,

We wanted to add the following words: "related to the misuse of the Lachin road contrary to the Trilateral Agreement".

This is obvious that the major problem is that this corridor, unfortunately, is misused by Armenians. That is the exact fact that ammunition, mines, and rotation of the military personnel have been happening there.

That is why, of course, we are in favour of this Amendment.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against it?

Mister Stefan SCHENNACH.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC): Mister Samad SEYIDOV,

Some minutes before you spoke about peace, and now you write this. You know that there's no misuse.

If you transport food, medicine, and other necessities to people who cannot move out of this area, this is not a misuse in any way.

It's really a question of peace, if you allow it.

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

Mister Oleksii GONCHARENKO, what is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 25.

Mister Samad SEYIDOV.

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

It is really very strange, because everybody who is talking in favour of this report is talking about the ethnic Armenians.

In these amendments we wanted to include the wording "including local Armenians, ethnic Armenians", but I don't understand why the Committee is against.

We are in favour of taking into account those citizens of Azerbaijan Armenians while living in Karabakh.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the amendment?

I do not see anyone.

Mister Oleksii GONCHARENKO, the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

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

I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 26.

Sir, you have the floor.

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, President.

I would like to remind our colleagues that Azerbaijan has ensured the free and safe movement of Armenian residents in both directions at the Lachin border checkpoint.

Despite these efforts, on 15 June our border guard was injured as a result of firing of the border checkpoint by Armenia.

It seems that Armenia is resorting to such provocations, including this one here, because it's deprived of its illegal activities it carries through the Lachin Road.

Therefore, this so-called humanitarian crisis in the region is baseless.

Thank you.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the amendment?

Mister SCHENNACH.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC): If there were free and safe access through the corridor, then we would not need this resolution.

This is contrary to the resolution, and please vote against it.

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

Mister GONCHARENKO, what is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 27.

Mister JAFAROV, you have the floor.

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you very much.

Armenia, which constantly targeted the civilian population during a 30-year-long occupation, carried out ethnic cleansing against nearly 1 million Azerbaijanis, committed massacres against them and prevented them from returning to their land in a dignified and safe manner with its military provocation. Now accusing Azerbaijan of carrying out so-called ethnic cleansing is a clear example of hypocrisy.

Therefore, I call you to support our Amendment.

Thank you.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment? I don't see any...

Sorry, Mr Ruben RUBINYAN.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): Thank you. I'm against the Amendment, but I just wanted to use this opportunity...

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): No, no. You only have time to speak against the Amendment.

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): Yes! I'm speaking!

... to remind everyone that it's very important that everyone stays, because the tactics of the Azerbaijani delegation is to prolong the process so that people leave and the recommendation is not passed.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Sorry, that was not an explanation of your vote against.

Please stick to the order.

The opinion of the Committee, Mister Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results.

It's rejected.

Amendment 28. Sir.

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Yes.

This is not a tactic. This is called democracy.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Sorry, stick to the issue.

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Lachin border checkpoints should not be viewed as a pilot project.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan took the obligation to restore all economic and transport links in the region.

Until now, the Republic of Armenia has not guaranteed the safety of transport links between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic in order to organise and impede the movement of citizens, vehicles, and goods in both directions.

Therefore, I call on all of you to support our Amendment.

Thank you.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

It's not the case.

Opinion of the Committee, Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 29.

If it is adopted, Amendment 30 will follow.

Who wants to speak?

Madam Nigar ARPADARAI.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Mister President,

The Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, we would like to replace it with the following words: "Armenians living in Azerbaijan" because, as my colleague has already mentioned, there is no such place as Nagorno-Karabakh. It is against our constitution to call it Nagorno-Karabakh.

The region is called Karabakh.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

Mister SCHENNACH.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC): In the end, for real peace and for a peaceful future, we need a status like an autonomous region inside Azerbaijan, but to say only "Armenians in Azerbaijan", sorry, this is too little.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Mister GONCHARENKO, the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Let us see the results.

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 30.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Dear Parliamentarians,

Again, the same thing and couple of days ago we were discussing...

The Committee was discussing the change of the name from "Belorussia" to "Belarus". I don't know why the Assembly is not consistent and cannot change "Nagorno-Karabakh" to "Karabakh". There is no such place as "Nagorno-Karabakh". The region is called "Karabakh".

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see anyone.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority, Mister President.

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

I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 31.

Who is going to support it? Ms Nigar ARPADARAI.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): In Amendment 31, delete the words between Baku and Khankendi / Stepanakert, and neutral international involvement in any peace implementation mechanisms.

First of all, we don't really understand why we are using words Stepanakert, the region is called Khankendi.

Secondly, "neutral international involvement" is not clear in the text.

The peace deal that is currently under discussion between Armenia and Azerbaijan is going on with mediation.

Also, a reintegration agenda is being pursued by the government of Azerbaijan with local ethnic Armenians.

So this is the proposal that we have.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see any.

The opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority, Mister President.

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

I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 32.

Who wants to speak in favour of the Amendment?

Madam ARPADARAI.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Mister President,

Amendment 32, delete the words "between Baku and Khakendi/Stepanakert", because the dialogue is to be conducted between the central authorities in Baku and local ethnic Armenians living in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

In the current sentence, the wording "Khakendi/Stepanakert" is not acceptable, since it may insinuate representing some kind of identity, which is not and cannot be the case.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I don't see any.

Mister GONCHARENKO, the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 33. Who is going to speak in favour of it? Mr Erkin GADIRLI.

Mr Erkin GADIRLI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Dear friends,

Believe me, I also would like to leave this room as soon as possible, but...

The context of Amendment 33 is the designation of a special representative to conduct a dialogue with the Armenian community in Karabakh. In fact, they already had one negotiation, but since then have never met again.

We suggest, after Paragraph 8, which remains as it is, to insert the following paragraph:

"The Assembly welcomes the designation by Azerbaijan of a Special Representative to pursue dialogue with Armenians living on its territory, and it encourages the further pursuit of this dialogue with a view to ensuring their rights and security."

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see anyone.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 34.

Who wants to speak in favour of the Amendment?

Mr Erkin GADIRLI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Dear Chairman,

It is again about the addition of another paragraph, after paragraph 8, which again remains as it is. And it reads as follows, "The Assembly notes that Azerbaijan has established a border checkpoint on the interstate border with Armenia, in full compliance with international practice, and provides all necessary conditions for the movement of local Armenian residents in both directions. In this context, it deplores attempts by the Armenian side seeking to prevent local Armenians from using this checkpoint freely, which ultimately affects their situation."

I would like to remind you that the establishment of checkpoints of an internationally recognised body is the sovereign right of any state.

Thank you.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see any.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 35.

Who is going to support it?

Sir you have the floor.

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): It is inaccurate to describe the situation as if Azerbaijan is not complying with the interim measures indicated by the European Court of Human Rights.

At least, in the case of the ill persons mentioned in the report, all ambulances passed through the road and hundreds of Armenians reunited with their families on both sides.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see any.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): You will not be surprised. The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 36.

Sir?

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): We resolutely reject the absurd allegations.

The statement is factually wrong.

We remind Armenia once again that despite the creation of appropriate conditions for the transparent and safe passage of the local Armenian residents of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, in both directions at the Lachin border checkpoint, and the fact that hundreds of Armenian residents of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan have passed through the checkpoint since its establishment, it's a provocation of the Armenian armed forces that obstructed the safe passage from the Lachin checkpoint.

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

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see anyone.

Mister Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 37.

Who is going to support it, Sir?

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): It's me again.

It seems that the Armenian is resorting to such provocations, because it's deprived of the illegal activities it carried out through the Lachin Road after 2020, as well as because it is concerned about the positive approach demonstrated by Azerbaijan during the passage of Armenian residents.

The so-called humanitarian crisis in the region, propaganda of Armenia, is baseless.

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

Does anyone want to speak against it?

What is the opinion of the Committee, Mister Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 1.

If it is adopted, then Amendments 38, 39, 40, 41, and 42 fall.

I call Mr Armen RUSTAMYAN to support it... no, withdrawn.

Does anybody else want to move it?

I don't see any...

Then we come to Amendment No. 38.

Who's going to support it?

["I support it." - heard off-mic from the floor]

Mister Rafael HUSEYNOV.

Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV (Azerbaijan, ALDE): We propose to delete the following phrase because this paragraph does not reflect sufficiently clearly and accurately the essence of the relevant legal proceeding. The application of Azerbaijan submitted to the International Crisis Group requesting the indication of interim measures concerning another interstate case on a substantively different matter thus cannot be construed as a mirror application.

Thank you.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see any.

Mister Oleksii GONCHARENKO, the Committee's opinion?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 39.

Who's going to support it?

Mister Rafael HUSEYNOV.

Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV (Azerbaijan, ALDE): We propose to replace the following phrase, because most recently Azerbaijan designated a special representative for the dialogue with local ethnic Armenians, who has already conducted a first round of talks on 1 March 2023.

Instead of acknowledging this and other efforts and encouraging further steps, the report passes over them in silence and replicates one-sided accusations stemming from the false and unsubstantiated narrative of Armenia, which serves to denigrate Azerbaijan's efforts to this end.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see anyone.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, the Committee's opinion?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Against with a vast majority, Mister President.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 40.

Who is going to support Amendment No. 40?

Mister Rafael HUSEYNOV.

Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV (Azerbaijan, ALDE): Mister President,

We propose to replace the phrase "allegations" with "profound concerns", because denying the illegal presence of military personnel of Armenian and Azerbaijan's abuse of the Lachin corridor over the last two years is an example of hypocrisy. Azerbaijan provided a number of well-documented reports, including videos proving that.

Therefore, they cannot be allegations. We propose to change "allegations" with "profound concerns" to reflect the situation accordingly.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see any.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The Amendment is rejected.

I come to Amendment 41.

Madam.

Ms Parvin KARIMZADA (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you Mr Chairman.

We propose replacing the words "Nagorno-Karabakh" with "Azerbaijan sovereign territories", as well as rotation and funding of armed formations therein, because the presence of the armed forces of Armenia in the territory of Azerbaijan is not disputed, and even was confirmed by the senior officials of Armenia.

Also the establishment of a checkpoint has extensively prevented the rotation of those forces.

Armenia continues to fund these illegal armed formations which is also confirmed by the leadership of this country.

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

Does anyone wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see anyone.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 42.

Ms Parvin KARIMZADA.

Ms Parvin KARIMZADA (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Yes, in this Amendment we propose to replace the words "Nagorno-Karabakh" with "Karabakh" because the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe should respect the Azerbaijani Constitution and official toponyms.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see any.

Mister Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 43.

Who is going to support it?

Mr Samad SEYIDOV.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Mr Chairman,

Our Amendment is to replace the words "Nagorno-Karabakh" - we already discussed this, but we insist on doing that with the following words: "the relevant area".

This reflects the reality. We ask for support for this Amendment.

Thank you.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against it?

I do not see any.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 44.

Who's going to support it?

Mr Samad SEYIDOV.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): This is actually the same but we insist on taking into account the realities.

There is a Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

You should take into account this reality, because otherwise it would be very difficult to reach peace.

That's why we are in favour of this Amendment.

Thank you very much.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against it?

I do not see anyone.

The opinion of the Committee, Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 45.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV.

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

In my speech I already said that Azerbaijan has opened all doors for the Red Cross.

We are co-operating with this international organisation on a very high level, but when we are talking about some other international organisation, that's not so understandable.

That's why we have international organisations in the region. That's why we are in favour of this Amendment.

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

Does anybody want to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see anyone.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Committee against with a vast majority.

I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 46.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV.

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

I think the major problem sometimes we can see within international organisations is the absence of relevant standards which unfortunately we can see.

That's why, from this point of view, this is really very important that UNESCO will be in line with this respective initiative and relevant principles regarding international humanitarian assistance.

That's why we are in favour of this Amendment.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against it?

I do not see anyone.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Attention! Believe it or not! The Committee is in favour with a vast majority! Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is adopted.

We come to Amendment 47.

Who is going to support Amendment 47?

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): In Amendment 47, in the draft resolution, in the first sentence replace the words "Nagorno-Karabakh" with the following words: "living in the territories of Azerbaijan where the Russian peacekeepers are temporarily deployed", because this is factually correct.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against it?

It is not the case.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): No more surprises, dear colleagues, the Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 48.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): In Amendment 48, in draft resolution, paragraph 13, delete the second sentence, because this is a misleading statement, as Azerbaijan has closely worked with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) since the beginning of the conflict.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see anyone.

The opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 49.

Who is going to support it?

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): In Amendment 49, we propose the following paragraph: "In the full recognition of Armenia's and Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, the Assembly underlines the need to achieve a normalisation of their relations, and to this end it strongly supports the negotiations of a peace agreement between the two countries, to ensure lasting peaceful co-existence, reconciliation and co-operation in the region.

"It also strongly encourages both countries to invest all efforts towards the opening of all transport communications in the region, including the route between Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan region."

In the meantime [interrupted by the President]

....it urges Azerbaijan [interrupted by the President]

... to take [interrupted by the President]

... the necessary measures at its disposal [interrupted by the President].

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Who wants to speak against the Amendment?

That is not the case.

The opinion of the Committee, Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 50. Who is going to speak about Amendment 50?

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI, 30 seconds.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): In Amendment 50, we propose to use the words "on its territory".

Actually, it was changed. In the initial version of the report that was the phrase, but I do not know why the rapporteur has changed it overnight, so we propose to return it to the previous one.

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

Anybody wish to speak against it? I don't see any.

The opinion of the Committee, Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 51.

Who is going to support Amendment 51?

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI.

Ms Nigar ARPADARAI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): In Amendment 51, again, the word "Karabakh", because I think that the fact that our Assembly doesn't want to be consistent in that and doesn't want to accept it creates more distrust among our population.

If we change "Belarussia" to "Belarus", the Assembly should change "Nagorno-Karabakh" to "Karabakh".

This is the right, correct version of the name of region.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I don't see any.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the result?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 52.

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Yes, it's me.

Hate speech is by no means unique to any single society.

Instead of being a one-sided report, the proposed amendments aim at making the paragraph more balanced and comprehensive by recalling the commitments of both Azerbaijan and Armenia.

I kindly ask all of my colleagues to support the amendment.

Thank you.

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

Does anybody wish to speak against it?

I do not see any.

The opinion of the Committee, Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we see the results?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 2.

I call Ms Sona GHAZARYAN to support Amendment No. 2.

Withdrawn.

Does anybody else wish to move it?

Not the case. Withdrawn.

We come to Amendment No. 53.

Mister Kamal JAFAROV.

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you, Mister President.

In the draft resolution, we would like to replace paragraph 16 with the following paragraph:

"The Assembly believes that in the context of dialogue between the Azerbaijan authorities and ethnic Armenian residents, which should in any case not be detrimental to the Armenians living in Azerbaijan, innovative solutions could be found to protect the rights of Armenians in Karabakh within the toolbox provided by the Council of Europe, which includes standards, instruments and programmes. The Assembly, therefore, emphasises the importance of taking full advantage of existing standards, instruments, programmes related to the enjoyment of minor rights, language, and education [*interrupted by the President*] ...and local self-government..." [*interrupted by the President*]

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much. 30 seconds is 30 seconds.

Does anybody wish to speak against it?

Mister Oleksii GONCHARENKO, the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the result?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment No. 54.

Who wants to support it?

Mister Kamal JAFAROV.

Mr Kamal JAFAROV (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you very much, Mister President.

I would like to tell my colleagues that in "Nagorno-Karabakh", the word "Nagorno" is neither an Azerbaijani nor an Armenian word; it's a Russian word.

Even the EU Council President Mr Charles Michel, when we have trilateral meetings and following the trilateral meetings, in the communiqués, we never use, they never use, Mr Charles Michel never uses this word.

I don't know why our rapporteur is insistent about this terminology.

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

Anybody wish to speak against it?

I do not see any.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

Close the vote.

Can we see the result?

The Amendment is rejected.

We come to Amendment 55.

Who is going to support Amendment 55?

Mr Erkin GADIRLI.

Mr Erkin GADIRLI (Azerbaijan, EC/DA): Thank you Mister Chairman,

In paragraph 17 we suggest replacing the words "consequences of the absence of free and safe access through" with the phrase "situation concerning".

The European Court of Human Rights and International Court of Justice don't use the phrase "free and safe".

The ECHR uses the phrase "safe access" and the International Court of Justice, "unimpeded movement".

None of them means free movement.

Freedom of movement is not an absolute right.

Every European Convention provides for legitimate reasons [interrupted by the President]

... to restrict it [interrupted by the President]

Thank you. So it's a situation rather than [interrupted by the President].

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see any.

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

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): The Committee is against with a vast majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): I put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the result?

The Amendment is rejected.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft Resolution contained in Doc. 15796 [as amended]. A simple majority is required.

The vote is open.

I close the vote.

Can we see the result?

The Resolution is adopted.

We will now consider the draft Recommendation contained in Doc. 15796 to which 7 amendments have been tabled.

I understand that the representative of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendments 56 to 62 to the draft Recommendation (Doc. 15796), which were rejected by the Committee with a two-third majority, be declared as rejected.

Is that so, Mister GONCHARENKO?

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA, Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons): Yes exactly, Mister President.

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

Is there any objection to this proposal?

Not the case.

That means that Amendments number 56 to 62 to the draft recommendation are rejected.

I call now Mr Samad SEYIDOV to support...

Sometimes things take time, sometimes things go fast.

That means we now are going to vote on the draft Recommendation.

I tell you that the two-thirds majority requires counting only affirmative and negative votes.

The vote is open on the Recommendation.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The Recommendation is adopted with a two-thirds majority.

Congratulations.

[Applause]

May I complement everybody for their patience in this procedure.

The Assembly will hold its next public setting tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. with the agenda that was approved on Monday.

I would like to remind those members who are not attending the remainder of this part-session to return the voting cards to the dedicated box at the entrance of the chamber before leaving the Palais.

The sitting is adjourned.