



**Provisional edition**

Wednesday 9 April 2025, afternoon

## Official report of debates

### Opening of the sitting No 15

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** The sitting is open.

Dear colleagues,

I want to remind you that if you want to take the floor first you have to insert your badge before taking the floor and then press the microphone button, wait for a couple of seconds and begin to speak.

His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Luxembourg is about to enter the room.

Their Royal Highnesses the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg [spoken in French].

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, it is now my honour to welcome among us in this chamber His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Luxembourg and Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg.

Royal Highnesses, your presence today, as your country—a founding member of the Council of Europe—so successfully chairing the Committee of Ministers for the 8th time, is a clear symbol of your deep attachment to our European fundamental values and principles and a gesture for which I would like to sincerely thank you.

The priorities chosen by the Presidency of Luxembourg are clearly in line with the core values of the Council of Europe: rule of law and democracy, championing joint standards and policies as key levers against democratic backsliding and increasing threats in Europe, living together, fostering mutual respect and understanding in our diverse societies, culture, sport, and heritage as vectors for promoting human rights.

These are challenging goals on which you can rest assured that the Parliamentary Assembly stands together with your country.

In particular, the annual meeting of the Committee of Ministers in Luxembourg in May 2025 will be a good time to take stock of progress, two years on from the Reykjavík Summit of Heads of States and Governments.

Without further ado, I have the honour, your highness, to give you the floor.

---

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.

## **Address: His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Luxembourg**

**His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Luxembourg ():** Mister Chairman,

Mister General Secretary,

Members of Parliament,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is always a great honour, as well as a great pleasure. All the more so as I address you in the context of Luxembourg's Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers.

I have a sincere affection for this Organisation, which embodies the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. My country, Luxembourg, one of the founding members of the Organisation, shares and defends these values. Today, more than ever, we need this institution, which is an important element of multilateralism and peace-building in Europe.

During my reign, I have had the opportunity to visit this emblematic place on numerous occasions, as I did last November for the ceremony marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the institution of the Commissioner for Human Rights. My dear wife, the Grand Duchess, spoke here two weeks ago at the session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. She spoke about a subject that is particularly close to her heart and central to the work of this Organisation: the fight against sexual violence against women in conflict zones, through her association Stand Speak Rise Up! Tragically, this is an inexhaustible subject and bears witness to the profound imbalance that reigns in our societies.

The first time I addressed your distinguished Assembly was in April 2002, shortly after succeeding my father, Grand Duke Jean, when Luxembourg held its last chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. I also visited you on 29 September 2015, when my compatriot, Ms Anne BRASSEUR, was President of your Assembly.

As this eighth Luxembourg Presidency draws to a close, I myself am just a few months away from the end of my own reign.

In October, after a quarter of a century at the head of my country, I will be handing it over to my son, Prince Guillaume, who has already been assisting me for six months in his role as Lieutenant-Representative.

The future Grand Duke is already a regular visitor to the Council of Europe, and I know that he will also be keen to cultivate the special relationship that Luxembourg has with your Organisation.

From 2000 to 2025, my reign will have spanned two successive Presidencies of my country. Or should I say that these Presidencies have framed my reign?

The values for which the Council of Europe has been fighting for seventy-five years are a source of inspiration for all those who take on political and institutional responsibilities. These invaluable references have certainly guided me throughout these years.

Mister Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Like other regional and international organisations, the Council of Europe is facing major political and social challenges, in a context marked by democratic backsliding, geopolitical tensions, and proven cases of non-compliance with the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights.

The most terrible test is, undoubtedly, the return of war to our continent, a war of aggression unleashed by Russia and now being suffered by Ukraine and its people. For over three years, the Ukrainian nation has been fighting for its right to exist.

The Council of Europe and its member states have mobilised and stand by our Ukrainian friends.

Indeed, since 2022, the Council of Europe has proved the relevance of its actions. The rejection of the Russian aggressor was immediate. In view of the flagrant violations of the principles and values that unite us, any indulgence or compromise in the name of a policy of dialogue or appeasement had become impossible. The speed and clarity of the decision taken here in the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers are a credit to this Organisation.

The 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Reykjavík in May 2023, has revitalised the Organisation and adapted it to new challenges. By creating the Register of Damage for Ukraine, the Council of Europe has shown the way towards responsibility and the refusal of impunity.

Mister Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The union of Europeans through the Council of Europe, and later the European Union, is one of the most remarkable political achievements in human history. Together, we have built this project for peace in Europe. Let us not forget it. Let us be proud of it, and above all, let us draw from this extraordinary success the strength and confidence we need to face the new challenges we face.

The climate crisis continues to alert us to the need to take care of our environment and our planet, for ourselves and for future generations. But other, more immediate preoccupations risk distracting us from this, such as everyday worries, fear of tomorrow or the noise of war.

While this may be difficult, let's not listen to those who say that exclusion, selfishness, discrimination and rejection of truth and facts are the answer to our worries. The solutions are within our grasp.

Yes, for over seventy-five years, the Council of Europe has been a powerful ally. It has transformed Europe into a continent of law, and created a unique form of co-operation between our countries.

As the oldest of the post-war organisations, and the only truly pan-European one, it has shaped Europe into a continent of peace, social and societal development, while ensuring fundamental respect for human dignity.

The action of your Assembly, together with the Committee of Ministers, makes the Council of Europe a vigilant, active, and committed organisation, calling us to order when necessary. However, it cannot act in our place. It needs its actions to be relayed, concretely implemented and, above all, respected by its member states.

This is what our Presidency has been working towards. For Luxembourg, the framework of the rule of law and democracy is fundamental, and must be constantly reinforced if it is not to be eroded. Fundamental values are not abstract parameters. They must be applied in real life. This is why living together, between nations and between individuals, is crucial. This in a spirit of tolerance, benevolence, and openness, especially towards the most vulnerable.

Finally, let's not forget culture, often neglected but so important. Through culture, we must remember who we are and what characterises us. It is precisely this humanism forged over the centuries that gives us this thirst for exchange and sharing.

Culture, through artistic creation, is a powerful means of transmitting, reminding and, if need be, defending our fundamental values.

Mister Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you will have gathered, I have never lost my enthusiasm for the Council of Europe.

This Presidency gives me the opportunity to express myself one last time as Head of State.

The disasters of the first half of the 20th century led us to create the international structures of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the European Union, in order to preserve international peace and security, promote social progress and defend human rights.

Let us maintain this confidence in ourselves, recognising our achievements. Let us integrate them fully into our collective consciousness. Together, we will succeed in overcoming obstacles, without denying or losing the values that are our strength.

Thank you very much.

*(Applause)*

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Your Royal Highness, your presence is encouraging and strengthens us.

Your excellent political analysis on international issues, disputes and challenges of our era are heard by your audience, ambassadors, colleagues and Secretary General with great respect.

You've pinpointed the word dignity and this is the core of the Council of Europe. Your enthusiasm is our enthusiasm.

Thank you for visiting us.

## **Debate under urgent procedure: The arrest of the Mayor of Istanbul and the state of democracy and human rights in Türkiye**

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Dear colleagues, I remind you that this morning we approved a change in the Agenda for tomorrow, Thursday 10 April.

The debate on "Legal aspects of the accession of the European Union (EU) to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)" will now take place at the end of tomorrow morning's sitting.

The next item of business this afternoon is a debate under urgent procedure on "The arrest of the Mayor of Istanbul and the state of democracy and human rights in Türkiye" (Doc. 16151) presented by Lord BLENCATHRA on behalf of the Monitoring Committee.

In order to finish by 5:30 p.m. I will interrupt the list of speakers at about 5:00 p.m. to allow time for the reply and the vote.

I now call Lord David BLENCATHRA, co-rapporteur.

Sorry, Lord Blencathra, there is a point of order. Yes, I am listening.

**Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA (Ukraine, ALDE):** Thank you very much.

I'm sorry. I would like you to, please, consider my vote in favour of the draft resolution, draft convention we voted on this morning "Respect for the rule of law and the fight against corruption within the Council of Europe".

Please, note that for the record.

Thank you.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Yuliia.

It is noted and the change you have asked will be done.

So I now call Lord David BLENCATHRA, co-rapporteur, you know that you have 7 minutes now and 3 minutes at the end to reply to the debate. You have the floor.

**Lord David BLENCATHRA (United Kingdom, ECPA, Co-Rapporteur):** Thank you, Mister President.

First of all, my colleague and joint rapporteur Mr Stefan SCHENNACH sends his profuse apologies. He has been elected leader of his party group and has had to return to Austria to participate in a debate in Parliament. He is in complete agreement with this report.

On Monday, the Assembly decided to hold an urgent debate on the detention of the mayor of Istanbul, Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, and the state of democracy and human rights in Türkiye, and we are honoured to be appointed as rapporteurs to table this draft resolution. Of course, the the Assembly's Bureau had immediately criticised the arrest on the day of Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU was arrested.

He was arrested on charges of "corruption" and "aiding terrorism", alongside 106 other people, including the district mayors of Şişli, and Beylikdüzü, and other local officials, politicians, journalists, and businessmen.

On 23 March, he was placed in pre-trial detention on corruption charges, alongside another 47 suspects and he and the other mayors were removed from office.

Mr İMAMOĞLU's arrest came just four days before he was due to be nominated by the main opposition party as the presidential candidate for the 2028 elections.

In addition, on 18 March, Istanbul University suddenly revoked Mr İMAMOĞLU's university degree, which under the Turkish constitution is a prerequisite for running for the country's presidency.

We consider that this Assembly should strongly condemn these decisions, which appear politically motivated and aim to intimidate the opposition, stifle pluralism, and limit freedom of political debate.

The arrest of Mr İMAMOĞLU triggered an unprecedented wave of largely peaceful mass protests of mainly young people across the country, particularly in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir.

People have been protesting despite a blanket ban on demonstrations imposed by the authorities. A protest in Istanbul on 29 March gathered around 2.2 million people, according to the organisers.

The events surrounding the protests, colleagues, are also very worrying. There are reports that the police used pepper spray, stun grenades, plastic bullets, and water cannons against the demonstrators, causing injuries.

According to the Ministry of Interior, almost 2 000 people were arrested and over 300 detained. Numerous protesters also reported that they had been beaten or otherwise ill-treated during protests or while in custody.

We are also dismayed by the fact that President Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN described legitimate protests as 'street terrorism'.

Moreover, we are very worried about reports of physical attacks against journalists while covering the protests and about their arrests and detention. At least 20 local journalists were physically assaulted by the police or protesters while covering the protests and at least 10 of them were detained.

Foreign media journalists were also targeted. On 27 March, a British journalist from the BBC, Mr Mark LOWEN, was expelled on grounds of "threat to public order", and, on 28 March, a Swedish journalist, Mr Joakim MEDIN, was arrested upon his arrival to Türkiye and is now detained on terrorism-related charges.

We also deplore the widespread restrictions of the right to receive and impart information about the protests. The authorities imposed administrative fines and/or temporary suspensions of up to 10 days on some independent television channels covering the protests.

In addition, for almost two days after Mr İMAMOĞLU's arrest, access to major social media and messaging applications—including X, Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp— was temporarily restricted in Istanbul, with reported bandwidth restrictions and numerous accounts in Türkiye blocked or made unavailable.

During these two days, the internet was almost unusable.

So we conclude, colleagues, that this Assembly should strongly condemn the arrest and detention of Mr İMAMOĞLU and the worrying events surrounding it, especially as Türkiye is a long-standing member of the Council of Europe and an important actor in ensuring security, stability, and peace in Europe.

Some of the concerns we note today, unfortunately, are not new. For the last few years, there has been a pattern of arrests and detentions on spurious charges, including terrorism-related offences, of anyone who might become a challenger to President ERDOĞAN and/or criticises the government. It seems that the definition of "aiding terrorism" extends to legitimate calls for democratic change.

This Assembly and our committee have already voiced concerns about the independence of the judiciary and prosecution services in Türkiye and also the politicised composition of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors. We have repeatedly asked Türkiye to implement the European Court of Human Rights' judgments in the cases of Osman KAVALA and others, who are detained on politically motivated charges.

In paragraph 11 of the draft resolution, we list the requirements we ask of the Turkish government and we propose that the Assembly insists that Türkiye upholds and promotes the democratic values of The Council of Europe, the rule of law and human rights, and implements all the recommendations of the Assembly and the Venice Commission.

Moreover, the Assembly should urge the authorities of Türkiye to release Mr İMAMOĞLU immediately and drop all unfounded charges against him and others involved in the same investigation. The authorities should also take all necessary measures to repeal the decision of the Istanbul University to revoke Mr İMAMOĞLU's university degree. Colleagues, the revocations was obviously a political ploy to prevent him from being a candidate.

Other recommendations contained in the draft resolution refer to the situation of protesters and restrictions to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. As a state party to the European Convention on Human Rights, Türkiye should respect these rights, which are fundamental to the conduct of public debate in a well-functioning democracy.

Thus we submit, the authorities should, in particular, avoid the use of disproportionate force against protesters, release all those who have been detained on unfounded charges, ensure the effective investigation into cases of violence and other human rights violations by law enforcement bodies, and respect the rights of journalists and media workers, and remove all restrictions on the right to receive or impart information on the protests.

We say that this Assembly should also call on all the authorities to ensure that the right to a fair trial by an independent and impartial court is respected in the case of Mr İMAMOĞLU and all the other persons prosecuted in this investigation.

Political persecution should cease, and the reform of the judicial system should be carried out without delay.

We call on the authorities to implement all Venice Commission's and Assembly's recommendations on reforming the electoral framework which would ensure genuine free and fair elections.

And finally, colleagues, since we live in unprecedented times, we suggest something this Assembly, which has not done this before, should call on all Council of Europe member states to condemn the arrest and detention of Mr İMAMOĞLU and the subsequent reprisals against demonstrations.

I commend our report to the committee.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Lord Blencathra.

In the debate, I call first speakers on behalf of political groups and from the European People's Party (EPP), Ms Maria SYRENGELA.

**Ms Maria SYRENGELA (Greece, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you very much, Mister President.

Dear colleagues,

What we are witnessing in Türkiye is a profound challenge to democratic principles. Journalists silenced, judges dismissed, opposition leaders jailed, civil society crushed. Every day the rule of law is being dismantled brick by brick. This is not about isolated abuse. It is systemic, it is strategic, and it raises serious concerns.

The arrest of Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, just days after becoming the presidential candidate of the democratic opposition, is not justice. It appears to be a calculated act of political sabotage. A challenger removed not by the will of voters, but by a courtroom bent to the will of power. His disqualification through the revocation of an academic degree is not legal and raises ethical questions. The mass ban on demonstrations and the arrest of journalists, students, and peaceful citizens are an assault on the very essence of our freedoms.

President ERDOĞAN calls peaceful protests "street terrorism". But let me ask, since when is democracy a threat? Since when is hope a crime? Two million people marched, not just for İMAMOĞLU, but for a Türkiye that is free, pluralistic and just. They believe in Europe. The question is, do we believe in them?

Dear President,

Dear colleagues,

We know that the Council of Europe is not a substitute for national governments. We do not command armies, nor do we enforce laws at the barrel of a gun. But we are something else, something still powerful. We are the largest coalition of the willing on this continent, committed to human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Today, we stand in solidarity with the people of Türkiye. We must make sure they know that we see them, we hear them, and we stand with them. In the name of these people, we must ensure that no European government or citizen is unaware of the serious human rights concerns arising from Ankara's actions.

We need to stand up and do everything in our power to encourage a Türkiye that embraces democratic principles, respects the voices of its people. That is why our group stands firmly behind this report under urgent procedure, because silence is not neutrality. Silence is complicity.

Thank you.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** On behalf of the European Conservatives, Patriots & Affiliates, Mr Marco SCURRIA.

**Mr Marco SCURRIA (Italy, ECPA, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you, President.

I want to tell my Turkish friends about an Italian proverb, which says that you cannot have one foot in two shoes. This is the time of choices, of choosing where to position Türkiye. Whether it wants to be the leader of the Arab and Islamic world, even of that extreme world, which Turkish President ERDOĞAN seems to want to woo, as when he says at the end of Ramadan, "may Allah destroy Zionist Israel," or choose, while maintaining, of course, its own identity, its own tradition, its own religion, or will it choose the European way, which means definitely choosing democracy, the rule of law and the secular state.

Because you see, in all our countries it may happen that a mayor is arrested, it may happen that a journalist is arrested, actually very rarely, but it always happens on the true basis of a principle of the rule of law. The difficult thing about democracy is to know that one's ideas do not have absolute value, that they are not right par excellence, that they may not be accepted by others, and that a different point of view is not lese-majesté, it is not the transgression of a religious precept, it is simply another idea.

The beauty of democracy is that these ideas are confronted and sometimes some win and sometimes others. And when they lose yours, you don't cry conspiracy, or you don't, before elections, do strange manoeuvres, or you don't put your rivals in trouble, perhaps with the complicity of institutions of the state that should be and always remain third parties.

This is also why negotiations with the European Union have not made progress for so long, because democracy is a serious thing, and it allows us to be free as people and as a society.

Take it from me, the foot in two shoes makes life uncomfortable. Better to walk with seriousness and conviction by putting the right foot in the right shoe.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** On behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO.

**Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO (Monaco, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you, Mister President.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take the floor today with gravity, because the events we are witnessing in Türkiye, and more particularly in Istanbul, are a wake-up call for all those who believe in democracy, the rule of law and freedom of expression.

Whatever our political affiliation, what we are seeing unfold before our eyes is unacceptable.

The democratically-elected mayor of Istanbul, Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, is now in prison. His lawyer was also arrested and then released. Not only are we imprisoning an elected official, depriving him of his university diplomas and trying to prevent him from expressing his defense, but worse still, we are denying him the right to stand freely before the electorate. This is authoritarianism at its worst.

I'd like to remind you what a democracy fundamentally is. It is not a system in which the winner of an election crushes the others. It is not a system where justice is used to muzzle opponents. A democracy worthy of the name guarantees pluralism, freedom of opinion, freedom to run for office, the independence of institutions and, above all, respect for human rights. These are sacred principles on which the entire edifice of the Council of Europe rests, and they are the focus of all our work.

But beyond this political arrest, which is causing a stir among the population, there are many other arrests, including journalists, professors and leaders of NGOs working to protect LGBTI rights.

All accused of terrorism. It's all very sobering.

Unfortunately, when the opposition is criminalised, when the media is muzzled, when journalists are hounded, when demonstrators are repressed in the streets, it's more than just a step backwards for democracy.

Türkiye is a member of the Council of Europe. As such, it has commitments. Obligations. It's not an option, it's a contract. And today, this contract has been betrayed.

It is committed to respecting the European Convention on Human Rights. Today, it is violating the most elementary principles.

We cannot pretend that nothing has happened.

What is at stake in Istanbul is a fight for the democratic survival of a country that has always had the ambition of joining the European Community. It is also a battle to ensure that the people have a choice and make their own choice, whatever that choice may be, in complete freedom of opinion.

And it is also a test for us, members of this Assembly. Do we still have the courage to defend our democratic values in the face of abuses, even when they come from close partners?

Because, yes, democracy implies rights, freedoms, a respected opposition, free press, independent justice and free elections.

Thank you for your support.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** On behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left, Mr George LOUCAIDES.

**Mr George LOUCAIDES (Cyprus, UEL, Spokesperson for the group):** President,

Dear colleagues,

The recent arrest of the Mayor of Istanbul, Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, alongside many others, is not an isolated development. It is the latest step in the long and well-documented pattern of democratic erosion in Türkiye.

Mr İMAMOĞLU, a democratically elected leader with broad popular support is now being targeted through a judiciary that has repeatedly been criticised for its lack of independence.

Let us remember that this is not the first time an elected official has faced such treatment. Dozens of opposition mayors, particularly from and the HDP and the DEM Party, have been dismissed and replaced by government-appointed trustees since 2019.

Furthermore, since the last elections in March 2024 alone, 13 elected mayors have been removed from office from CHP and the DEM Party from the opposition.

Former HDP/HDP co-leaders Selahattin DEMİRTAŞ and Osman KAVALA remain in prison despite rulings of the European Court of Human Rights demanding their immediate and unconditional release.

We have repeatedly warned of this decline in Resolution 2121 of 2016, in which this Assembly reintroduced the monitoring procedure for Türkiye. That was the first time in the history of this organisation, citing serious concerns over separation of powers and respect for fundamental rights.

In Resolution 2319 of 2020, we called again for the immediate release of Osman KAVALA and in Resolution 2459 of 2022, we made it explicit: Türkiye's failure to comply with the Court's rulings could and should lead to the triggering of the complementary joint procedure.

Yet here we are in 2025, and not only have those warnings been ignored by Turkish authorities, but the situation has continued to deteriorate.

Media pluralism has all but vanished. Peaceful protests are met with repression. The judiciary is under clear political control. And most recently, the massive protests following İMAMOĞLU's arrest have been met with brutal police force.

Dear colleagues, we must ask ourselves what the cost is of continued inaction? If we do not respond meaningfully to this deep and ongoing democratic backsliding, we risk undermining the credibility of the Council of Europe and the principles we are meant to defend.

The aim should be to ensure that Turkish authorities are held accountable and reminded of their obligations under the Convention. If we want to safeguard the credibility of this organisation, then we must initiate the complementary joint procedure, not as punishment, but as a necessary step toward restoring the rule of law and democratic standards in a member state of the Council of Europe.

Thank you.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** On behalf of the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group, the leader of the group, Mr Frank SCHWABE.

**Mr Frank SCHWABE (Germany, SOC, Spokesperson for the group):** Dear Mister President and dear colleagues,

The situation of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Türkiye has been deteriorating for many years. We have numerous judgments, verdicts of the court, and Türkiye did not and does not implement them, in the case of KAVALA and DEMİRTAS and a lot of others.

There was some hope in the last months, I would say, and we try to recognise this hope. Our rapporteurs could visit Mr KAVALA, Mr DEMİRTAS as well. There is this kind of reconciliation process in the Kurdish question, for sure. But now we have a fundamentally new situation. I don't see any hope today.

I was the Chair of the Election Observation Mission in the last election, presidential and parliamentary elections, and for sure we saw a situation in which there was no preparation for fair elections. But there was still the hope and the idea in Türkiye that through elections, you could change something in the country. This is a new situation, that Mr ERDOĞAN and others destroy this hope in the country.

I welcome that we are not just concerned about the situation, we are very clear. We ask for the release the Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İMAMOĞLU. I would like to thank the co-rapporteurs, Lord BENCASTRA and Stefan HARNA for this very clear message. The Council of Europe, this Council of Europe must send a clear message. Europe must send a clear message. So I welcome that the European Union (EU) has cancelled visits in the next weeks in Türkiye. Paris decided to give honorary citizenship to Ekrem İMAMOĞLU.

Our Secretary General announced that he will go to Türkiye and maybe to Ankara in the next weeks. I expect, we expect, that he should not go to Ankara or if he goes, he should send our clear message that we ask for the release of Ekrem İMAMOĞLU. Not just for his release. We ask for the release of those young people who are imprisoned now, just for demonstrating. We ask to change the decision on the reconciliation of the diploma of Ekram İMAMOĞLU.

This is the Council of Europe. This is an organisation which cares for human rights and the rule of law. We see an example in a written declaration on 24 September 1998. Maybe I should quote it quickly: "We, the undersigned, condemn this decision and this treatment of the elected mayor of a city with a population of 10 million". Some members of all groups signed it. One of them was Emanuelis ZINGERIS. And do you know who the mayor of Istanbul at the time was? It was Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN. So we asked for this, and now we ask for the release of a mayor who was two times, in fact three times elected. He was leading in the polls. This is not a crime. So we have to make a clear message: release Ekrem İMAMOĞLU.

Thank you very much.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Ms Azadeh ROJHAN is next.

**Ms Azadeh ROJHAN (Sweden, SOC):** Thank you, Mister President.

Dear colleagues, as general rapporteur on political prisoners, I would like to take this moment not to repeat the facts about the situation in Türkiye, which has already been addressed, but to offer a broader reflection on what is at stake when we speak of political prisoners such as Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU in a Council of Europe member state such as Türkiye.

This is not only about one individual case. It is about a dangerous erosion of the fundamental distinction between legitimate dissent and criminal conduct. It is about how the machinery of justice can be turned into a tool of repression, where expressing a political opinion, representing an opposition party, or simply winning an election can become grounds for imprisonment.

When we, as a parliamentary assembly, speak of political prisoners, we do not do so lightly. The definition is clear. These are individuals deprived of liberty not because they have broken the law in any just sense, but because they have challenged power peacefully, democratically, and lawfully.

Dear colleagues, when elected officials such as Mr İMAMOĞLU are removed, when peaceful protests lead to mass arrest, and when opposition voices are silenced under vague and shifting accusations, these are not isolated incidents. Taken together, they reveal a pattern, a pattern of the systematic behaviour of those who fear the ballot box more than they fear betraying democratic principles.

So we, as this Assembly, must ask ourselves, are we using all tools at our disposal? And are we demonstrating our strong political will to challenge these systematic behaviours that are going on around Europe?

Because political imprisonment anywhere within our membership undermines the credibility of our shared values everywhere. If we fail to respond, we send a message that our principles are negotiable.

We must therefore remain committed to sustained long term scrutiny and to supporting those who have no voice left within their own institutions.

We need to be the voice of Mr İMAMOĞLU and other political prisoners, such as we once were for Mr Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, such as my dear friend Mr Frank SCHWABE mentioned.

Let us remember, political imprisonment is not only an abuse of the individual, it is a signal of democratic breakdown. And it is our duty to respond before silence becomes complicity.

Thank you.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** I don't know if Frank likes to be renamed as Peter, like Mr Peter OMTZIGT, but it's okay. I think that he accepted it with pleasure.

So, Mr Ioannis OIKONOMOU is next.

**Mr Ioannis OIKONOMOU (Greece, EPP/CD)\*:** Thank you, Mister Chairman. I will speak in Greek.

In recent years, we have seen rising and constant concerns about human rights and democracy in Türkiye. This time round the Mayor of Istanbul was deprived of his powers on the basis of corruption charges, so we could spend hours debating the reasons for these charges, but I would like to talk about facts.

The fact that an elected official is no longer able to run for office is something which should be worrying all of us. Similarly, his incarceration, throwing a well-known politician into prison, the fact that his university diploma was revoked, which meant that he was no longer entitled to run for office, these are happenings that are simply not compatible with Europe.

But what's been happening in Türkiye is not merely a one-off, nor is it unusual. This is why it is important that we must respond immediately.

However, I don't want to be pessimistic. I don't think our actions will bring about any consequences in all the cases, including that of the Mayor of Istanbul, but the same applies to issues such as democracy and compliance with international law.

Türkiye is obstinate. It continues to stick to its chosen route. Who could have imagined what happened with Cyprus? Who could have imagined the threat of war against Greece if Greece were to exercise its sovereignty over the Aegean? Or recent events with Israel. And Türkiye is tolerant, if not directly supportive of terrorist organisations such as Hamas.

Ladies and gentlemen, all this demonstrates that our behaviour as Europeans towards Türkiye should not be undermined by naïvety.

The İMAMOĞLU case is a clear reminder that as long as Türkiye refuses to budge, we should take a fresh look at its position in Europe, and we should keep Europe firmly close to it.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

The next speaker is Mr Mehmet AKALIN.

You have the floor.

**Mr Mehmet AKALIN (Türkiye, ALDE):** Thank you, Mister Chair.

Dear colleagues, first of all, it saddens me greatly that Türkiye's name is being brought up in an undemocratic context.

In this context, I would like to comment on the issues surrounding the arrest of Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU and many other political figures and the protesters.

What makes the arrest of Mr İMAMOĞLU dubious is that the allegations and the arrests were made just a couple of days before his formal announcement of candidacy in the next presidential elections.

This resulted in the majority of people in Türkiye and the world being unconvinced that the allegations against him would be dealt within a fair trial.

All these actions are politically motivated to seek the elimination of rivals and aimed at silencing any political opposition.

I would also like to comment on the main cause of these situations.

As we all know, democracy is protected by the separation of legislative, executive, and judiciary powers. However, with 2017 referendum in Türkiye, the constitution was changed. Following the 2018 elections, the new presidential system took over the existing parliamentary system, allowing the newly elected president to become not just the head of government, but the head of whole state with exclusive powers.

Under this new system, all legislations began to be made in the presidential palace, leaving the parliament ineffective and powerless.

Executive governing bodies have also been assigned to operate under the power of president as all ministers, governors, diplomats, rectors, and others who are appointed solely by their loyalty to the party and the president, rather than on their merits and experiences.

All the heads and the boards of the judicial system are also appointed directly or indirectly by the president, turning the state-run system into a presidential fan club operated by one voice only.

Any rivalry, persons or bodies attempting to challenge this authority and the system are quickly eliminated using the presidential powers. So the system is the cause and the civil unrest happening in Türkiye at present is the result.

The solution is to change this authoritarian presidential system back to the democratic parliamentary system.

Should the system continue as it is currently, Türkiye will move from one autocratic regime to another.

As a nation that has built its republic on the pillars of democracy over 100 years, I firmly believe that liberty and democracy will prevail over autocracy in Türkiye.

Thank you.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

And the next speaker is Ms Petra BAYR. You have the floor.

**Ms Petra BAYR (Austria, SOC):** Thank you very much, Mister Chairman.

I must confess. When I look at Türkiye at the moment, I am above all desperate, really desperate, because it is clear that the judiciary is being misused for political purposes in order to clear away politically undesirable opponents.

I am desperate because the results of democratic elections are being trampled on again and again, because mayors are being replaced by government commissioners.

I am desperate, because for years, for many years, Türkiye has simply not respected our common rules of the game here. Because Türkiye has simply not been implementing important rulings of the European Court of Human Rights for years, simply ignoring them and thus jeopardising the human rights protection of all Turks.

I am desperate and believe that we really should consider a complementary joint procedure more and more, because I can't think of many other means of exerting pressure. I am desperate, because I see that the President of Türkiye is simply unlawfully withdrawing from international treaties that have human rights at their core, which is not part of presidential democracy, for example the Istanbul Convention.

I am desperate, because I see Türkiye slipping more and more towards autocratic structures.

I am particularly distressed when I see that young people who take to the streets to protest against all of this, peacefully and fairly, using democratic means, are simply cleared away and arrested. I am particularly incensed when I hear that sexual violence is also used against female demonstrators in the course of the arrests.

I feel despair when I see that the economic situation in Türkiye is becoming increasingly unbearable for many Turks. That even the inflation rates that are published, where we know the real ones are much higher, are only going down very, very slowly and people no longer know how they are actually supposed to make a living.

What really fills me with concern is that there is, obviously, political cover for all of this from the other side of the pond, from the USA, from the Trump system. I find that really very frightening.

I want to express my solidarity with all those who are taking to the streets for Ekrem İMAMOĞLU and others who are fighting for peace, for democracy, for the rule of law in Türkiye. And I believe that the signals we send out to Türkiye really need to be a lot more robust than they obviously are at the moment, because something has to change.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

And the next speaker is Mr Georgios STAMATIS.

You have the floor.

You need to put your card in to speak.

**Mr Georgios STAMATIS (Greece, EPP/CD)\*:** Thank you, Mister President, allow me to speak in Greek.

Dear colleagues,

Türkiye is one of the longest-standing members of the Council of Europe since 1949. In other words, over the last 75 years, Türkiye should have understood clearly its role within this Assembly.

Today, within the Assembly, in its committees, we have Turkish colleagues who fight to defend human rights – human rights for everybody. So I think we are obliged to support them.

We hear declarations, comments, but we don't really know the real reason, the real cause, for this is. We know perfectly well that Türkiye has occupied after invading a state which is also a member state of the Council of Europe. I am talking about Cyprus. We all know perfectly well that Türkiye has a casus belli against another member state of the Council of Europe and the European Union, Greece. Türkiye is a country which co-operates with the Russians against Ukraine.

If we look at a map of the world, we can see countries where Türkiye has sent troops. Moreover, Türkiye is also a country which imprisons its opponents. The problem is that because of its leadership, because of ERDOĞAN, Türkiye has chosen to take a road which we in this Chamber do not share. Türkiye has now become something quite different. It's not enough simply not to send a representative. We need to decide where we're going; where we want to go. The democratic face of Türkiye is now in the street. We ratified the Istanbul Convention, a treaty which is extremely important for women, but the country where it was signed is not party to that Convention.

So we talk about human rights, but the fact is in Türkiye, if somebody disagrees with President ERDOĞAN, they might end up in prison.

So we support young people. We support those out demonstrating for democracy. We support those who believe in what we believe in. And I'm delighted that we have Turkish colleagues here in this Assembly who are ardent defenders of human rights. So we then have to choose our way forward on the question of Türkiye.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

The next speaker will be Ms Seda GÖREN BÖLÜK.

You have the floor.

**Ms Seda GÖREN BÖLÜK (Türkiye, NR):** Thank you, Mister Chairman.

Rule of law, democracy, justice, equality before the law, I've lost count of the number of times we've mentioned all these concepts in this House.

However, when it comes to Türkiye, I regret to see that some of our colleagues think that the application of these concepts should vary from one country to another.

An independent and impartial judiciary is one of the most important elements of a democratic constitutional state.

I find it completely contrary to the founding principles of the Council that Türkiye is being criticised so harshly for an investigation which was opened following denunciations made by its citizens and which has still not been finalised.

This morning we discussed a report on the importance of fighting corruption. Why is the fight against corruption considered normal in France and other member countries, but when it comes to Türkiye, there's a prejudice that it's a political fight?

We must remember that no one is above the law. Public officials are equal and accountable before the law. Allegations of corruption by elected officials abusing their powers is one of the most important issues to be investigated for the future of every country. As stated in our Assembly's 2013 Resolution 1943, "corruption jeopardises the proper functioning of public institutions and diverts public action from its objective, which is to serve the general interest".

The mayor in question is the mayor of my constituency, Istanbul. If my constituents, whose votes got me elected and brought me here, are no longer receiving the services they were supposed to because of corruption, those responsible must be held to account before the law.

Dear colleagues,

Elections in Türkiye are held every five years. There are no rules or regulations requiring candidates to be nominated two or three years before the elections. This is why the statement that he is the subject of this investigation because he will be a presidential candidate is not correct. However, I would like to stress that the notifications that led to the opening of this investigation did not come from members of the ruling party. The denunciations were forwarded to the prosecutor's office by members of the mayor's own party.

I invite each of my colleagues to examine their political conscience by answering the following questions for themselves.

Would you want a politician in your country to pursue his political career with a university degree that was awarded to him by irregular means, trampling on the rights of millions of students?

Would you accept that a mayor in your country, instead of serving a city with 16 million inhabitants, used an alleged sum of 14 million euros for his own interests?

Would you accept that these allegations were not brought to justice?

It's not hard to guess the answers.

I would like to express once again that we will not accept any outside interference in these judicial proceedings, which are being conducted by the independent Turkish judiciary, on the basis of the fight against corruption and without any political motives.

Thank you for your attention.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

The next speaker is Mr Christophe LACROIX.

You have the floor.

**Mr Christophe LACROIX (Belgium, SOC):** Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The arrest of the Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, goes beyond the scope of an internal affair and even raises an essential question: how can a member state of the Council of Europe, whose primary mission is to defend human rights and democracy, act in this way?

Elected democratically, Ekrem İMAMOĞLU embodies alternation and the hope of unity in today's deeply divided Türkiye. His arrest has no clear basis. It is a political instrumentalisation of the justice system and is aimed at removing a feared opponent, while also depriving him of his university degree, a condition of eligibility for the presidential elections.

For years – for years! – President ERDOĞAN has been concentrating power and weakening checks and balances. This authoritarian drift is totally incompatible with Türkiye's – your country's, dear predecessor's – commitments within the Council of Europe. Despite this, Turkish civil society is not giving up. Hundreds of thousands of courageous citizens are peacefully demonstrating, and their only response is repression, with almost 1 900 arrests.

We can no longer look the other way. Türkiye is a partner, yes, but one that is committed and has been committed since 1949 to respecting the principles of democracy and the rule of law. The time has come to remind it of this firmly.

This is not an arbitrary attitude on our part, Madam. Stop playing the victim. It's not interference to remind you that the resolutions we have voted for, and the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, are damning you, damning you because you do not respect the rule of law.

I salute here the courage of the CHP, and I address myself to your fellow citizens of Turkish origin: your fight for democracy is also ours. To Mr ERDOĞAN: you can arrest a man, but you can't arrest an idea.

History is on the side of the people, not of regimes that confuse power with property.

Free, free Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, honour your commitments and, above all, above all, I beg you, let Turkish citizens freely decide their future.

Thank you very much.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

The next speaker is Ms Sofia AMLOH.

You have the floor.

**Ms Sofia AMLOH (Sweden, SOC):** Thank you, dear President.

The escalating developments in Türkiye are both alarming and very dangerous.

The Turkish regime brutality against peaceful protests and the mass arrests and attacks on journalists, activists, and political opportunists shows that President Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN will not hesitate to use any means to crush all opposition.

On 19 March, over 100 people, including Istanbul Mayor Ekrim İMAMOĞLU, were detained on charge of alleged corruption and terrorism in a crackdown that is considered political motivated.

The mayor of Istanbul and his party have strong popular support, and he is ERDOĞAN's biggest opponent.

It has now been over two weeks since Swedish journalist Mr Joakim MEDIN was imprisoned in Türkiye. He was there to report the last developments in the country and the large protest against the arrest of Istanbul mayor.

Freedom of the press is a cornerstone of every democracy. Silencing journalists is an attack on free speech and on citizens' rights to independent reporting.

The arrest of Mr Joakim MEDIN is one example of worrying development in Türkiye.

The Turkish authorities need to account for what reason Mr Joakim MEDIN is accused of. If the Turkish authorities cannot do so, Mr Joakim MEDIN must be released.

I would like to quote Mr Joakim MEDIN.

"Journalism is not a crime, not in any country. The outside world cannot turn a blind eye to what is happening in Türkiye. But give the democratic forces our support and the promise that we will all defend democracy every day in true international solidarity. Now is the time to step forward, not backward. No one is free until everyone is free."

Thank you.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

The next speaker is Ms Sevim DAĞDELEN. You have the floor.

So Ms DAĞDELEN is not present.

Okay, thank you very much.

Then we go to Mr Armağan CANDAN.

You have the floor, please.

**Mr Armağan CANDAN (Cyprus\* [Resolution 1376 (2004)]):** Dear colleagues, Türkiye is not an oil rich Arab or Gulf country. Türkiye's richness comes from its founding principles and the dedication to secular democracy, rule of law, human rights and freedom of speech. Türkiye has been a breach between East and West for centuries, as its geography dictates. Both Europe and the Turkish people need a democratic Türkiye.

History has proved on many occasions that as Türkiye gets more democratic and as the rule of law prevails, its economy grows and the living standards of people in Türkiye improve. We have supported the steps on the way towards democratisation and expansion of freedoms that were taken by the Turkish government. It is those steps that paved the way towards fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria and the launch of accession talks with the European Union (EU).

Allow me to remind you that a Turkish Member of Parliament (MP), Mr ÇAVUŞOĞLU, served as the President of this Assembly for two years during those good days. Unfortunately, in recent years, we have been witnessing setbacks regarding the state of democracy and rule of law in Türkiye. Treatment of the opposition leaders and figures has been unjustifiably biased and sceptical. I want to believe that the rule of law and justice in Türkiye will prevail as soon as possible. I hope that the Turkish government will change its mind and make some efforts to eliminate the doubts and suspicions that the charges brought against Mr İMAMOĞLU are politically motivated.

Nobody, of course, is above the law and everybody should be treated as such. However, when we look at the process as a whole regarding Mr İMAMOĞLU, it leaves the impression that the motive behind this arrest is more political than judicial. This sentiment led millions of people to take to the streets in order to support Mr İMAMOĞLU for a case for justice.

Dear colleagues, we stood by Mr ERDOĞAN when there was a military coup attempt against him. Now it is our duty to stand by the opposition to defend democracy. In this sense, the adoption of this resolution at this very moment is crucial in order to show that we stand on the right side of history.

Thank you.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

The next speaker is Mr Markus WIECHEL.

You have the floor.

**Mr Markus WIECHEL (Sweden, ECPA):** Mister President,

I'm glad that our Assembly decided to hold this special debate on the recent worrying developments in Türkiye.

They involve the arrest of Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU and many of his followers as well as independent journalists, and on the implications that these arrests may have for Turkish democracy.

To date the accusations by the judiciary against the popular mayor of Istanbul have been utterly vague, talking about alleged corruption and contacts with Kurdish politicians.

But the fact that the arrests and current imprisonments took place only hours before the official deadline would expire for registering as a candidate in the presidential election in 2028 gives us a clear idea of what is really going on.

This idea grew even stronger the next day, when Mr İMAMOĞLU's academic diploma was revoked from the Istanbul University, presumably on the instructions by the government, which also disqualified him from running in the upcoming presidential election.

What is also worrying is the ongoing crackdown on free independent media. And I have a fresh example of such.

A Swedish journalist who recently visited Türkiye, was detained upon arrival in Istanbul, clearly because of his political views.

Now, dear colleagues, you need to understand me correctly. In fact, this person does not align at all with the ideas that I have. The opinions of this journalist do not align at all with mine.

He could be described as the complete opposite of me if you look at our positions within the political spectrum.

Nonetheless, I do defend his right to state his opinions and the right of any journalist to do his or her important work without interference.

It is a fundamental principle in a democracy.

To be clear, dear colleagues, the undemocratic and deeply worrying tendencies in Turkish politics are nothing new.

We have for a long time seen massive oppression against people in opposition to the current regime.

Not least, the Kurdish population are used to mistreatment sanctioned by the Turkish authorities.

Understandably, this has led to massive demonstrations over the past few weeks attended by millions, night after night, in Istanbul and in other cities.

In conclusion, we owe it to the Turkish people to give them hope and support for a full restoration of Turkish democracy, respect of human rights and the rule of law.

Thank you, Mister President.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

Now the next speaker is Ms Ingjerd Schie SCHOU.

You have the floor.

**Ms Ingrid Schie SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD):** Dear President,

Dear colleagues,

The backsliding of democracy has become a most pressing issue in this Assembly. This week we are debating several concrete examples of this. Türkiye is one country where the backsliding is happening before our eyes.

The arrest of the Mayor of Istanbul, Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, is the most recent example. It is important that we as an Assembly condemn this in the strongest terms. Making sure that your opposing candidate cannot stand for election is not worthy of a President of a democratic country. It makes me question the state of democracy in Türkiye.

Turkish people took to the streets after Mayor İMAMOĞLU was arrested. According to the organisers, more than two million. This is a strong signal that Turkish citizens want to exercise their democratic rights. The way they were met by the Turkish authorities was highly questionable and another sign of the backsliding of democracy in the country.

In a true democracy, freedom of assembly and freedom of speech are guaranteed. Meeting peaceful demonstrators with pepper spray, water cannons, and plastic bullets is not worthy of a democracy. The same goes for mass arrests. Beating and kicking demonstrators lying on the ground is simply unacceptable.

President,

This is why this draft resolution is so important. We must raise our voices against this injustice. We must show our Turkish friends that we care. We want Türkiye in our community of democratic states. A community based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Dear colleagues from Türkiye,

In this resolution, we call for the release of Mr İMAMOĞLU and the many protesters and journalists.

We call for the decision to revoke Mr İMAMOĞLU's university degree to be repealed.

We call for the respect for freedom of expression and assembly.

And we call for an end of repression of opposition politicians, civil society, and dissenting voices in the media.

I call on you to contribute to the full implementation of our resolution.

In closing, I also reiterate our call for the release of Mr Osman KAVALA.

Thank you, Mister President.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

And now the next speaker is Ms Aysu BANKOĞLU.

You have the floor.

**Ms Aysu BANKOĞLU (Türkiye, SOC):** Thank you, Mister President.

The issues are a matter of the country. A matter of justice, democracy, freedom, rights and the rule of law.

The issue of the future of the country. The man who addressed the nation with this statement is currently under arrest. That man is the duly elected Mayor of Istanbul, chosen by the people of this city of 16 million. That man is also a presidential candidate of our party. That man is Ekrem İMAMOĞLU. He earned that mandate by defeating the ruling party not once, but three times in local elections.

The government knows it is losing the trust of the people. It knows it will lose the next presidential election. And that is precisely why it imprisons its strongest political rival.

Day by day, this government slides deeper into authoritarianism. Not only political figures, but also journalists, artists and students are being arrested simply for exercising their basic rights. What we are witnessing is now a civilian coup. ERDOĞAN's regime is criminalising its opponents, jailing them and attempting to rule through fear.

But the people are not afraid. In the face of injustice, millions of people across the country have taken to the streets in peaceful protests, exercising their constitutional right to demonstrate. Yet their peaceful demonstrations have been met with brutal police violence, tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets. Over 2 000 citizens were detained with disproportionate force. Three hundred and one, mostly young people, remain in prison.

The issue is not only about Ekrem İMAMOĞLU. It is about reclaiming our democracy. It is about protecting our future. The arbitrary arrest, political persecution and the attacks on fundamental freedoms have no place in any country that dares to call itself a democracy.

History will not honour those who ignored the will of the people. It will remember those who stood up and resisted for freedom. Today, the nation is united. We are united in conscience. We are united in justice. We are united in the pursuit of a shared destiny, a common future. The walls of fear are falling. The youth are rising. The women are leading. The people of this country will not be silenced. No matter how they imprison our elected leaders or us. The people have shown they will overcome every threat and every conspiracy. Because the people are the true owners of this republic. Because the people are great and the people are greater than any government and will not back down. Not now and not ever.

Thank you.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

Now the next speaker is Ms Meryem GÖKA.

You have the floor.

**Ms Meryem GÖKA (Türkiye, NR):** Thank you so much.

Dear President and colleagues,

Türkiye is a sovereign, democratic nation governed by the rule of law, and no individual is above the law.

The ongoing judicial proceedings concerning the mayor of Istanbul are part of an evidence-based investigation led by independent judicial authorities.

Unfortunately, recent statements reflected or reflect a biased and premature judgment, undermining the principle of non-interference and attempting to exert political pressure on Türkiye's judiciary.

Making biased and one-sided assessments about ongoing legal proceedings is incompatible with universal legal principles.

Let me be clear. This is a corruption and bribery investigation initiated by members of the opposition itself who came forward with evidence and testimony. What we are witnessing is a serious legal process that has not yet been concluded and therefore is not a political operation.

For 23 years, the AK Party has shown its commitment to democracy by competing with the opposition only at the ballot box.

Have any of you ever witnessed a case in Europe where someone declares themselves a presidential candidate three years ahead of a scheduled election? The legal process was not intended to prevent Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU's nomination. On the contrary, it was the CHP leadership that hastily launched the nomination process to instrumentalise the legal proceedings for political purposes.

But once again, we face double standards. When politicians in Europe face legal action, as recently seen in France with Ms Marine LE PEN, do we hear urgent statements? Do European institutions question the legitimacy of those judicial systems? When such processes take place within European borders, they are simply regarded as normal functions of democracy and the rule of law.

But when Türkiye enforces the same legal principles, it's quickly labelled as authoritarian. I'm frankly sick and tired of this frustrating, deep-rooted bias and mind-boggling hypocrisy.

To repeat it, we are concerned about Türkiye rhetoric, the habit of judging our country through wishful thinking and not reality, and the anti-ERDOĞAN obsession in some foreign media and politicians.

But let us be clear. Türkiye is no longer the Türkiye of the past. You may not point fingers at Türkiye and attempt to bring it into line. We certainly do not need lectures on democracy. Türkiye does not need selective lectures from those who remain silent in the face of grave human rights violations in Gaza, yet rush to politicise legitimate judicial processes within our borders.

If this Assembly seeks to protect the integrity of democratic values, it must do so consistently, not conditionally.

Today, Türkiye embraces a historic mission, assuming global responsibility as a stabilising actor in the region and proactive advocate for international justice.

Thank you.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

And now the last speaker will be Ms Derya TÜRK-NACHBAUR. You have the floor.

**Ms Derya TÜRK-NACHBAUR (Germany, SOC):** Thank you very much, Mister President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Democracy means voting - not imprisonment. A political opponent belongs on a ballot paper - not behind bars.

Anyone who fears political competition at the ballot box has long since lost touch with their own people.

The imprisonment of Ekrem İmamoğlu and the numerous other mayors and journalists from the opposition parties is a direct attack on the fundamental democratic values to which Turkey has committed itself not only through its membership of the Council of Europe, but also through its own constitution.

It is another step in a systematic attempt to silence the political opposition and curtail the rights of citizens and suppress an active civil society.

But this case is not just a political confrontation with a competitor that is feared - and this fear can also be heard here in the speeches of the AKP party - it is a reflection of the overall situation of an entire generation.

A generation that is being cheated of its freedom of development, its economic independence, its desire for research, its freedom of expression, its present, but above all its future.

The number of people in prison gives an indication of the dramatic situation in Turkey: Germany has a similarly large population to Turkey; while there are around 40 000 people in prison in Germany, there are around 400 000 in Turkey. This number has almost doubled in the last three to four years. And yet, perhaps precisely because of this, people are taking to the streets with more determination than ever. I bow to the courage of these women and men.

I was in Ankara at the weekend and spoke to many of them. They are not afraid of being arrested per se - they know that they have to lead the fight out of the darkness on their own. They want us here not to look the other way when their rights are trampled underfoot.

And that is why a clear message must go out from this House today: We see you. We hear you. And you are not alone. We want to be your loudspeakers. Your call for freedom echoes far beyond the prison cells of Silivris, the streets of Istanbul, Ankara or Izmir.

The longing for freedom cannot be imprisoned - not by judgments, not by violence, not by intimidation.

Water cannons and police sirens may drown out these calls - but they cannot silence them. Those who oppress young people are sawing away at the future of their own country.

Turkey is a member of this House. This is not just a formal membership - it is a promise. A promise that the rule of law, human rights and democracy are not a matter of interpretation, but our common foundation.

Law Law Justice [spoken in Turkish]

Everything will be fine.

Thank you.

**Ms Christiana EROKORITOU (Cyprus, SOC):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Unfortunately, but perhaps not unexpectedly, we are once again gathered to address the deteriorating state of democracy and human rights in Turkey.

The recent arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu has sent shockwaves across the nation, reigniting memories of the Gezi Park protests and laying bare the fragility of democratic institutions under the current regime. Yet, let us not fall into the trap of treating this arrest as an isolated event. It is but one symptom of a much broader, entrenched pattern of authoritarianism that has steadily engulfed Turkey.

What of the ongoing crackdown on journalists and media outlets and the systematic targeting and intimidation of lawyers and judges, including the President of the Istanbul Bar Association? What of Turkey's blatant refusal to implement binding decisions of the ECHR concerning Osman Kavala, Selahattin Demirtaş?

Elected mayors from the pro-Kurdish DEM Party and the main opposition party CHP have been arrested and replaced by government-appointed trustees. This is not governance, but the nullification of democratic choice.

Let us not ignore Amnesty International's chilling description of Turkey as the world's largest prison for journalists. Or the ECHR' ruling on the illegal arrest of Aydın Sefa Akay, a UN judge, an incident that violates the core principles of diplomatic immunity and judicial independence. Let's remember the warning from the UN Special Rapporteur, who unequivocally stated that 'if the current trajectory continues, it could lead to the collapse of the rule of law in Turkey.' This warning was issued before the arrest of Imamoglu and the arrests of judges and lawyers.

The CoE is founded upon democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law, not optional ideals, but binding commitments. No member state, regardless of size, political weight, or geopolitical relevance, is exempt from these obligations.

If we allow our principles to be compromised for the sake of expediency or political convenience, we do not merely weaken our institution, we betray it.

What do we do when a member state persistently, deliberately, and flagrantly violates the very commitments that bind us together?

Are we prepared to act, not just speak? Are we ready to invoke the Joint Procedure Mechanism, adopted for such persistent cases of non-compliance? Are we finally willing to send a clear, unified message that this Council will not stand idly by while democratic institutions are dismantled?

If we fail to act, we embolden the regime. Silence becomes complicity. Inaction then becomes permission.

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

I think here, beyond the discussion of political positions, who's on which side and which ideology, a bizarre double standard approach prevails. If a person or issue is against our political position, a legal case is immediately labeled as political, not even considering its legal content. However, if the same situation occurs for someone who is close to our political position, the case is seen as proceeding within the law. We have seen this in two different examples that came one after another in the last two weeks: Türkiye and İmamoğlu incident, France and Le Pen incident.

It's quite clear that we need put an end to this double standard.

It's also very important for the Turkish government to observe democratic sensitivities and it's doing so. However, serious criminal allegations, clear testimonies, denunciations and allegations coming from within its own party, alleged money flows based on concrete reports and perhaps, one of the most critical issues in this case: the alleged organized crime.

These are not allegations that any democratic government would ignore, sweep under the rug or brush aside, wondering if they could be understood through a political understanding.

No European government would do this and should not do either. Instead of making early decisions and making sentence of judgments, the focus should be on the content of the allegations, the gravity of these allegations and the course of the ongoing legal process here, this should be followed up and these serious allegations against İmamoğlu should be clarified.

Moreover, this is something that İmamođlu, who claims that he is innocent and that these are purely political matters, should want first and foremost and this will benefit him the most. Yet strangely, there is no sign of any sensitivity from either the European governments and the Council to stress on the European norms of ethics and good governance such as transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, and even, no sign of the slightest effort from İmamođlu, who is personally the subject of these accusations, to clarify and acquit this. With an interesting laxness, he is dominated by the idea that he will somehow distort the case with popular support and some provocations and manipulations and get out of the issue. Indeed, it's a basic rule: legal processes cannot be clarified with an anti-legal approach, exactly what we have experienced in the current legal course of this case so far.

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

Dear President,

Dear Colleagues,

Türkiye is a democratic country that operates under the rule of law.

Our legal system is anchored on the principles of justice, fairness, and accountability. And it functions with integrity, ensuring that everyone, regardless of position or status, is accountable to the law.

Our commitment to these principles is also reflected in our continuous efforts to combat corruption.

A prime example of this is our consistent efforts to sign, ratify, and incorporate the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption into our national legislation.

Proceedings related to local governments in Türkiye are carried out fully within the rule of law. They result from investigations and prosecutions based on criminal allegations, which are conducted in strict compliance with our Constitution and relevant laws.

And it is a universally recognised principle and a cornerstone of democratic governance that public officials are held accountable if they are found to be involved in criminal activities.

Therefore, the ongoing legal proceedings against the Mayor of İstanbul and some municipal officials should be viewed in this framework.

Dear Colleagues,

As in any state governed by the rule of law, judicial investigations in Türkiye are conducted with great sensitivity and due diligence by independent and impartial authorities.

It is our collective responsibility to allow the investigation process to unfold without interference or speculative commentary. This will also facilitate the work of the investigating authorities.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to a disappointing aspect of our Assembly's approach. Similar corruption-related proceedings are taking place in France, with comparable political implications, including today's detention of the Mayor of Lyon. However, while this issue is not on our agenda, it reflects a double standard, as developments in Türkiye are the subject of an urgent debate.

Our Assembly should adopt a consistent and a fair approach to all individuals, regardless of their political or public standing.

Thank you.

**Mr Yunus EMRE (Türkiye, SOC):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

It is truly heartbreaking that in a country like mine—one that adopted its first constitution in 1876 and has held elections for decades—democracy and the people's right to vote are now under threat. Like millions of citizens of the Republic of Turkey, I cannot accept the situation my country has been forced into.

I have known İmamoğlu for many years. I have no doubt about his innocence. But I want you to know that for us, this is not a personal matter concerning İmamoğlu. This is fundamentally an attack on the will of the people — an attempt to let those in power decide who can and cannot run in elections in Turkey. This is what we oppose. It is the people of Turkey who must decide who will govern the country. We cannot accept any other option.

We know that government spokespeople will once again accuse us of "complaining to Europe" about the government. But this is a ridiculous accusation. The Council of Europe, which we are speaking before today, is an international organization established to protect the rule of law, democracy, and human rights — and my country is a founding member of this organization, having pledged to uphold these very principles.

We are not asking for special support from anyone or any country. We will fight up to end for our own rights. But we also know that it is authoritarian regimes—not democratic actors—that seek foreign backing. What we ask from the world is not to support such authoritarian practices that aim to sever Turkey from democracy. The first demand of authoritarianism is silence. Because silence is the first step toward enabling authoritarianism.

I want to remind you of an old concept: the \*conspiracy of silence\*. The government accuses the opposition of conspiracies, but let us be clear — the real conspiracy is the conspiracy of silence in our case. Dictionaries define conspiracy of silence as \*"the behaviour of a group of people that by unspoken consensus does not mention, discuss, or acknowledge a given subject."\*

Unfortunately, the government wants the whole world to be part of this conspiracy of silence.

That's why I sincerely thank everyone who has spoken up here today and broken that conspiracy of silence.

**Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC):** *Speech not pronounced (Rules of Procedure, Art. 31.2), only available in Italian*

**Mr Kristoffer LINDBERG (Sweden, SOC):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Thank you President. Dear colleagues.

We are deeply concerned about what is happening in Türkiye. Istanbul's elected mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu, has been arrested, along with other opposition members and journalists.

A living democracy needs a free opposition. It is very worrying that President Erdoğan's biggest political rival is being arrested on weak and unclear charges. We must ask if this arrest is politically motivated, and if it is an attempt to stop İmamoğlu from running in the 2028 presidential election.

Meanwhile, Swedish journalist Joakim Medin was arrested at Istanbul Airport on March 27. He was on his way to report on the protests by the Turkish people after İmamoğlu's arrest.

Türkiye must follow the same rule of law as all other countries in the Council of Europe. Journalists must be allowed to do their work without fear of being jailed without clear reasons. This is a basic principle in any democratic country. The rule of law and press freedom must be respected.

Turkish authorities must also make sure that journalists are safe while working in the country.

We expect Joakim Medin to be treated well in Marmara high-security prison. This prison is known for holding politicians and journalists in important cases. Istanbul's mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu is also being held there.

Türkiye must now clearly explain what Joakim Medin is accused of, and if there are real evidence, put them on the table.

If Türkiye is not able to do so, he must be released. His case to be handled quickly. It is a priority for us that Medin returns home to his wife as soon as possible.

Dear colleagues, journalism is not a crime. Not in any country. And especially not in a member State of the Council of Europe.

Thank you.

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

Mayor İmamoğlu's imprisonment along with numerous other politicians and journalists, after his nomination as presidential candidate, before his trial, is indeed a serious backsliding of democracy in Turkey.

And we could really build bridge here between this debate and the debate we will have later on this evening, regarding the non-enforcement of the ECHR judgments, especially in the Kavala and Demirtaş cases. The İmamoğlu case adds another layer to this institutional crisis, this crisis of mistrust towards judicial authorities and the political institutions.

There is a clear pattern: The persecution and imprisonment of political opponents. At the most suspicious timing in the most suspicious method. Control of the press. Attacks on the freedom of expression. Attacks on local administration, on pluralism and on the prospect of a vibrant civil society in Turkey. The erosion of democratic norms in Turkey, incompatible with the principles of the Council of Europe.

At the same time, on the international relations level, we've witnessed a constant revisionist rhetoric by the Turkish Government, in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean, with its constant challenge of Greece's sovereignty rights in the Aegean or the requests for the division of Cyprus, following the Turkish invasion 51 years ago.

Of course, these are parameters that should be taken under very serious consideration not only by the European Union within the accession procedure, or the intergovernmental discussions on the European defense architecture, but also, by us, here, in the Council of Europe.

Democracy is not a luxury. It is held in parliaments, but also in mayors' offices, in independent courts, in free media, and in the will of the people.

Citizens in Turkey, mainly young people, are protesting for better and deeper democracy. This should be the real basis of the debate that we have, here, today: A call for Turkey to become a real democracy. Respecting not only the rule of law domestically, but also proving its respect towards the international law, the law of the sea, the European values of human rights and social justice.

This would give hope and dignity to the young people protesting in the streets of Turkish cities.

And would serve as the strongest guarantee of peace and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean.

**Mr Namık TAN (Türkiye, SOC):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Mr President, Distinguished Colleagues,

Let me begin by expressing my respect for this Assembly and the values that bring us together — democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. These are not just words in a founding treaty; they are principles that must be lived and defended every day.

Recent developments in Turkey demand our attention. What began with the arrest of Istanbul's Mayor, Mr. Ekrem İmamoğlu — a leader elected by millions — is, unfortunately, part of a broader pattern. In the past months, multiple district mayors from the opposition have also been detained or removed from office under vague or politically charged accusations. Meanwhile, not a single mayor from the ruling AKP party has faced similar legal scrutiny.

This must mean — we are asked to believe — that members of the ruling party are entirely immune from corruption or misconduct. Either that, or the justice system in Turkey has become dangerously selective, targeting only those who challenge the government's power. We all know which explanation is more credible.

Let me be clear: in Mr. İmamoğlu's case, there has been no conviction. The principle of presumption of innocence applies. Or at least, it should. But when legal institutions are used as tools of political engineering, even innocence offers no guarantee of safety.

Distinguished members,

Young people, students, and concerned citizens are peacefully protesting against these injustices — as is their right under our Constitution and under the European Convention on Human Rights. And yet, they are met with disproportionate police force, surveillance, and in some cases, detention. What message are we sending to the next generation? That civic engagement is a crime?

We, as the opposition, believe that protests are vital expressions of democratic life — but we also believe that real change comes through the ballot box. And that is precisely what seems to frighten those in power.

Dear Colleagues,

Turkey is a founding member of the Council of Europe. We are part of the European family, and we intend to stay part of it. But to do so credibly, we must uphold the shared values that define this community — not just in documents, but in practice.

As the Republican People's Party, we will continue to fight — peacefully, legally, and persistently — for a Turkey where justice applies equally, where elections are respected, and where no citizen fears the consequences of dissent.

Thank you.

**Mr Francesco VERDUCCI (Italy, SOC):** *Speech not pronounced (Rules of Procedure, Art. 31.2), only available in Italian*

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

I start congratulating the co-rapporteurs of the Resolution, Mr Stefan SCHENNACH and Lord David BLENCATHRA.

The recent arrest of the Mayor of Istanbul is not an isolated incident. It is yet another chapter in a troubling story — a story of rising authoritarianism, of institutions being hollowed out, of dissent being criminalized.

The people of Istanbul have demonstrated their revolt because they are told that their votes do not matter. That the will of the people can be replaced by the authoritarian decision of those who will spare no means to achieve the end of removing political opponents.

But let's be clear: this is not about one man. This is about democracy.

The Mayor of Istanbul was not arrested for “corruption” or for “aiding terrorism”. He was arrested for ideas, for standing firm in the face of intimidation, for being a strong candidate for the 2028 presidential elections. It means that the ruling power in Türkiye fear words and ideas. It means that the Turkish authorities fear the rule of law and democracy.

For too long, the Turkish government has eroded the pillars of democracy under the guise of national security. Journalists have been silenced. Judges have been replaced. Academics have been purged. Protesters have been beaten. And now, elected mayors are arrested.

Democracy does not die overnight. It dies in moments like these—when good people stay silent and principled pressure is replaced by political convenience.

The current moment challenges us as citizens and democrats. History watches our behaviour in a changing world like we never imagined. To imprison a mayor for doing his duty is to imprison the future. History will judge us for this.

Dear Colleagues,

Let us raise our voices. Let us demand the release of the Mayor of Istanbul. Let us demand the restoration of democratic norms and human rights across Türkiye. It is our duty.

**Ms Birutė VĖSAITĖ (Lithuania, SOC):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

#### 1. A Strategic Ally Under Scrutiny

Radicalization of the democratic states is going everywhere in Europe, America and Asia. Erdogan is acting this way too.

Lithuania is deeply concerned by the deterioration of democratic standards and rule of law in Türkiye, especially the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, a prominent opposition figure.

Just 4 days before he was nominated as the candidate of the main opposition party CHP for Presidential elections.

Türkiye plays a critical role in Black Sea security, defense industry cooperation, and support for Ukraine – including drone supplies, naval equipment, and intelligence sharing.

## 2. Democracy Under Threat: The Case of Mayor Imamoglu

These actions violate the principles of free expression and political pluralism, and are pushing Türkiye into darkness by dismantling free media and an independent judiciary.

## 3. Diplomatic Role

Lithuania has already voiced disappointment and demands the immediate release of the mayor, municipal staff, and detained peaceful protesters.

Calls for an independent investigation into the case and urges Türkiye to cooperate with European monitoring bodies such as the Venice Commission.

## 4. NATO, Values, and Security – Not Mutually Exclusive

Türkiye remains NATO's second-largest military and a pillar of regional deterrence – including key contributions to Ukraine and the Black Sea naval balance. "A NATO partner must not undermine the very values NATO was founded to defend: democracy, liberty, and human rights."

## 5. A Friend Must Also Tell the Truth

Türkiye is not just an ally — it is a country with deep historic, cultural, and economic ties to Europe.

But friends must speak openly: the arrest of political opponents is incompatible with democracy.

Let this speech serve as an invitation, not condemnation. Lithuania expresses hope, not hostility – a hope that Türkiye will reaffirm its democratic commitments, and rejoin the European community of values, not just interests.

### **Mr Cemalettin Kani TORUN (Türkiye, NR):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear Colleagues,

The case concerning Istanbul Mayor Mr. Ekrem İmamoğlu reflects the concerning trend of increasing authoritarianism by the government of Türkiye in recent years. The government has systematically replaced numerous democratically elected mayors in Eastern and Southeastern regions with appointed trustees, establishing a troubling pattern rather than an isolated incident.

The administration continues to implement politically motivated measures - including pressure campaigns, arbitrary detentions, and removals - against municipal officials while framing these actions as anti-corruption efforts. While allegations of misconduct may exist in CHP-led municipalities, similar and well-documented claims have emerged regarding government-appointed trustees and AK Party municipalities. Notably, corruption cases involving AK Party municipalities have consistently been disregarded, revealing a clear double standard in enforcement.

Were the government genuinely committed to combating corruption, numerous substantiated cases could be pursued. However, the fundamental motivation remains political - specifically, the perception of Mr. İmamoğlu as a formidable presidential contender. This political calculus underpins both the prosecution and detention measures. The decision to detain Mr. İmamoğlu constitutes a significant miscalculation.

The public widely perceives this as political maneuvering rather than legitimate judicial process. This action has inadvertently strengthened the main opposition CHP while damaging the ruling party's credibility. The resulting street protests, compounded by economic instability and the Lira's depreciation, have undermined social cohesion. The depletion of Central Bank reserves has further destabilized Türkiye's fragile economic recovery.

Our position remains clear and consistent: We oppose all forms of corruption without exception, whether in central or local government. Any credible allegations against Mr. İmamoğlu or his team should be addressed through proper judicial channels - without resorting to preventive detention. The judiciary must remain independent and focused solely on administering justice in the public interest.

In this context, I call upon all political parties represented in the Parliament of Türkiye to establish without delay a cross-party commission tasked with drafting and implementing comprehensive political ethics legislation and to investigate all cases of political corruption. This initiative should begin its work immediately to restore public confidence in democratic institutions.

**Ms Gökçe GÖKÇEN (Türkiye, SOC):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear colleagues,

Mayor of Istanbul, President of Union of Municipalities in Türkiye, and our presidential candidate Mr. Ekrem İmamoğlu has been in jail since March 19.

I will not repeat what happened, because the facts and injustices are crystal clear. Instead of repeating the facts, I will focus on the ways to react.

What makes us an institution based on protecting human rights and democracy is not our tactics or ability to maneuver. It is our values.

It is not our fear, but our courage.

If you consider that Türkiye is nothing more than Erdoğan,

If you give up your own values just because you may need him in the war or in Syria,

If you postpone working on solutions to the refugee crisis and bargain with the lives of millions of people in Türkiye,

If you say, "Don't be a part of Europe, stay outside the door, but be useful," I am sorry, but problems will increase.

Because as one of the founding members of this very institution, our problem is your problem. Why? Because this is not just another violation of human rights.

This is not a step forward in oppressing the minority. This is about taking the presidential candidate of the leading party in the last elections hostage. This is about trying to appoint a trustee to the party that is leading all the polls. This is about the denial of the very idea of free elections and democracy. This is about blocking the peaceful transition of power. This is about creating its own controlled opposition. Legitimizing this method will definitely hit us all.

So dear colleagues, we do not want help. We do not need help. Because we are the majority. And we are on the right side.

In Türkiye, millions of people are on the streets, and hundreds of young people are in prison. Our lawyers, our party organizations, and our MPs are with those protesters. Silivri prison is now a presidential campaign office.

This is why those who stand with democracy or against it will be remembered by the next government of Türkiye. Just as Trump does not hesitate to make sure we know who his friends are, support of a great majority and silence of some of our friends will definitely be remembered.

Thank you.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

I must now interrupt the list of speakers.

The speeches of members on the speakers list who have been present here during the debate but have not been able to speak, can give their speech to the table office for publication in the official report.

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

I will now call on Lord David BLENCATHRA, the co-rapporteur, to reply.

You have 3 minutes, David.

**Lord David BLENCATHRA (United Kingdom, ECPA, Co-Rapporteur):** Mister Vice-President,

This has been a good debate and I am grateful that there is strong support for our resolution and our recommendations.

I counted 17 speakers in support of our report and two against.

Let me reassure all colleagues that it gives us no pleasure whatsoever to make these recommendations. Just 3 months after the 6 countries created the Council of Europe, Türkiye joined and has been an esteemed member since 1949, all of our 75 years of existence.

Some supporters of the government deny that the arrests were politically motivated but when the university deliberately withdraws his degree on the day of his arrest, a degree that he has had for 35 years, and which is essential to be a political candidate, then that is prima facie proof that there is political motivation behind the arrests.

The main defence by the Turkish Government supporters is that these arrests were done according to the rule of law, but it is the Turkish law which is the problem here, since it does not seem to accord with international standards in, for example, the definition of terrorism, where it seems that calling for democratic change is a form of terrorism in Türkiye.

A law that sentenced Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU to 2 years in prison for calling election officials "idiots" is not a law which can be defended as a legitimate rule of law. Nor do we accept that the judges are properly independent.

Mr Frank SCHWABE, I think, got it right when he said that this arrest removed hope that you can get democratic change.

Finally, colleagues, let me say this personally, and I think it is relevant. I am saddened by the Türkiye I see now.

As a schoolboy studying classical Greek, this was the famous land of Troy I loved in the Trojan Wars, of 1200 BC, the stories of Agamemnon, Menelaus, Achilles, and Helen of Troy, "the face that launched a thousand ships".

This was the land where, 1 400 years later, St Paul the Apostle wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians and Cappadocians, the magnificent city of Ephesus destroyed by the Goths and the amazing cave architecture of Cappadocia.

This was the land through which XERXES marched his army of 250 000 people to invade Greece and which XENOPHON later wrote about the lost 10 000 Greek army.

The city of Byzantium, and then Constantinople. And now Istanbul, with its 2 500-year history, I submit, is the most splendid city in the whole region.

But colleagues, more up to date and far more important is that Türkiye is the great country created by the Father of Türkiye, Kemal ATTATÜRK, who brought in democracy, full free education for all, complete civil and political rights for women in a free and secular society in a parliamentary democracy.

So let us not forget the long and magnificent history of Türkiye, which I deeply respect. But it is that erosion of political rights and democracy which is now so sad and which we condemn in this resolution, condemned by the vast majority of speakers speaking here today.

And I commend this resolution to the Assembly without any amendment.

Thank you, Mister Vice-President.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much, David.

And it's a surplus of being a member of this Assembly that we can also have history lessons in here. So thank you very much.

The Chair of the Committee, do you want to take the floor? You have 3 minutes.

**Ms Zanda KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA (Latvia, EPP/CD, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)):** President,

Dear colleagues,

Indeed, at the end of March, we witnessed a deeply alarming development. The arrest and detention of Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, the democratically elected Mayor of Istanbul and the main opposition candidate for the 2028 presidential elections. These events sparked widespread protests across cities of Türkiye. There have been reports about the use of violence by police during these protests, and restrictions on the right to freedom of expression.

The draft resolution prepared by the co-rapporteurs of the Monitoring Committee rightly urges our Assembly to take a principled stance on these events, and I would like to thank the co-rapporteurs for preparing this particular resolution.

The Committee therefore calls for the immediate release of Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, who was democratically elected by the people as the Mayor of Istanbul and as a presidential candidate in a vote organised by his party. It also stresses that his imprisonment and earlier revocation of his university degree are designed to prevent him from standing in the next presidential election and to intimidate the opposition, and are therefore a clear attack on democracy.

Again, this background, and in line with its previous resolutions, the committee encourages the Assembly to condemn the abuse of the judiciary for political purposes and call for respect of the right to a fair trial. In addition, Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, his associates and others persecuted for political reasons, or the journalists persecuted for covering the protests, should be released.

The authorities should be urged to exercise maximum restraint in dealing with demonstrators. The use of force against peaceful demonstrators, arbitrary detentions and restrictions on freedom of assembly and expressions are in clear breach with Türkiye's obligation under the European Convention on Human Rights and other commitments arising from its membership in the Council of Europe.

Therefore, I hope the draft resolution will be adopted by this house without controversy. By doing so, the Assembly will show solidarity with the people of Türkiye who are peacefully demanding justice, accountability and respect for democratic norms.

Thank you.

## **Vote: The arrest of the Mayor of Istanbul and the state of democracy and human rights in Türkiye**

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much, Zanda.

Now the debate is closed.

The Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) has presented a draft resolution, Doc. 16151, to which 12 amendments have been tabled.

I understand that the chairperson of the committee wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendments 1 to 12 to the draft resolution, which were rejected by the committee by two-thirds majority, may be declared as definitively rejected.

Is that so?

**Ms Zanda KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA (Latvia, EPP/CD, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)):** All the amendments were rejected by unanimity, actually.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** If no one objects, I will consider the amendments to be rejected.

Is there any objection? No.

Therefore, Amendments 1 to 12 of the draft resolution are rejected and will not be called.

We start with amendment number... Just a moment. We have been through all the amendments.

We will have to vote on the draft resolution, and it is contained in Doc. 16151. Here we have a simple majority required.

I will now open the vote.

The vote is now closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

*The draft resolution is adopted.*

## **Debate under urgent procedure: Russian war of aggression against Ukraine: the need to ensure accountability and avoid impunity**

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Dear colleagues,

The next item of business this morning, or this afternoon, is a debate on the urgent procedure on the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

The need to ensure accountability and avoid impunity, which is in Doc. 16152, presented by Mr Iulian BULAI on behalf of the Committee of Legal Affairs and Human Rights.

Colleagues, in order to finish by 6:45 p.m., I will interrupt the list of speakers at about 6:25 p.m. to allow time for reply and vote. But now we just need, I think, a change of rapporteurs and chairpersons at the bench, and then we can continue shortly.

Okay. Dear colleagues, may I ask you to find your seats, and we will start again on this resolution.

I will now call Mr Iulian BULAI, who is rapporteur. Mister Bulai, you have 7 minutes now, and you have 3 minutes at the end of the discussion.

Please, colleagues, keep your voices down or leave the room so we can continue.

Are you ready now, Mister Bulai? Then we are ready too. You have the floor.

**Mr Iulian BULAI (Romania, ALDE, Rapporteur):** Thank you so much, Mister Chair.

Dear colleagues,

More than 11 years after the beginning of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine began, and more than three years after the launch of the full-scale invasion of the Bucha massacre, the Assembly must reaffirm again the need to ensure accountability and to fight against impunity for the serious violations of international law and crimes committed by the aggressor, which have caused so much death, suffering and damage to Ukraine and its people.

The aggression continues to rage as we see every day with missile strikes on residential areas, in the cities Kharkiv, Kiev and Kryvi Rih, where just a few days ago, at least nine children were killed near a playground.

The recent talks held in March by the new US administration with both Russia and Ukraine have led to renewed hopes for peace negotiations or at least a ceasefire.

However, Russia has repeatedly violated the terms of the agreed partial ceasefire and continues its military attacks in Ukraine, including against energy facilities. This undermines the credibility of any peace negotiations and demonstrates Russia's lack of genuine willingness to engage in peace.

At this moment in history, and given the extremely volatile geopolitical landscape, the Assembly and the Council of Europe must reaffirm more than ever the need to deliver justice to Ukraine in line with the values for which this organisation stands – human rights and the rule of law.

According to our statute, the pursuit of peace can only be based on justice and international co-operation. Peace must be just and human rights compliant if it is to be durable and comprehensible. It must also respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its borders and the human rights of the victims of the aggression. An unjust peace cannot be accepted, and the aggressor must not be rewarded in any way for the terrible crimes it has committed. The aggressor must also make reparation for all the damage caused.

The Council of Europe has worked tirelessly for the establishment of a comprehensive system of accountability since the first day of full-scale aggression. We already heard that the European Court of Human Rights, which remains competent to deal with the violations committed by Russia until 2022.

In 2023, thanks to a proposal by the Assembly, we created the Register of Damage for Ukraine, which has already received more than 20 000 claims for individual victims. But this is not enough. We need to do more. The Assembly was the first international body back in April 2022 to launch the idea of a special international tribunal for the crime of aggression committed against Ukraine, to fill the gap of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which lacks jurisdiction in this case.

A group of legal experts from some 40 countries has managed to complete all the technical work necessary for the tribunal, placing three draft texts, including a draft bilateral agreement between the Council of Europe and the government of Ukraine and a draft statute for the tribunal. We must be proud of this achievement. But now we must act and put in place the tribunal. We first need to finalise a political agreement endorsed by the Committee of Ministers and authorisation for the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to conclude the agreement with Ukraine.

In the draft resolution and draft recommendation, I therefore propose to put pressure on the member states and the Committee of Ministers to complete without delay the work of the Special Tribunal respective of the evolution of any peace negotiations.

Justice cannot be a bargaining chip on the road to peace. I also stress the need to strengthen the work of the ICC and the Ukrainian prosecution authorities with regard to other crimes – war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. I therefore propose to call on member states to fill the gap left by the new US administration's decision to withdraw from some accountability projects and mechanisms and to suspend international aid.

Finally, with regard to compensation for the damage caused by the aggression, while welcoming the new developments on the Register of Damage and the negotiations on the International Claims Commission, I call for the need to transfer all frozen Russian assets to an international trust fund. This fund could manage the assets for the benefit of the people of Ukraine and distribute them in the future for compensation purposes. Indeed, there is a risk that some of the EU sanctions freezing the Russian assets will not be renewed in the future due to a blockade by some EU member states. This would be dramatic because it would mean that these assets could be returned to Russia, which could use them to continue its war against Ukraine.

We must act before that happens. And the best way to ensure reconstruction and compensation for Ukraine is to use these assets as a lawful and proportionate countermeasure to Russia's grave affront to the international legal order.

Let me finish this intervention presenting my report by thanking my colleague Mr Eerik-Niiles KROSS, who, along with the staff from the committee, who has presented this report, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, has been to Ukraine talking and engaging with the authorities in terms of what goes on now in Kiev and within the peace negotiation talks. He was in Kiev and he did a great job. And many of the findings that this report relates to are coming from there.

And now, Mister President, at the end of my speech, I would like us to just remember how humiliating the meeting was of the hero of Europe, Mr ZELENSKY, in a certain office on the other side of the Atlantic. And I would like to ask that this house never to be a place where we should, in which some people in arrogance, would point to the Ukrainians asking them to say thank you, but rather in a continuous place where we offer help and support for those defending Europe now.

Thank you.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much, Mister BULAI.

Now we go to the debate.

I first call the speakers from the political groups.

The first is Mr Edmunds CEPURĪTIS.

You have the floor.

**Mr Edmunds CEPURĪTIS (Latvia, SOC, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you very much.

The list of crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine is a long and bloody one. They are committed quite openly and for all of us to see. We see an unprovoked war of aggression. We see indiscriminate attacks on civilians, on children, on infrastructure. We have seen torture used against prisoners of war, sexual violence against people under occupation. We have seen abduction of Ukrainian children, attempts of destroying their cultural identity and attempts at genocide. We have seen the victims of these inhumane acts of violence, sometimes with tears in our eyes.

You do not have to be an expert in international law to see them as war crimes, crimes against humanity and basic decency. People I have talked to everywhere see them that way.

When we look at all of these violations together, we can recognise a clear intent. Mr Vladimir PUTIN is intentionally challenging the values of human rights and principles of international law, and the very fact that there would be any rules for those who position themselves as above the law.

The question then is if we would allow this world view to gain strength and legitimacy. He is betting that we will allow it. PUTIN wants impunity for these crimes to be one of his victories. For him, but also others. Now we have to prove him wrong.

Ukrainians proved PUTIN wrong with their courage in not allowing the Russian military invasion to succeed at any of their goals. We have proved PUTIN wrong in setting our sanctions three years ago.

Now we have to prove him wrong again. This can't be done with speeches here.

We have to use the tools we have prepared. We have a Special Tribunal ready to be established, we have a Claims Commission close to coming together. We have Russian frozen assets, that should be repurposed to cover at least a part of compensation for the damages caused by this aggression. These are the tools that are waiting for our decisions.

The report outlines clearly, and the rapporteur now, what the stakes are.

This is a generational challenge to defend the human rights and a world where we do not have to cry when we are watching the news.

Only a just peace and justice for Ukraine can prevent the disaster. Directing billions worth of military equipment —missiles, drones, tonnes of steel and explosives— that turn all of that violently against peaceful populations can again become a norm in the future of Europe and the world.

Our actions now will also be judged by history, and I believe that our unity will give us the courage to make these decisions right.

Thank you.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much, Mister Cepurītis, speaking on behalf of the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group.

And now the spokesperson from the Group of the European People's Party will be Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS.

Emanuelis, you have the floor.

**Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group):** But not taking decisive action in Ukraine. Supporting Ukraine, especially comprehensive military support and assistance.

We are approaching a major war between the West and the neo-Soviet Russian regime. A war in which all European countries could become involved. Because Russian history, after the Bolshevik communist coup in 1917, represents only a single showcase of testing Western democracies in terms of their weaknesses and vulnerability. After cementing his dictatorship at the cost of the lives of democratic Russians, Mr PUTIN created an absolute monopoly of power within Russia and now continues to spread his dictatorial vision, a Russian world, beyond Russian borders.

Boris NEMTSOV himself, who was brutally assassinated by PUTIN in the following war. PUTIN is a war. PUTIN will stop at the point where you, Ukrainians and Europeans, will stop him. It was said a few days before he was killed. It was said a few days before NEMTSOV was killed. I would like to ask the representatives of our southern friends again, Spain, Italy, and France, about your military budget of 3%, 2% for defense? That is not because of President TRUMP, but this is a question from our Nordic and eastern neighbors in the European Union (EU). What about our southern flank? Are you battle-ready? We will try to be battle-ready during the next years.

Now I would like to remind you that during the so-called peace talks we have had double and triple Russian aggressions against Ukraine. Now I would like to name the Ukrainian children who have been killed over the last few days in Kryvyi Rih. Tymofiy, 3 years old. Aryna, 7 years old. Radislav, 7 years old. Herman, 9 years old. Alina, 15 years old. Danila, 15 years old. Mikita, 15 years old. Konstantin, 16 years old. Nikita, 17 years old. These so-called military objectives in Ukraine, bombed by Russian ballistic missiles.

I would like to use my time for three or four seconds of silence, if you allow me, to remember those children killed during the last few days in Ukraine.

*(Short silence)*

Thank you so much. Thank you so much.

Finally, I would like to say that we should, of course, support the negotiations for freedom, but we should be prepared to be battle-ready in the case of Russia using this freedom for their aggressive purposes against Ukraine and against us. We should not leave Ukraine to be in a shadow of the event and to be on the second page of newspapers. We should be battle-ready and prepare Europe for the next battle.

Thank you so much.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mister Zingeris.

And now, speaking for the European Conservatives, Patriots and Affiliates, Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

You have the floor.

**Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, ECPA, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you. Thank you very much.

We, Ukrainians, want peace as soon as possible. Peace – real peace – not a surrender. And just imagine what we feel when we hear statements like this. It was recently, a German intelligence chief, president of the Federal Intelligence Service, said: "an early end to the war in Ukraine would enable the Russians to direct their energy where they actually wanted, namely against Europe". What does that mean?

First, that Ukraine is not Europe. "So, namely against Europe", and who are we? So when we die for Europe, we are Europeans. When we die for democracy, we are good enough. But for the early end of the war... No, Europe, maybe it's not the best time for Europe now, because Europe is still not prepared. Three years of full-scale invasion. Ten years of the war and it's still not prepared.

Second question. What does it mean? So an early end is not a desirable option? Some of the top European officials told me, "You need to wait three and a half years. In three and a half years, there will be a new president of the United States. Just keep fighting". Easy task, right? Three and a half years to fight more. In three and a half years, Ukraine will be completely deserted. We are bleeding. Literally, every day they are killing us, our children, everybody.

How do we feel when we see how Russia continues to do business in Europe, like NLMK from Vladimir Lisin, who has a small factory in Belgium. And the Belgium government vetoes all the time sanctioning leasing because they have 600 working places. They can't lose it. It's politics, you know. But at the same time, Ukrainian steel, Ukrainian grain, Ukrainian goods, they are not good enough. You know, you need to go through all certification processes and everything.

How do we feel? We feel betrayed when we hear we can't. We need, we want to be in the European Union as soon as possible. What we hear in response is, "yes, but you have 15 chapters, 30 chapters. Now you will open the first chapter. Then, in two years, the second chapter." We wrote all these chapters with our own blood already. Show me another nation in Europe which paid for the European dream with blood. Not with money, not with time, with blood!

And after all of this we feel betrayed. So we want to be a member of the European Union now. We want to see your support now. Seizing of Russian assets now. We want to see the European contingent not fighting, but helping us to secure at least the border with Belarus now!

Take us to Europe. Help us finish this war as soon as possible. Make us a member of the European Union and build a strong European army on the basis of a strong Ukrainian army. That is the only viable option.

Thank you.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mister Goncharenko.

And now, on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, Mr James MACCLEARY.

You have the floor.

**Mr James MACCLEARY (United Kingdom, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you, Chairman.

Over 3 years have passed since Mr Vladimir PUTIN launched his brutal and illegal war against Ukraine.

3 years of death and destruction, displacement, and despair. And yet 3 years marked too by the extraordinary courage and unshakable resolve of the Ukrainian people.

Each day, Ukrainians show the world what it means to stand for democracy, sovereignty, and the rule of law, not only for themselves, but for all of us. They resist not because it is easy, but because it is right.

However, as the war grinds on, we face a dangerous temptation: to look away. War fatigue creeps in, attention wanes, and priorities shift.

We, as liberals and as Europeans, must reject that temptation. Our support for Ukraine must not weaken, it must strengthen instead.

If others falter in their commitments, Europe must rise to the challenge with unity and clarity of purpose. And this is not just Ukraine's fight, it is Europe's fight. And Europe must lead with deeper military, humanitarian, and economic support.

That means more ammunition, more air defences, more medical supplies, and more sustained investment in Ukraine's recovery.

At the same time, we must show the courage to act decisively with our financial tools.

The frozen Russian state assets across Europe. The stolen wealth of a corrupt regime must be put to use, not left gathering dust in Western capitals, in London in particular, but repurposed to build Ukrainian schools, hospitals, homes, and infrastructure.

We have the means. What we need is the political will.

Let us be honest. Our sanctions regimes are not yet watertight. Too many loopholes remain, exploited by Kremlin cronies and enablers. We must shut them down.

Europe must not be a safe haven for dirty money. It must be a fortress for democracy.

If Ukraine is defeated, every authoritarian regime will draw the same conclusion. That military aggression works and Europe cannot and will not stop them. That cannot be allowed to happen.

That is why we fully support the resolution to ensure that those responsible for this aggression at every level are held to account. From the generals who ordered missile strikes on civilians, to the propagandists who fuel the lies, to the highest offices of the Russian state.

There must be justice. This war is a crime. And like any crime, it demands investigation, prosecution, and consequences. Impunity is not an option. Not now, not ever.

Ukraine must win. And victory must mean full territorial integrity, accountability for war crimes, and an unshakable place for Europe within the European family.

This is a moment of historic consequence, friends.

We must stand firm. Stand together and stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Glory to Ukraine! [spoken in Ukrainian]

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

And now, speaking on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left is Ms Sevim DAĞDELEN.

You have the floor.

**Ms Sevim DAĞDELEN (Germany, UEL, Spokesperson for the group):** Mister President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Someone once said that every text is written to hide something important. So, when we ask ourselves what this text on Russia is supposed to conceal, the first thing that comes to mind is the double standards by which EU and NATO leaders measure international politics. This text is intended to conceal the fact that both NATO and leading members of the military pact, such as the USA, regard violations of international law and wars of aggression as a completely normal political tool.

I would just like to remind you of three examples: Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya. Of course, the fact that NATO and EU officials are currently complicit in obvious war crimes and possible genocide against the Palestinians through their arms deliveries to Israel should be concealed; in this case, they don't care about international jurisdiction at all.

But the reasons for the war in Ukraine are also to be concealed. The co-responsibility of NATO, the USA, and its European NATO allies for this war through the broken promises of NATO expansion is to be made invisible. Nor do they want to talk about the character of the regime in Kiev. They do not want to talk about the fact that opposition parties have been banned, that trade unions are being harassed, that hundreds of thousands are fleeing forced recruitment and that crimes, such as the death of US journalist Gonzalo LIRA in Ukraine, remain unsolved and unpunished.

This is nothing other than whataboutism, dear colleagues, which you like to accuse others of in order to silence criticism of your double standards. At its core, it is therefore war propaganda. You are longing for escalation, and while the USA, even if it is a President Trump, is trying to work towards peace in Ukraine, you now want to continue the proxy war, which the USA itself says is a proxy war, on your own. Yes, how crazy is that?

Instead of a policy of double standards, we finally need peace efforts, also from Europe. Détente and disarmament may still be dirty words to them, but they mean everything to the peoples of Europe.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN (Denmark, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

That completes the speakers from the political groups.

Now I'll call for the next speaker, who is Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN.

Lise, you have the floor.

**Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN (Norway, SOC):** Mister President,

Dear colleagues,

During the debate on the Progress Report, several speakers emphasised the high number of urgent debates during this session, as a direct consequence of the many recent setbacks of democratic values in our member countries, among them this debate on the need for accountability and avoiding impunity concerning the invasion and aggressive war in Ukraine.

The people of Ukraine are fighting for our common freedom. Ukraine is entitled to our full support both now and when a peace agreement hopefully is in place. Ensuring that the Russian aggressor is held accountable and finally, avoiding a situation of impunity, will depend on the full support from the international community. It is therefore regrettable that the United States has withdrawn from this co-operation.

That is why this report is so important. It reminds us of the endless damage and suffering of Ukraine and its people. It shows us how Russia tries to force upon us all a different Europe, without respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Thus, I am pleased that the Norwegian Parliament unanimously decided to increase our support, through our Nansen support programme, to grant Ukraine a minimum of 155 billion Norwegian kroner until 2030. I am pleased to mention that yesterday, in Kiev, Norway and the other European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries signed a free trade agreement with Ukraine.

Furthermore, we should all actively support what is highlighted by the rapporteur – the work of the Register of Damage for Ukraine, the need to establish and to provide the Special Tribunal with necessary resources, support the ongoing investigations of the International Criminal Court (ICC), establish a Claims Commission for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, and to transfer frozen Russian assets to an international trust fund.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the ongoing so-called negotiations between Ukraine and the United States on a possible agreement on mineral resources. While this terrible war is still going on, Donald TRUMP attempts to seize control over large parts of Ukraine's natural resources and infrastructure. Such behaviour from one of our Western allies is unparalleled in modern history.

All the more important is that our support to Ukraine comes without demands for pay-back, but together with future reconstruction agreements and future mutual co-operation on an equal footing.

Thank you.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Thank you.

Mr Gustaf GÖTHBERG is next.

**Mr Gustaf GÖTHBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD):** Thank you very much, Mister President.

Dear colleagues,

For over a decade, Ukraine has stood as a lighthouse in the storm at the frontier of European values in a war at the heart of Europe.

The Russian war in Ukraine is not only an assault on national sovereignty, on human dignity, or international rule of law. From the illegal annexation of Crimea to the brutal targeting of civilians, the shelling and deportation of children, and the attempted erasure of a nation's cultural identity, the Russian Federation has crossed every moral and and legal red line.

What the dictatorship of Vladimir PUTIN is doing is not only to conduct a military operation, it is a campaign against civilisation itself.

This report calls us to act not with anger, but with resolve. It demands that we hold the Russian Federation accountable through lawful means, like a special tribunal for the crime of aggression in line with international law and the founding principles of this very Assembly.

It is, Mister President, not about revenge. It is about reaffirming that freedom is defended not only by force, though force is important, but also by justice.

I support the economic and legal instruments proposed in this report by Mr Iulian BULAI. From the use of frozen Russian assets for Ukraine's reconstruction to the maintenance of strong and targeted sanctions.

This report is important. It calls for justice, not revenge. It demands action, not appeasement, and it does so with a very clear and principled proposals mentioned also in the report.

We must, Mister President, also ensure that the victims are not forgotten. The report's strong emphasis on the Register of Damage, the future Claims Commission, and the use of frozen Russian assets for Ukraine's reconstruction reflects this as well.

In such a context, the Assembly must send a clear and united message. There will be no amnesty for aggression. There will be no forgiveness without justice. There will be no lifting of sanctions without compliance.

Dear colleagues, a ceasefire that silences the guns but protects the guilty is not a peace at all.

As the report rightly states, justice must be a foundation for the peace, not a casualty of it.

Finally, I commend the report's call to maintain protections for displaced Ukrainians, to resist energy dependence on Russia, and to support universal jurisdiction trials across Europe.

My home country, Sweden, stands firmly with Ukraine, its sovereignty, its people, and the right for the country to exist.

That is why we support the continued freezing and, ultimately, the use of Russian assets for Ukraine's reconstruction.

The aggressor must pay for what the aggressor has destroyed.

We stand with Ukraine shoulder to shoulder today and tomorrow.

Thank you.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Mr Rostyslav TISTYK is next.

**Mr Rostyslav TISTYK (Ukraine, ECPA):** Mister President, dear colleagues.

Today, we are witnessing alarming shifts in the global political landscape. The Russian Federation, which has been waging an aggressive, bloody war against Ukraine for over 11 years, is now gaining a real chance to evade responsibility for all the crimes it has committed – both against the Ukrainian state and its people.

Russia is striving to reshape its image: to lift sanctions, restore diplomatic relations and push the world to “move on.” We already see some international politicians avoiding even mentioning Russia as an aggressor.

Currently, Russia illegally occupies about 18% of Ukraine’s territory, including Crimea, parts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions. These territories have become sites of widespread war crimes. In the city of Mariupol alone, according to preliminary estimates, up to 100 000 civilians were killed. In Bucha and Irpin, the world saw the extent of torture, executions and mass graves.

The International Criminal Court has already issued an arrest warrant for PUTIN for the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children – over 19 000 children. This is a crime that falls under the definition of genocide. According to the United Nations, by early 2024, more than 30 000 cases of serious human rights violations caused by Russian aggression had been documented – and this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Yet today, Russia is trying to retain control over the occupied territories. If it succeeds, proving the crimes committed there will become impossible. Evidence will be destroyed. Witnesses – silenced or killed. Perpetrators – left unpunished.

Moscow wants to end this war as a winner – or at least as an “equal partner” – without condemnation, without reparations, without accountability. And if the world allows this to happen, then we must say it clearly: the consequences will be catastrophic.

Russia has opened Pandora’s box. It has shown that a country can invade, occupy, destroy and commit atrocities and still demand peace negotiations on its own terms. If impunity becomes a precedent, other states with territorial ambitions will surely follow this example.

That is why holding Russia accountable is not just a Ukrainian interest. It is a matter of global justice, international security and the rule of law.

We do not have the right to be indifferent. We do not have time to delay. Every day of hesitation means more victims, more destruction, more politicians bought by the aggressor.

A world without justice for Russia is a world without rules. And a world without rules is a path to a new global catastrophe.

Thank you for your attention.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Ms Véronique DURENNE.

**Ms Véronique DURENNE (Belgium, ALDE):** Mr Chairman,

Dear colleagues,

Three years after the start of the full-scale invasion, Ukraine continues to face a war of annihilation. As you reminded us, rapporteur, the aim of a war is not simply to conquer territory, but to deny the very existence of a people. Europe cannot stand idly by and watch.

As a member of the Belgian parliament and a member of the coalition government that strongly supports Ukraine, I would like to reaffirm our commitment here. The resolution we are examining today is unambiguous. No peace without justice, no peace without responsibility. This is a red line that we will not cross.

The creation of a Special Tribunal for the crime of aggression is a major step forward. It's not just a symbol: it's a concrete tool to put an end to impunity. Aggression is the crime of crimes: we must be able to judge it.

But for justice to be done, reparations must also be made. And on this point, I would like to raise a fundamental issue, that of frozen Russian assets. Like many European countries, Belgium holds a significant proportion of these assets. Nearly 250 billion euros are tied up in our country. We support their use for the benefit of Ukraine, but – and it's important to say this here – we need legal certainty before we act. Seizing sovereign assets is an unprecedented measure. It raises complex questions of international law, treaty law and investor protection.

In Belgium, these issues are the subject of extensive debate, and we are not alone. All member states must be able to act within a clear, stable and co-ordinated framework. This must not be an excuse for inaction, but a call to strengthen our legal framework so that Ukrainian victims can obtain justice without our states being exposed to a legal and economic backlash.

I therefore welcome the proposal to set up an International Claims Commission under the aegis of the Council of Europe. This mechanism is essential if we are to give credibility to our commitments and ensure that Russian assets do not become an issue of division, but of solidarity.

Dear colleagues,

Let there be no mistake. If we fail to translate our promise of justice into action, we leave the way open for the next aggression.

History is watching us: let us rise to the occasion. Let us support this resolution.

Thank you for your support.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN.

**Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN (Romania, SOC):** Colleagues, the next day, after 24 February 2022, the Council of Europe started to define and to affirm its position. We have stated, first of all, an important package of fundamental principles such as multilateralism, international systems based on rules, accountability for the crimes committed by Russia. We have condemned Russia because for committing a crime of aggression and we have expelled Russia from the Council of Europe. We have also launched the project of establishing an international jurisdiction for judging the crime of aggression and by that, rejecting their impunity.

Now, of course, it should be peace. We want peace and we support peace, but peace based on justice and international fundamental principles of law. What I heard just a few minutes ago, here in the Plenary Session during this debate, is a shame. It is not the European Union (EU) or NATO that generated this conflict. To be very clear, it is Russia that committed a crime of aggression against a sovereign state. What should the priorities be now, at least for us, the Europeans?

The first priority is to engage a clear political will of the member states and to adopt, as soon as possible, this Enlarged Partial Agreement that establishes an international jurisdiction for the crime of aggression. It will take the form of a bilateral agreement concluded between the Council of Europe and Ukraine. It will be an important step forward.

But the next priority is somehow even more important, because it's far from being enough. We should understand, looking at the practice of the states during the years and looking at the doctrine of the international law which states the fact that the crime of aggression is the most serious among all the international crimes committed, even more than war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

This is why I would like to make an appeal, addressed to the Secretary General of this organisation, to the Committee of Ministers and to the leadership of the Parliamentary Assembly to take action to ensure the enlargement of the sphere of the state parties to the Enlarged Partial Agreement. We need to ensure, step by step, universal accountability, not only European accountability for the crime of aggression.

This is why I will strongly support the adoption of the resolution and of the draft recommendation.

Thank you so much.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Titus.

Mr Christophe BRICO is next.

Christophe.

**Mr Christophe BRICO (Monaco, EPP/CD):** Thank you, Mister Chairman.

The Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, as this report rightly points out, did not start three years ago, but eleven years ago, under the current regime. And we could go back even further, since a few months ago, in this very chamber, we commemorated the century of the Holodomor.

It's a crime the likes of which we haven't seen on our continent for a long time, and no crime can go unpunished.

In these times, we must make no mistake about words. Peace does not mean surrender. Peace cannot be synonymous with Ukraine's capitulation, which would also be our capitulation. This Assembly was created on the ashes of the Second World War with one intention: "Never again". And it is put to the test not when things are easy, but when things are hard. And today, things are hard.

In 1936, after the signing of the Munich Agreement, Winston CHURCHILL said to Prime Minister CHAMBERLAIN: "You had the choice between dishonour and war; you chose dishonour and you will have war".

This report proposes justice.

There can be no peace without justice. There can be no peace without recognition and compensation for the victims. Russia, the Russian Federation, and more precisely the regime of the Russian Federation, attacked, pillaged, raped and killed Ukraine, not only the state but also the people; the state which is part of this institution, the people who sit with us in this hemicycle. A brotherly people, a people with whom we work.

So, of course, I will support this report unreservedly, and I hope that many of us will do the same.

*Slava Ukraini!*

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Christophe.

Ms Nadejda IORDANOVA is next.

**Ms Nadejda IORDANOVA (Bulgaria, NR):** Thank you, Mister President.

Dear colleagues,

It is, indeed, more than 11 years since Russia invaded Ukraine. It is more than three years since the Russian Federation launched its full-scale, brutal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. A war that constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and assault on the very principles that bind us as a European Community – sovereignty, territorial integrity, democracy and the rule of law.

The report is not only timely, it is essential. It sends a clear message that aggression, atrocity and violations of human dignity will not be unpunished.

Mister Bulai, thank you for your excellent work. I strongly support the draft resolution and the recommendations, specifically paragraph 13 with a clear call to speed up and reach a political decision on the creation of a Special Tribunal for criminal aggression against Ukraine.

My home country, Bulgaria, participates in the core group on the establishment of the Special Tribunal. A significant progress in the work of the group has been achieved in the last few months. The establishment of such a tribunal should have the widest possible support and legitimacy, and it should guarantee the independence and impartiality of the mechanism.

Justice must be done. It must be seen being done. I believe that achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine must be based on the respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It must provide for full accountability for all perpetrators of war crimes and the settling of just and comprehensive compensation for the victims of those crimes.

To this end, I strongly support further efforts to create a compensation mechanism. Accountability includes reparation. I support the proposal that frozen Russian assets be repurposed for this aim. Of course, with legal certainty. It's only just that Russia, the aggressor, contributes directly to rebuilding what has been done.

Dear colleagues, I believe that we will unite tonight and support the resolution.

Thank you.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Nadejda.

Mr Pavlo BAKUNETS is next.

**Mr Pavlo BAKUNETS (Ukraine, ECPA):** Dear Mister President, dear rapporteur, dear members of the Assembly,

I am here today because of brave Ukrainian soldiers. Our Ukrainian delegation are here because of brave Ukrainians.

The Ukrainian army has been stopping the biggest aggressor in the continent for the last 12 years. Every day our brave soldiers are fighting.

We can live, we can work. We can say the truth about the Russian aggressor, about Russian terrorists here because of brave Ukrainian people.

Last year our Ukrainian army fought better. Because your support is better. Your support is very big. Thank you. Every one of you. Thank your people in your countries because it's their money. Thank you for your support.

Now, while we are here in Strasbourg, Ukrainian soldiers are stopping Russian attacks on the front line. I want to say it clearly: the Ukrainian army is protecting not only Ukraine. Our army is protecting all of Europe.

And you must know that Russia knows no borders. Russia will not stop. Russia must be stopped.

I want to underline that Ukraine wants peace. Our people are doing everything to bring peace to Ukraine and to Europe.

There is only one country, one person who does not want peace. It's a terrorist country. It's a killer country. You know its name. It's Russia. And we together must stop it. Europe must be united. United to bring Russian military and political leaders to justice for these crimes, for this genocide in Ukraine.

I mean international tribunal next month. I mean international tribunal in the nearest future.

I believe in the Special Tribunal. I believe in the International Comprehensive Fund. And I believe in God.

I believe in a free and peaceful Ukraine, in a big democratic European family.

Thank you.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Pavlo.

I now give the floor to Mr Piero FASSINO. Piero.

**Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC):** "I will speak in Italian" [in English].

Thank you, President.

After 3 years of war, of course, the call for peace goes up from many quarters, and that's right. A war that has produced devastation, destruction, casualties, massacres. And yet I believe that we must with great clarity from this house say that not all peace is a just peace.

It is not a just peace that rewards the aggressor and punishes the aggressed.

It is not a just peace that accepts humiliating conditions that were set by Vladimir PUTIN to go to negotiations. In particular I recall that PUTIN has already annexed, not just occupied, the Donbas. Having annexed it, today he is demanding that it simply be recognised as part of the Russian Federation, just as he did in 2014 with Crimea.

I remember that it is calling for a dismantling of the entire Ukrainian military system and it is calling for conditions of limited sovereignty for Ukraine, which are unacceptable.

I think you have to be clear about all of this.

We want a just peace. And a just peace is a peace that recognises the rights of the aggressed and does not reward the aggressor.

And it is, in my opinion, worrisome that the President of the United States is ready to grant PUTIN whatever PUTIN asks for, because then he already risks putting the negotiation on an unjust basis and creating the conditions under which PUTIN can think about continuing the war, delaying at any time the search for an agreement and then setting his conditions knowing that the main country on this planet is ready to accept those conditions.

I believe that all this should push us even more to support Ukraine in its reasons, to support it while it is suffering an aggression that is even more acute and atrocious than the one it has suffered in the past years, and that it is right not only to fight for a just peace, but also for those who produced this war and this tragedy to be held accountable. Let him be held accountable for the crimes that he has committed and let him be held accountable for the devastation that has been produced.

And this therefore is the direction followed by the actions of the Council of Europe.

I believe that we must ask all the governments of the member countries of the Council of Europe to support the Council of Europe in this initiative.

Thank you.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Piero.

Ms Natalia DAVIDOVICI is next.

**Ms Natalia DAVIDOVICI (Republic of Moldova, EPP/CD):** Thank you, Mister President.

Dear colleagues,

Accountability for war crimes is not just a legal necessity – it is a moral imperative and a matter of regional and global security.

We have all witnessed the tragedy that has been unfolding in Ukraine for three years now – deliberate attacks on civilians, mass executions, torture, sexual violence, killing and illegal deportation of Ukrainian children.

These crimes cannot be dismissed as propaganda or isolated incidents. They have been systematically documented, analysed and corroborated by reputable international bodies, human rights organisations and legal experts.

These reports include testimonies, satellite imagery and forensic investigations.

A report by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has documented the unlawful killings of civilians, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and widespread torture, which meet the legal definitions of war crimes under the Geneva Conventions.

Moldova has consistently condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine and stands in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. The Moldovan government supports all initiatives aimed at delivering justice to the victims of Russian aggression, including the establishment of a Special Tribunal.

It is imperative that we, as members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, stand firm in the belief that impunity must not be allowed to prevail. The international community has a legal and moral obligation to ensure that those responsible for war crimes face justice.

Failure to address these crimes emboldens aggressors worldwide, undermining the fundamental principles of international law and human rights. If Russian authorities are not held accountable, it will set a dangerous precedent, signaling that acts of aggression and cruelty can go unpunished. This, in turn, weakens the international order and fuels further violations. It is our responsibility to prevent this.

Just yesterday, children were being laid to rest in Kryvyi Rih:

I want their names to be heard in this hall again:

Timofey - 3 years old

Radislav - 7

Arina - 7

German - 9

Mikita - 15

Alina - 15

Danilo - 15

Konstantin - 16

Nikita - 17 years old

Nine children from Kryvyi Rih who were killed by a Russian ballistic missile. And hundreds more Ukrainian children. PUTIN must be held accountable for their deaths.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Madam Larysa BILOZIR.

Have you inserted your badge, Larysa? Press just one once and wait.

**Ms Larysa BILOZIR (Ukraine, ALDE):** Thank you, President.

Dear colleagues, foremost I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the rapporteur that also initiated this report, Mr Iulian BULAI. Thank you for your leadership, and thank you colleagues for your unwavering support to Ukraine.

These debates are incredibly important.

While Russian attacks increased and are horrifying, in just the past month over 4 000 of navigated bombs and 4 000 of Shahed drones. Russia improves its weapons, makes them more sophisticated, to kill as many people as they can.

Such tactics prove that Russia's dictator, PUTIN, is unwilling to end the war.

By now we didn't hear anything during the so called peace talks in Saudi Arabia about restoring international law and borders, punishing Russia for war crimes. Instead there are talks about what Russia will come out with. Of course. Let's leave sanctions on Russian gas and oil, turn on SWIFT for Russia and Russians will send three times as many drones and missiles as a gratitude for this right away.

Russia continues to claim that they target only military targets, attacking us every day. My children now are sitting in the bomb shelters. Actually, they go even to play now, my 2-year-old son goes there to play even if there is no airline because his whole entire life he mostly spent his time in a bomb shelter.

So Russia killed 9 children in the hometown of our president, Kryvyi Rih, and injured children when they were in school in Sumy, 19 children last week. And at the same time, when there is a minute of commemoration of these children that were killed, some demonstratively do not stand up even, just to show the ignorance and their cynical approach to these deaths. And I think it's inhuman in this citadel of human rights and humanity, and still I thank German people for their support of Ukraine. And I thank that some of us were not re-elected who didn't even stand up in this minute of silence.

The Ukrainian delegation, our people are thankful to your vital role, to the vital role of the Council of Europe in this mission to establish the Register of Damage and momentum behind a Special Tribunal for the crime of aggression.

And I really much hope we add now more claims. It's 10 already. And I really much hope that the compensation mechanism and the fund will be established and the tribunal too.

So, let history remember that when others thought of compromise we chose justice, when others spoke of peace we demanded it to be just and long-lasting, and when others looked away you stood firm with Ukraine.

Thank you.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly):** Thank you.

Mr Christophe LACROIX.

**Mr Christophe LACROIX (Belgium, SOC):** Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The aggression against Ukraine, a member of the great European family, is a flagrant violation of international law, a challenge to our democracies and a direct attack on the values that this Council of Europe has been defending against all odds for over seventy years.

The Council of Europe, founded to defend democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, has a duty to say now and clearly: there can be no peace without justice. No forgetting, no impunity for anyone who attacks another country.

But responsibility does not stop with the courts. We, the member states, also have a political responsibility: that of being able to protect our peoples, our institutions and our allies.

Today, Europe is still far too dependent: it is militarily dependent, it is economically dependent, and it is vulnerable to actors who do not share our values. The current position of the United States, under the presidency of Donald TRUMP, has acted as an electroshock for Europe, highlighting our dependence and the urgent need to reinforce our strategic autonomy.

The world has changed, our certainties have been swept away, and we are faced with an American President who threatens Ukraine, humiliates its President, talks with the aggressor Vladimir PUTIN; an American President who threatens Canada; an American President who threatens Denmark and Greenland; an American President who threatens Panama; an American President who spits in the face of his historic allies and declares an unprecedented trade war on them; an American President who votes at the United Nations against a European proposal with Russia, North Korea, Belarus and Iran.

So what's to be done? What should we do? Continue to lament? No. Deep within us, we have the resources to stand up and face reality, without forgetting the ideal. We can defend our interests, our people and our principles without depending on uncertain allies. But above all: not at any price. Autonomy must not mean austerity, privatisation or social regression.

We must forge a European capacity to defend our principles while remaining true to who we are: democracies, yes, but first and foremost social democracies, based on solidarity and the rule of law. We can no longer do without this reflection. The war in Ukraine has revealed our vulnerabilities.

The Council of Europe must be the guarantor of this coherence. There can be no talk of human rights without the means to defend them.

The war in Ukraine is an electroshock for us: it's up to us to ensure that it becomes a decisive turning point with no turning back.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Mister Claude Carignan, you have the floor.

Thank you, Mister Carignan.

**Mr Claude CARIGNAN (Canada):** Thank you, dear colleagues.

The Council of Europe and this Parliamentary Assembly have shown extraordinary leadership in holding Russia to account for its crime of aggression in Ukraine.

Indeed, the Register of Damage for Ukraine is a case in point, obviously serving to register claims and preserve evidence.

In addition, the Core Group, of which Canada is a member, has now finalised the work required to create a special tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine within the framework of the Council of Europe.

In the words of the Secretary General: "The Council of Europe is ready to rapidly set up the Special Tribunal. It is now up to states to show the political will".

From the outset of Russia's invasion of Ukraine – in 2014, I'd like to emphasise – Canada took a clear, principled stance.

When Russia invaded Crimea, former Prime Minister Stephen HARPER led the charge to expel it from the G8. Canada began imposing sanctions against Russian individuals and institutions.

More recently, we referred the situation in Ukraine to the International Criminal Court (ICC) a week after the full-scale invasion. We subsequently sent a team from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to support the war crimes investigation.

The International Criminal Court's arrest warrants against Vladimir PUTIN and his Commissioner for Children's Rights are important steps forward in the process of holding Russia responsible and accountable.

However, it's no secret that the new US administration has a different view of this war of aggression.

While I welcome American diplomatic efforts to bring about a ceasefire, there can be no lasting peace without justice. Indeed, if Russia is allowed to annex Ukrainian territories, to kill, torture and kidnap without consequence, how can we feign surprise when others follow suit?

In conclusion, in Canada, as many of you know, we are in the middle of an election campaign. But I can assure you that whatever the outcome, I am convinced that the next government's position on this war of aggression will not change.

The PUTIN regime must be held accountable.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Madam Mezentseva-Fedorenko, you have the floor.

**Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

There is a very interesting saying which might be a little bit contradictory for us, but I'll explain. It goes like this: "The true soldier is fighting not because he hates something in front of him, but because he loves a lot what is behind him.

Today, thousands and thousands of brave Ukrainian women and men do really fight for everything they love which is behind them. Behind this Assembly, there are so many millions of Ukrainians who are not fighting only on the front line, but daily saving lives, teaching children in metro schools under the ground because the bombs are rolling daily, saving lives, and continuing the diplomatic fight as well, moving the economy together and moving our EU inspirations together.

I think, colleagues, one day we will be very proud of ourselves because of these enormous efforts, which were made by each and every one of you. And I would like to thank Mr Iulian BULAI and the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights for collecting very practical examples of what will happen next.

We do think that it is a realistic move to establish a special international tribunal for the crime of aggression already in May. After three years of daily work for all of us. It will be talking not about top leadership, the illegitimate, I wouldn't even call him president, Vladimir PUTIN, but around 20 other persons of top military and political leadership of the Russian Federation, the real aggressor with whom we deal with today.

Temporary relocated persons.

I want to thank every member state and beyond from not only our subcontinent, but also beyond, it's also the Canadian colleagues and others for receiving our compatriots, children, women, and not only.

And the resolution calls not to stop the statutes which you might be revising.

Colleagues, the Register of Damage. More than 20 000 claims have already been tabled. There will be many more. We're giving the way, we've paved the green light for those whose losses were not only material, those who faced sexual violence, deportations, killings and other things.

Last but not least, civilians in captivity, prisoners of war, illegally deported children. All of these categories have to be back home. One approach, if it's prisoners of war exchange all for all, civilians have to be back home. No breach of any international conventions and Geneva Conventions by the Russian Federation.

International pressure has to be there so that the sanctions should follow until the just and lasting peace is established.

Glory to Ukraine. [spoken in Ukrainian]

Thank you.

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

**Mr Markus WIECHEL (Sweden, ECPA):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Madam President

I wish to begin by extending my heartfelt gratitude to the Ukrainian delegation present here in the Council of Europe.

Your dedication, cooperation, and contributions to humanity are invaluable. You embody the spirit of resilience and collaboration that serves as a beacon of hope for us all.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment and the sacrifices you have made, which indeed remind us of the strength found in unity and cooperation.

Today, I also wish to emphasize the importance and profound significance of standing firm against aggression—a principle that forms the foundation of our commitment to peace and stability in Europe.

The ongoing Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is not merely a struggle confined to its borders; it is an assault on the principles and values that constitute the core of our organization.

Therefore, defending Ukraine should be considered a collective defense of our shared ideals.

The people of Ukraine have shown remarkable bravery and resilience when faced with ruthless adversities.

Ukrainian soldiers are not just defenders of their own nation but vanguards of Europe's security.

The courage displayed by Ukrainian men and women is heroic and inspiring.

Therefore, I cannot emphasize enough that their steadfast resistance sends a clear message:

The expansionist ambitions of the Russian dictatorship cannot and will not undermine the bedrock of international order.

It is crucial that we stand united in our support, providing the necessary resources and solidarity to ensure that Ukraine remains a sovereign, independent nation.

We, as Europeans, should commit to this cause for as long as it takes.

This challenge demands not only our attention but also our action.

I am therefore proud that my own Swedish government has continually increased our military support packages to Ukraine.

In conclusion, dear friends and colleagues, let me remind you:

- Supporting Ukraine today is safeguarding the autonomy of nations tomorrow.
- In standing with Ukraine, we stand for liberty, justice, and the enduring power of a free people.
- Helping Ukraine is not just a moral obligation; it's a strategic imperative for future peace.
- With Ukraine, we affirm that democracy is worth defending, no matter the cost.
- Ukraine's fight is Europe's fight—it is a testament that tyranny will not prevail.
- The resilience of Ukraine is a rallying cry for unity against oppression.

Thank you.

*Slava Ukraini.*

**Ms Zdravka BUŠIĆ (Croatia, EPP/CD):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

It is four years since Ukraine is fighting for freedom and their own existence, and Russia continues destroying the future of Ukrainians to live freely and peacefully in their home nation. Unfortunately, we still don't see the end. Thus, we must continue with our overall support to Ukraine.

Only strong Ukraine can achieve the desired outcome in the peace process. This is in the interest of the entire Europe. Therefore, it is important that we continue to extend our strong military, economic, humanitarian, and diplomatic help. With that, we invest in our own security as well as in the economic and social stability.

Only peace which will protect the sovereignty of Ukraine and guarantee security could be long-lasting and sustainable. Such a peace agreement must not, and it should not, undermine the foundation of the international law on which the international system is based.

Therefore, it is important that Europe is present in every peace conference as well as in all negotiations. Because it is there where the decisions are made about peace architecture of our continent.

It goes without saying that we all are supporting peace process and we all are for peace. But it is not acceptable that the outcome in which occupied territories of Ukraine would be under Russian jurisdiction, which is in contradiction with the principles of the international jurisprudence.

These negotiations must include the principle of territorial sovereignty of Ukraine as it was before the annexation and aggression.

We are not for peace which would reward Russia as an aggressor. Neither we are for peace which would result in a frozen conflict that could last for decades. Such a peace agreement would only create grounds for new conflicts with even greater territorial ambitions of the aggressor. Therefore, Ukraine must have just and sustainable peace.

*Slava Ukraini!*

**Mr Georgios STAMATIS (Greece, EPP/CD):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

The continuous Russian aggression in Ukraine is a blatant violation of international law and human rights. The tragedy of war has brought untold suffering, destruction and death to millions of innocent civilians.

As an organization committed to the protection of human rights, we strongly expressed in clear terms the horrors we have seen by the bombardment of cities like Mariupol and Kharkiv, the destruction of hospitals and schools, the mass displacement of people, and the credible reports of war crimes including torture, rape, and the deliberate targeting of civilians. These are not abstract facts. These are human lives, and behind each number is a name, a family, a future cut short.

In this regard, the international community has to send a clear message to the contrary, namely that perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and possible genocide, will be held to account. The same must apply to the perpetrators of the crime of aggression, namely the political and military leadership of the Russian Federation who are responsible for launching the ongoing war. The Assembly has called for

accountability, and we must stand firm in our commitment to justice. As it is underlined in the resolution, we support setting up an ad hoc international criminal tribunal to prosecute the crime of aggression allegedly committed by the political leaders and military commanders.

But, beyond our efforts for accountability, as an organization dedicated to the promotion of peace, we have also to work systematically to build peace in Ukraine. The war must come to an end. Not through silence or compromise with violence, but through diplomacy, dialogue, and the rebuilding of trust. This means, above all, ensuring that Ukraine, its sovereignty, its people, and its democratic future, is at the very center of any peace process.

What we need is a framework for dialogue rooted in international law and human dignity. A peace process that includes Ukraine fully and respects its territorial integrity. A process that does not reward aggression, but rather restores the primacy of rules over force.

Yet, seeking peace does not mean forgetting justice. The two must go hand in hand. Peace cannot exist without truth, without recognition, and without responsibility.

Every day this war continues, more lives are lost, and the wounds deepen. We have to work for a peace that is just, inclusive and lasting.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

We must now interrupt the list of speakers.

Registered speakers who have been present during the debate but have not been able to speak may, within 4 hours, submit their typed statement to the Session Office for publication in the minutes. This text must not exceed 400 words and must be transmitted electronically.

I now call the Committee's reply.

Mister rapporteur, you have the floor for 3 minutes.

Thank you.

**Mr Iulian BULAI (Romania, ALDE, Rapporteur):** Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Thank you all of you for these fantastic contributions, and I am so happy that all of you have touched upon the most important topic: justice and a just peace.

And I am very happy that we've been going through supporting the Register of Damage we're about to have done, the Special Tribunal, and we're working on the compensation mechanism.

And now I want to turn to you, Ms Sevim DAĞDELEN. We are all here in order to tackle and to address all the sufferings in Europe and beyond, together with those who suffer, but not one against each other, not us against those from the Middle East or those on the African continent suffering, but all together tackling and addressing and respecting all, not one against each other. That is so important to do here.

That being said, yes, it's good that people understand that we should create peace, but not impose more tariffs on those who suffer more. I'm very happy that the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) representatives have been in Kiev these days signing this treaty. It's so important.

Mr Gustaf GÖTHBERG, I totally agree with you that we should aim for justice, not revenge, and a just peace, that is the starting point of no revenge.

Yes, Mr Christophe BRICO, you're right, peace does not mean capitulation. So we should help Ukraine to fight until a just peace is achieved.

And I agree with Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN with the ideal of extended jurisdiction in Europe and beyond when thinking of justice.

Now, at the start of my intervention, I spoke about the 11 years since the war started. It is correct, but just partially right, because the first action before the fall of the Soviet Union was in Transnistria, was in Moldova. Europe was saying something, but not strongly enough. And they were still around misbehaving. In 2008, that's 17 years ago. They occupied two territories of Georgia, and they were still around. The people were a bit upset, but did not do enough. In 2014, the Russian MPs had been kicked out of the Assembly, but not of

the organisation. They were still around. They were welcomed back in 2019. Why did it take us such a long time to act categorically and call a war a war, not a temporary visit to another country? This is what we should be doing ahead of us: fight for justice and have dignity in our speeches when approaching these issues.

And on behalf of all of you, I would like to wish lots of wisdom and good health to Mr TRUMP and also safe trips from Mar-a-Lago to Washington every time. But I also like to invite him to join us in this debate in seeing the dignity of this Assembly when talking about peace and justice and the fair end of this war.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Mister Vice-Chairman, do you wish to reply?

**Mr Pablo HISPÁN (Spain, EPP/CD, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights):** Thank you, President. [spoken in French]

The Committee adopted the draft resolution by overwhelming majority and the draft recommendation unanimously. This report is the fourth report from the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights on Russia's full scale war of aggression on Ukraine and we need to ensure accountability.

We were the first to propose the idea of a special tribunal for the crime of aggression in April 2022, with a report by our former colleague, Mr Aleksander POCIEJ. We then made other proposals on justice and accountability in reports prepared by our members Mr Damien COTTIER and Mr Davor Ivo STIER. Some of these ideas have materialised, like the residual damage.

Today, I call the Assembly to support the draft resolution and draft recommendation prepared by Mr Iulian BULAI. Congratulations, Iulian, for your extraordinary report.

In order to show again our political support of accountability efforts that are being made Ukraine, our member states and the Council of Europe, and to say loud and clear that justice for the crimes committed by the aggressor cannot be sacrificed. Our committee will continue to work on the legal and human rights consequences of this aggression with a report that is being prepared by Mr Eerik-Niiles KROSS and is due for debate in June.

I want to finish my speech by giving thanks and recognition to the members and the secretary who have also worked hard on this report.

Thank you very much.

## **Vote: Russian war of aggression against Ukraine: the need to ensure accountability and avoid impunity**

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

The general debate is now closed.

The Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights has presented a draft resolution to which five amendments and one sub-amendment have been tabled, and a draft recommendation to which no amendments have been tabled (Doc. 16152).

I have been informed by the chairman of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights that Amendments 5, 3 and 4 were adopted unanimously by the committee. However, as these amendments have been the subject of sub-amendments, they will be examined in accordance with the usual procedure.

I have also been informed by the committee chairman that Amendment 2 was rejected by the committee by a two-thirds majority of votes cast.

Is this the case, Mister Vice-Chairman?

**Mr Pablo HISPÁN (Spain, EPP/CD, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights):** Yes.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** If no one objects, I consider this amendment definitively rejected.

Is there any objection?

If there is, we'll have to check that the objection has the requisite support of ten people.

*Amendment 2 to the draft resolution is therefore rejected and will not be called.*

I understand that Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO wishes to withdraw Amendment 1 in favour of an oral clarification amendment.

Is this the case?

**Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** That's right, Madam President.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Amendment 1 is therefore withdrawn.

The chair has been informed of the following oral amendment:

In the draft resolution, in the last sentence of paragraph 4, replace the words "release of all illegally detained prisoners of war and civilians" with the following words: "Release of civilians illegally detained by the Russian Federation and mutual release and repatriation of all prisoners of war, on an 'all against all' basis."

I consider this oral amendment 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.

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

There are not enough objections. Therefore there are no objections.

We will therefore consider this oral amendment.

Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO has the floor to support this oral amendment.

You have the floor, thank you.

**Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** Thank you, Madam President [spoken in French].

Colleagues, that's very simple. According to the Geneva Convention, civilians can't be taken hostage. The Ukrainian side never takes civilians hostage, but Russia does. We're talking about the approach, all for all, in terms of prisoners of war. In exchange, all for all. And to bring civilians in captivity on the Russian side back home to Ukraine.

This is a technical but also a legally important oral amendment. Please support it.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Does anyone wish to speak against this oral amendment?

Anyone?

The committee is obviously in favor.

We will now proceed to vote on the oral amendment.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

*The oral amendment is adopted.*

I understand that Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO wishes to withdraw Amendment 5 in favour of an oral conciliation amendment. Is this correct?

**Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, ECPA):** Yes, Madam President, that's right.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Okay

Amendment 5 is therefore withdrawn.

The chair has been informed of the following oral amendment:

In the draft resolution, at the end of paragraph 10, insert the following sentence:

"The Assembly stresses that the jurisdiction of the Special Tribunal should extend to alleged crimes of aggression committed by the so-called Belarusian leadership, as well as by the military and political leadership of North Korea."

I consider this oral amendment 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 rise.

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

There are no objections.

We will therefore examine this oral amendment.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO has the floor to support this oral amendment.

You have 30 seconds.

Thank you for your time.

**Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, ECPA):** Dear colleagues,

I think you see everything in the materials. This amendment is supported. So I just want to ask you all to support and to make this – by the way, very strong resolution – a little bit stronger.

And I want to thank Mr Iulian BULAI for the absolutely great job he has done. Thanks to you and to the secretariat who helped you.

[Speech in another language].

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your intervention.

Does anyone wish to speak against this oral amendment? Nobody?

The Committee is obviously in favor.

We shall now proceed to vote on the oral amendment.

The vote is open.

*The oral amendment is adopted.*

Amendment 3 is the subject of a sub-amendment by Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO has the floor to support Amendment 3.

You have 30 seconds.

**Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, ECPA):** Yeah, it's about the Register of Damage that is an important thing because, as you know, the war in Ukraine did not start on 24 February 2022. The war started in 2014 with the Russian attack on Crimea and Donbas, which have been illegally occupied since that time.

And unfortunately millions of Ukrainians have suffered from that time. So it's very important for us to register damage from that time, not just from 2022. It's a question of justice towards these people.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

We now come to the sub-amendment.

Ms MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO has the floor to support it.

You have 30 seconds.

**Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** Thank you, Madam President.

Colleagues, this is a technical addition.

We suggest to replace "Register of Damage" with the following "the participants and associate members of the Register of Damage" because we assume there will be many more than just member states, etc.

Thank you very much.

Please consider this. It's been stipulated in terms of legal procedures.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Does anyone wish to speak against the sub-amendment?

Mr Goncharenko, what is your opinion on the amendment to the sub-amendment?

**Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, ECPA):** I completely support my dear colleague, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO. Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** The committee is in favour.

We shall now proceed to the vote on the sub-amendment.

The vote is open.

*The sub-amendment is adopted.*

We now return to Amendment 3.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment as sub-amended? Anyone?

The committee has adopted this amendment as sub-amended.

We shall now proceed to the vote on the amendment.

The vote is open.

*Amendment 3 is adopted.*

Amendment 4 is the subject of an oral sub-amendment by the committee.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO has the floor to support Amendment 4.

You have the floor.

**Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, ECPA):** Thank you very much [spoken in French].

This is a very important amendment which says about addressing member states to impose sanctions finally on NLMK Group, which is led and owned by PUTIN's wallet, Mr LISIN, one of the richest people in Russia, meaning PUTIN's deepest wallet and one of the key persons in the defence area because he produces steel for all Russian weapons and he continues to work and operate in Europe and he doesn't have European sanctions. That is completely unacceptable.

And I ask you to support this amendment. Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your intervention.

The chair has been informed of the following oral sub-amendment:

In Amendment 4, before the words "because of their ongoing co-operation", insert the following words: "and others". I consider this oral sub-amendment admissible 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 stand up.

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

There are no objections.

We will therefore examine this oral sub-amendment.

Ms Olena KHOMENKO has the floor to support the sub-amendment.

**Ms Olena KHOMENKO (Ukraine, ECPA):** Dear colleagues, this oral sub-amendment was moved by Mr NATALUKHA during the Committee Meeting and it stipulates to put the words "and others" after the word "complex". This sub-amendment was supported by the rapporteur and the Committee.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your intervention.

Does anyone wish to speak against the oral sub-amendment? Anyone?

What is your opinion, Mister Goncharenko?

**Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, ECPA):** I completely support both dear colleague Mr Dmytro NATALUKHA and dear colleague Ms Olena KHOMENKO.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** The committee's opinion is obviously favourable.

We will now proceed to the vote on the oral sub-amendment.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I ask for the results to be displayed.

*The oral sub-amendment is adopted.*

We now return to the amendment.

Does anyone wish to speak against Amendment 4 as sub-amended? Anyone?

The Committee has adopted this amendment as sub-amended.

We will therefore proceed to the vote on Amendment 4.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I ask for the results to be displayed.

*Amendment 4 is adopted.*

We will now proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in Doc. 16152 (amended) entitled "Russian war of aggression against Ukraine: the need to ensure responsibility and avoid impunity".

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I ask for the results to be displayed.

*The draft resolution contained in Doc. 16152 was adopted.*

*(Applause)*

We will now proceed to vote on the draft recommendation contained in Doc. 16152 entitled "Russian war of aggression against Ukraine: the need to ensure responsibilities and avoid impunity".

I would also remind you that the majority required is two-thirds of the votes cast.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I ask for the results to be displayed.

*The draft recommendation is adopted.*

Thank you.

*(Applause)*

You may leave the room if you do not wish to continue with the session.

We will resume.

## **Debate: Implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights**

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Excuse me, if you don't want to stay for the debate, can you leave the session? Thank you for your time.

The next item is the presentation and discussion of the report by Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU on behalf of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, on the "Implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights" (Doc. 16134).

I would remind you that we must finish examining this text, including the vote, at 8 p.m. We will therefore have to interrupt the list of speakers at 7.50 p.m. in order to hear the committee's reply and proceed with the necessary votes.

Rapporteur, you have 7 minutes to present your report and 3 minutes to reply to the speakers at the end of the general discussion.

Rapporteur, you have the floor. Thank you for your time.

**Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU (Cyprus, SOC, Rapporteur):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Friends,

This is an important year.

This year is the 75th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Convention and the Court are monumental achievements in the history of our continent. Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) have led to the release of political prisoners; protections of speech, assembly and association that are the bedrock of democratic life; the decriminalisation of homosexuality; the development of fairer trials; an end to impunity for torture and ill-treatment in many states; laws to protect the judiciary and prosecutors from government control; measures to tackle slavery and human trafficking; and countless other achievements.

Almost 80% of the Court's rulings have been implemented. Overall, that means 26 500 rulings. Each one of these implemented rulings carries a story of justice for a person whose rights were violated.

Yet despite the successes, the failure by some states to remedy the underlying causes of human rights violations identified in a minority of judgments has a very negative impact on the Convention system as a whole.

Problems with delays at the Court are closely related to issues with the implementation of the Court's judgments. After the Court finds a violation of the Convention, states should make sure that the same problem does not happen again to other people, to prevent more human rights violations. However, if states do not do this, then similar problems keep happening and the Court is overloaded with cases.

The good thing is that most states are implementing judgments of the Court well. But for some states, a judgment of the Court can lead to the applicant in the particular case getting justice, but not to the reforms needed to resolve the underlying human rights problem identified by the judgment. This means that the same human rights violations keep on happening.

This report highlights those states which must do better in addressing the root cause of human rights violations, with the worst offenders listed clearly in the draft resolution.

The following countries all have over 40 leading judgments pending implementation: Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine.

These states must undertake urgent measures to systematically improve their implementation of the Court's judgments.

Türkiye, being the biggest country of the Council of Europe, has the highest number of leading cases pending implementation of any member state, meaning it has the most underlying human rights problems that need fixing. Something that has an impact on all of us. The Committee of Ministers is asking the Turkish government, pleading with it, to end its control over judges and prosecutors; to stop accusing people of terrorism who are just making political arguments; to stop locking people up simply for having encrypted messaging apps on their phones; to stop jailing politicians, human rights lawyers and journalists who make critical points. But the Turkish government keeps going, and the problems just get worse, leading to an avalanche effect.

We have seen ÖCALAN imprisoned without any hope of release. We have seen the removal of a series of democratically elected mayors. We have seen the arrest of the leaders of the main Kurdish political party, Selhattin DEMIRTAS and Figen YÜKSEKDAĞ. And a few weeks ago, we saw the arrest and imprisonment of the main Presidential challenger, the Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İMAMOĞLU.

Colleagues, this situation has not come out of the blue, and in fact, it is inherently linked to the non-implementation of the Court's judgments. Let me explain why. In the cases of Osman KAVALA and others, the European Court found that the prosecution and judiciary had been used by the government to target its perceived enemies. In its supervision of the implementation of the Kavala judgment, the Committee of Ministers has said that the Turkish government has to take steps to restore the independence of the prosecution and the judiciary. But this did not happen – and now we see the end result. The refusal of the Turkish authorities to implement the Court's rulings has left it able to control criminal justice, and it now uses this weapon to eliminate its political opposition.

This brings me to Osman KAVALA himself. It is absolutely unacceptable that Mr KAVALA has still not been released, despite a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights ordering this and a second judgment under infringement proceedings which confirmed that he must be released immediately.

I will return now to how this issue affects all member states. The key messages for states in the draft resolution are that they must put in place effective mechanisms at the national level to implement the Court's judgments, provided, of course, that they have the political will to do so. Meanwhile, parliaments should effectively supervise this process, through a committee or sub-committee that monitors judgment implementation. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe can support such initiatives, through the creation of a network of parliamentarians to promote the implementation of the European Court's judgments – and this proposal is also included in the draft resolution.

In the draft recommendation, the Committee of Ministers is requested to redouble its efforts to promote the implementation of the Court's judgments, through the measures indicated by the Reykjavík Declaration.

In my report, I also mention the long-unimplemented judgments of the Court in interstate cases or judgments of cases emanating or caused by interstate disputes affecting too many people, proving that the implementation of judgments also turns into a tool of politics and national interest, unfortunately.

Finally, friends, this is my third and final report on the implementation of ECtHR judgments. Over the last six years, I have been struck by two things. The first is an eagerness for stakeholders to point out the need to implement judgments when we are talking about other countries. But, when it comes to our own countries, it is a different story. I have heard both governments and parliamentarians from a wide range of states play down the need to implement; make false claims of progress which can be easily disproved; and commit to making progress one year, before backtracking the next.

My second conclusion from this time is that the Committee of Ministers needs stronger tools to react when states do not implement judgments of the Court. Proof of Article 46 is not enough, nor is the complementary joint procedure.

In this respect, the Reykjavík Declaration could have gone further.

Colleagues, I return to where I began, which is to celebrate the 75 years of the European Convention on Human Rights. We have been passed a torch from previous generations. We must keep this torch alight by doing our part to strengthen an institution which has done so much good over the last 75 years.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution, Mister rapporteur.

I shall now give the floor to speakers on behalf of the political groups.

Mister Gevorgyan, on behalf of the European Conservatives, Patriots & Affiliates, you have the floor.

**Mr Armen GEVORGYAN (Armenia, ECPA, Spokesperson for the group):** Dear colleagues,

Today, the decline of democracy in many states goes hand in hand with a growing erosion of confidence in the judiciary. As we assess the effectiveness of the execution of the European Court's judgments, we must remember: this is not merely a matter of legal formality. It is about public trust in justice and about the future of the rule of law in our countries.

In this context, it is essential to understand how the European Court's decisions actually influence the quality of justice and contribute to the strengthening of democratic institutions.

Perhaps it is time for the Council of Europe to move beyond statistics and assess whether the Court's judgments are truly reshaping legal cultures and driving institutional reform.

Because strong justice systems require more than compliance, they need independence, courage, and, most crucially, the trust of citizens, not of political elites.

The challenges faced by my country, Armenia, are part of a broader trend, where national courts may formally acknowledge the European Court's judgments, yet fail to integrate them into everyday legal practice.

As a result, we continue to witness rulings that disregard the Court's standards and are later overturned in Strasbourg, time and again.

This disconnect is not accidental.

Many judges, instead of upholding the law, align their decisions with the preferences of those in power. They depart from Convention often made to avoid political confrontation.

In Armenia, we are witnessing a growing number of such cases, particularly in matters of arrest and detention.

Judges issue rulings that contradict the Convention, relying on the fact that accountability, if it comes, may take years.

Increasingly, Armenian courts are perceived not as guarantors of justice, but as instruments of domestic political agendas. There have been instances of direct public violations by the Government of the independence of judiciary, which should also be perceived as a serious discredit to the Convention.

Madam Chair,

In conclusion, I must also draw attention to today's alarming news: Azerbaijan has announced it will not comply with the judgments of the European Court, citing the non-ratification of its Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe delegation. This is a blatant political blackmail, typical of authoritarian regimes.

President Ilham ALIYEV has already deprived tens of thousands of Armenians of their rights, holds disgraceful show trials of Armenian prisoners, and now denies Azerbaijani citizens access to justice in Strasbourg.

These are the result of Europe's dangerous compromises with a regime that trades gas for human rights.

And now we are witnessing not only the destruction of the International Criminal Court, but a real threat to start losing the European Convention-based human rights system.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Ms Elena-Simona SPĂȚARU, on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

You have the floor.

**Ms Elena-Simona SPĂȚARU (Romania, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group):** Dear colleagues,

As a representative of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), I would like to congratulate Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU for continuing his work as rapporteur on the implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. Drafting a report of such complexity undoubtedly represents an approach full of challenges.

In the 75 years of its existence, the European Court of Human Rights has demonstrated its relevance by establishing a vast legal space within which every citizen has the opportunity to obtain justice following the violation of his or her rights and interests and when national avenues of redress have been exhausted.

This is the most concrete way to defend the three fundamental pillars of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law on the European continent.

National parliaments play a key role through specialised committees or sub-committees, exercising control over how our governments implement the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. This is also the case in the Romanian Senate, where a permanent parliamentary structure, the Commission on Constitutionality, whose mandate is limited, among other things, to exercising control over the government's activity in this field, was established a few years ago.

The time has come for a strengthened role for national parliaments, as reconfirmed at the highest level at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member states, held in May 2023 in Reykjavík, Iceland.

I express my support for the Assembly's initiatives, following the recommendations of the Reykjavík Summit to invest the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe with a more significant role in terms of overseeing the execution of European Court of Human Rights judgments by States Parties to the Convention by raising these issues in high-level meetings.

I also express my appreciation for the information sessions for national delegations that are constantly organised by the Department for the Execution of European Court of Human Rights judgments, as well as for the Assembly's initiative to establish a network of parliamentarians for the implementation of European Court of Human Rights judgments in order to disseminate relevant examples of good practice and encourage the execution of European Court of Human Rights judgments at the national level.

The issue of leading cases needs to be adequately addressed by states facing such problems, such as Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

General measures, such as amending certain provisions of the legislative framework, where the European Court of Human Rights has found violations of the Convention.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Mr George LOUCAIDES, on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left.

You have the floor.

**Mr George LOUCAIDES (Cyprus, UEL, Spokesperson for the group):** Dear colleagues, on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left, I wish to express my appreciation to my compatriot Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU for his important work and dedication in presenting the 13th report on the implementation of the European Court of Human Rights judgments.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Convention, an extraordinary milestone for a system that has safeguarded the dignity, rights, and freedoms of millions across our continent.

However, the strength of the Convention is only as meaningful as its implementation, as rightly called in the Reykjavík Declaration and reiterated in this report, member states have an unequivocal obligation to fully and promptly execute the Court's judgments.

These judgments are not theoretical constructs. They are the final resource for victims of serious human rights violations, and their execution is essential to restoring justice, preventing recurrence, and reinforcing the rule of law.

Yet implementation gaps persist.

Structural deficiencies and a growing lack of political will in certain states have led to hundreds of leading cases remaining unexecuted.

Nine countries, including Türkiye, have over 40 leading cases pending, many for more than 5 years. This is not merely a technical delay. It reflects a systemic resistance to democratic accountability.

I must highlight, dear colleagues, the unresolved Cyprus vs Türkiye interstate case as regards both the cluster of the displaced and the missing persons. The passage of time should not discount the suffering of victims or impede on Türkiye's obligation to fully execute the Court's judgments, including the payment of just satisfaction.

Human rights cannot be optional nor selectively applied. We therefore fully support the call for strengthened national coordination mechanisms equipped with adequate authority and resources.

National parliaments must exercise robust oversight and ensure that domestic legislation aligns with the Convention.

The establishment of the execution coordinators network and the proposed network of parliamentarians are promising developments. Let us make them count.

Failure to implement judgments damages the credibility of our institutions, undermines multilateralism, and weakens citizens trust.

We owe it to the people we represent to defend the right to justice and to ensure that when the Court speaks, states listen.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Ms Wanda NOWICKA, on behalf of the Socialist, Democratic and Greens Group.

You have the floor.

**Ms Wanda NOWICKA (Poland, SOC, Spokesperson for the group):** Madam President, the report on the implementation of the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) prepared by the rapporteur Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU, is not only very timely on the 75th anniversary of adoption of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), but also very informative and analytical.

The Convention, in principle, has been a quite unique instrument aimed at defending human rights of individuals and communities and, moreover, aimed at contributing to legal and policy changes, improving human rights standards in the countries, signatories of the Convention.

Nevertheless, its implementation is still far from ideal, which the rapporteur extensively proved in his report. While the vast majority of judgements have been implemented, the number of cases pending implementation remains very high. It is also not surprising that problems with the implementation of the Court judgments are larger proportionately to authoritarian political trends and regimes in the countries in question. Therefore, it is not surprising that a high number of failures to implement convention provisions have been found, among others, in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Hungary, Georgia, and also in the past in my own country, Poland. Although, I am glad to inform you that recently in Poland, the implementation of judgments has speeded up and improved as a result of a new democratic government which is committed to human rights.

Sadly, while we are discussing this here in Strasbourg, problems with the implementation of Court judgments, serious human rights violations, are taking place every day in Europe and all over the world. Violent repression in Georgia against demonstrators following Parliamentary elections in 2024 raises a lot of human rights issues. The scandalous arrest of the mayor of Istanbul, Mr Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, along with over 100 politicians, journalists and business people, as well as violent repression against peaceful protestors in the streets of Turkish cities, are serious violations of human rights.

Only these two examples, among many others, demonstrate how human rights of people and entire societies in today's difficult times are being ignored, undermined, challenged and violated. However, despite all these deficiencies, we as an international community gathered here in Strasbourg, committed to human rights as a foundational pillar of the Council of Europe, we need to strengthen our efforts to defend our achievements in developing human rights mechanisms, and improve implementation to the highest possible degree.

Congratulations and a big thank you to our rapporteur, Mr Constantinou EFSTATHIOU, for your informative and inspirational report.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Mr Benjamin DALLE, for the Group of the European People's Party.

You have the floor.

**Mr Benjamin DALLE (Belgium, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you, Madam President [spoken in French].

Dear colleagues, first, we would like to thank the rapporteur for this timely and important report. The focus is very well chosen. It highlights the challenges that remain, especially in the implementation of leading cases which reveal systemic problems. It also draws attention to essential rights – the freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, free elections, the independence of the judiciary. Rights that lie at the core of our democracy.

The Group of the European People's Party (EPP) fully supports this report and its conclusions. Implementation matters not only for the final judgments. Interim measures, often issued in urgent situations to prevent irreparable harm, must also be respected. This is all the more important because procedures before the Court can take several years. Interim measures are sometimes the only tool available to prevent irreversible violations before justice is delivered.

The European Court of Human Rights is the final safeguard of the world's most advanced multilateral human rights system. That role becomes even more important today at a time when some political leaders openly undermine rulings by independent courts, especially when those rulings concern human rights or limit executive power. This is not just a legal concern, it is a test of our democracy. Implementing the Court's judgment is about more than legal compliance. It is about defending the rule of law against erosion from within.

And, dear colleagues, this responsibility lies not only with governments, as the report rightly points out, the national legislation and also this Assembly play a crucial role. We are all ambassadors of the European Convention on Human Rights. Whether we are in the majority or in the opposition, or whether we are here in this Assembly, we all share the duty to ensure that rights proclaimed on paper become rights respected in practice.

And this, dear colleagues, is our biggest asset. In every member state, there are parliamentarians, many of whom are here today, who are in the position to turn these judgments into lasting change. Let us speak with clarity, act with resolve, and stand where it matters the most, with the Court and with the people whose rights it protects.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Madam Gökçen, you have the floor.

**Ms Gökçe GÖKÇEN (Türkiye, SOC):** Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues, first of all, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur for this report focusing on a critical challenge our institution is facing.

The implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights is not about obeying to foreign powers, as some might claim it to be. It is about respecting the values of this very institution and its existence.

With several judgments, such as KAVALA, DEMIRTAŞ and YÜKSEKDAĞ cases not being implemented, I'm afraid there's another on the way. But that one is not just another violation of human rights. Instead, it is a direct attack against free and fair elections. It is a direct attack against the majority's right to nominate a candidate. It is a direct attack against not only Mr İMAMOĞLU, but against all of us that believe in real democracy.

Ekrem İMAMOĞLU is in jail not because he committed a crime, but because he won four elections against ERDOĞAN, and he will win another one.

301 young people are in jail not because they committed a crime, but because they showed great courage against systematic bans on peaceful protests.

I am not going to tell what happened again, as we already had an urgent debate on that. And by the way, I would like to thank you, dear colleagues, for your great support for the report on İMAMOĞLU.

I am not going to tell what happened, because what matters here is not what happened, but how we react to it.

If we sacrifice our principles just because we find these political actors useful for keeping the refugees out of the European borders, for their geopolitical position, if we do not make sure and remind ourselves why we have those principles, and if we consider this organisation as just another network activity of governments for their pragmatic work, I'm sorry, but we will not only lose more member states, but we might also lose this historical institution.

We need to accept that there is no security without democracy.

What I want to hope is that we discuss again, we teach ourselves again how great sacrifices were made in the past to end the wars, to create democracies from scratch, and we see how pragmatism can destroy our values.

And I repeat the wise words of the masses in Türkiye. "There is no salvation alone. Either all of us together or none of us". *Kurtuluş yok, ya tek başına ya hep beraber ya hiçbirimiz!*

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Madam Julhakyán, you have the floor.

**Ms Arusyak JULHAKYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD):** Thank you, Madam Chair,

And thank you, Mister Constantinos Efstathiou, for another report on this very important topic.

Dear colleagues,

Over the last couple of years, we have been reflecting to the importance of the implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which is one of the essential problems our organisation faces. So far, the European Court has delivered over 33 000 judgments. However, as of February 2025, more than 6 800 judgments of the Court have not been implemented and are still pending before the Committee of Ministers. This means that 21% of the Court's judgments have not been implemented by the member states, and this is a serious problem. Another crucial problem is that nearly 1 115 of the unexecuted judgments have been classified as leading cases, which require general measures to be adopted to prevent a recurrence of the human rights violation.

The implementation of the interim measures is also of high importance, as they are issued by the Court only in exceptional circumstances, where there is an imminent risk of irreparable harm, for example, when a person faces a threat to their life. Which means that the execution of interim measures is of higher importance. However, despite this, the Committee of Ministers has a lack of power in this respect.

Dear colleagues, I would like to remind all of us that one of the conditions for membership to the Council of Europe is respect for human rights. And the ECHR is the only abiding mechanism which is supposed to guarantee respect for human rights. And this isn't optional – it's a fundamental commitment made when joining the Convention system.

But what we see today is that the President of Azerbaijan, one of our member states, Ilham ALIYEV, during an international forum titled "Towards a new world order" declares that Azerbaijan will not comply with the European Court of Human Rights rulings due to the suspension of its Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe delegation's credentials. Is that acceptable for us?

Colleagues, unimplemented judgments undermine the authority and functioning of the convention system. This is why we must reaffirm the binding nature of judgments of the Court, further reinforce the execution of judgments by enhancing the means at our disposal in cases of non-compliance.

We cannot ignore the shameful statistics of the unexecuted judgments. And when I say shameful, I mean it for this Council, because it shows that this organisation should have taken proper actions in either introducing new mechanisms for enforcement or by thinking about sanctions in regard of the member states, which make zero effort to comply with the conditions of membership, in this case the respect for human rights.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Mister Yordanov, you have the floor.

Please insert your card. Press the button.

You have inserted...? Yes, good.

**Mr Toshko YORDANOV (Bulgaria, ECPA):** Ladies and gentlemen, today we are discussing the report of the European Court of Human Rights. In this report, Bulgaria is cited as a negative example because it refuses to register the separatist organisation OMO Ilinden.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are left with the impression that the European Court of Human Rights is exceeding its powers and interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. It is unacceptable for us that the European Court of Human Rights supports separatist organisations. Can't you see the negative effect of separatism inspired by external forces currently in Europe? The European Court of Human Rights should focus on the horrific examples of human rights violations in the state of North Macedonia, where there are documented cases of beatings just because they identify themselves as Bulgarians and shootings at Bulgarian cultural centres. This is what the European Court of Human Rights should be dealing with.

Let me be very clear.

There is no Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and there never has been. If we leave aside ideology and believe only in facts, then until the middle of the 20th century, there was neither a Macedonian state nor a Macedonian people. Macedonia is a geographical concept.

I was born in the geographical region of *Тракия* (Thrace), but I am not a *тракиец* (Trakiets). I am Bulgarian. Now, of course, there is a state called the Republic of North Macedonia – it is a multinational state. Bulgaria is not a multinational state, and we will never support separatism. Not only in our country, but also in other European countries.

Thank you for your attention!

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Mister Bouyx, you have the floor.

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

Ladies and gentlemen,

The year 2025 marks the 75th-fifth anniversary of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and in view of the news reaching us from across the globe, it has never been more necessary. It is our foundation, it is our honour, as Europeans, to remain constant at a time when the historic cycle opened after the horrors of the Second World War seems set to close.

Article 46 of the European Convention on Human Rights is very clear. I quote: "The High Contracting Parties undertake to abide by the final judgments of the Court in any disputes to which they are parties". In addition to the parties' commitment, the Convention system is equipped with a mechanism for monitoring compliance with its provisions. And yet, it has to be said, the execution of judgments continues to be inadequate.

Indeed, the resolution states that there will be 3 916 judgments pending before the Committee of Ministers in 2024. After excluding Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Hungary have the highest number of unimplemented Court judgments. Many of these countries are experiencing wartime situations, and it is clear that they face serious structural or complex problems in enforcing decisions. However, this is not always the case and, all too often, the failure to implement judgments reflects political will, or even an unwillingness to apply the principles to which they have been subscribed, and the global trend is not towards greater rule of law and enforcement of judicial decisions.

No country has been spared in what appears to be a headlong rush forward, further accelerated by the accession of Donald TRUMP to the presidency of the United States. The others, those who still believe in democratic values and human rights, appear stunned, no longer knowing how to oppose this global tsunami that is leading us into the abyss.

I would like to join others in warning against the temptation to pit sovereignty, and in particular judicial sovereignty, against respect for the fundamental principles that give structure to our continent.

No, the European Court of Human Rights does not interfere in the internal affairs of States. It only has jurisdiction over an infinitesimal proportion of cases. The ECHR judge is first and foremost the national judge: it is up to him or her to enforce the principles we all share. The ECtHR is a subsidiary form of justice; it intervenes only as a last resort, and respects the political and legal traditions of each state represented here.

Respecting the judgments and decisions of the ECtHR is a guarantee for us all. We cannot leave national jurisdictions on their own in the face of stiffening governments around the world.

We must hold the line, despite the headwinds.

This is a very important resolution: we'll have to come back to it regularly.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Madam Bayr, you have the floor.

**Ms Petra BAYR (Austria, SOC):** "No. International courts are not made to intervene in sovereign states. International courts are made to restore justice in sovereign states, just to make clear what they are made for." [in English].

Let me come to the report and to the core. The European Court of Human Rights is the core or is one of the very, very important cores of the Council of Europe. The core is only ever as hard as the implementation of the judgments of this Court work well.

In the Committee for the Election of Judges, we make every effort to look at the quality of the judges, to ensure that only the best are selected and to make sure that they are in a position to deliver very, very clear judgments, because I believe that the clarity of judgments also has a major influence on how a judgment can be implemented at national level. This quality of work is ultimately the protection, the supreme protection of the human rights of 700 million people, the very last chance to appeal to this Court if they don't think they can get justice anywhere else. That is why it is very, very important that it work well.

It is therefore completely unacceptable that judgments and, in particular, leading judgments are often not implemented for years. I would like to mention the KAVALA case once again today, where there are two judgments by the Court of Justice calling on Türkiye to release him, where there are infringement proceedings under Article 46(2), and where we are still biting on granite, and that cannot be.

I think to myself that every additional political prisoner in Türkiye is a step towards a complementary joint procedure, and we must also say this loudly so that it is understood at some point and the consequences are drawn at some point.

I am very grateful to the rapporteur for addressing the role of parliaments in the implementation of the judgments so specifically. I can only say that I have been a member of the Human Rights Committee in my National Council in Austria for over 22 years and for most of those 22 years I have also been a member of the Justice Committee, and I have never heard anything about judgments of the European Court of Human Rights in my committees. That means I'm also taking this home with me as a task.

Thank you, Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU, for the important information. We will pursue this issue.

I also believe that the proposal to set up a network where we as parliamentarians can exchange views on how the parliamentary role in the implementation of the judgments is carried out at home is really an important step. In this sense, we continue to have a good exchange and continue to strengthen the judicial system. Ultimately, this also means strengthening trust in institutions and thus strengthening democracy.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Madam Sacheva, you have the floor.

Ms Denitsa SACHEVA?

**Ms Denitsa SACHEVA (Bulgaria, EPP/CD):** Madam President,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the parliamentary scrutiny of the Assembly of the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights has to be admired. This gives parliamentarians the opportunity to be aware of the main problems of the functioning of the legal system in their particular country and on a European scale as well.

I shall focus my intervention on the Bulgarian case. Since the decision of the national assembly of Bulgaria from 2012, each year the Council of Ministers submits an annual report on the implementation of the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights on cases against the Republic of Bulgaria. This report is discussed and approved by voting in the Assembly. Unfortunately, due to political turbulences and in the last four years, a number of consecutive early parliamentary elections and a number of caretaker governments, the work on this procedure has been delayed.

The current political government and the Parliament work sustainably to compensate for the delay. However, it should be noted that since 2022, the number of applications against Bulgaria in the European Court of Human Rights has decreased significantly, and the judgments of the Court against Bulgaria are two times less than during the period before.

As a party to all major universal and regional legally binding documents on human rights, Bulgaria applies the highest international standards in this field. Our country fully complies with our international obligations, ensuring a comprehensive and well-functioning system for protecting human rights. This is essential to respect the letter and the spirit of the founding documents of the Council of Europe, the Statute and the

European Convention on Human Rights. Any arbitrary interpretation or application beyond the original intent threatens the effective functioning of the entire system of the Council of Europe. For example, the statements regarding the group of cases *UMO Ilinden and Others v. Bulgaria* in the explanatory memorandum attached to the report do not reflect the objective reality. Bulgaria has executed all necessary individual and general measures regarding these judgments, and the Constitution of Bulgaria and the relevant laws guarantee the freedom of association of all Bulgarian citizens without discrimination.

In conclusion, I dare to believe that the implementation of both the individual and general measures required with regard to the grounds of cases mentioned in the report has created the necessary conditions for the supervision by the Committee of Ministers to be successfully concluded.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Madam Gören Bölük, you have the floor.

**Ms Seda GÖREN BÖLÜK (Türkiye, NR):** Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The judgments handed down by the Court are the expression of the will of a united Europe, which seeks to guarantee human dignity, freedom and equality for all its citizens, whatever their nationality, origin or belief.

On the other hand, discriminatory approaches and double standards between member states undermine the credibility of the Council of Europe. Focusing on just one or two issues, selectively damning one or two countries and ignoring other problems is an approach that damages our Assembly.

Above all, I would like to emphasise the following point - the percentage is very important: while the average rate of execution of the Court's judgments by member states is 79%, this rate is 90% in Türkiye. This rate is higher than in many European countries.

We believe that approaches calling into question our commitment to the rule of law should be reassessed in the light of this hard data.

While criticising the independence of the judiciary in Türkiye, we note that attempts are being made to politicise ongoing trials. With regard to the Kavala case, which is also mentioned in the report, the national court proceedings on this issue are still ongoing.

Another striking example is that of minorities living in the Western Thrace region of Greece, who face discrimination and violations of fundamental rights. In several cases, the ECHR has handed down judgments pointing to discriminatory practices against these minorities, notably concerning access to language, culture, education and freedom of expression. These rulings have a direct impact on the lives of thousands of European citizens. Failure to comply with these rulings only aggravates social tensions and hinders progress towards a more inclusive society.

However, it is important to emphasise that there is no point in pointing the finger at specific countries. Rather than blaming, we need to adopt a constructive and supportive approach. Only by working together and understanding each country's specific challenges can we move forward together. Our role must be one of support, encouragement and dialogue, helping not to impose solutions, but to offer them.

Thank you all very much.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Mister Sánchez García, you have the floor.

**Mr José María SÁNCHEZ GARCÍA (Spain, ECPA)\*:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It may be relevant that I speak here.

The European Court of Human Rights is, without a doubt, the most important body of the Council of Europe, but that does not mean that this Assembly nor the Court nor the Committee of Ministers or anyone else can do something that the Convention itself does not provide for. That is to say that the judgments of the Court do not allow for a partisan enforcement by the Council of Europe.

They don't allow such because the states that are part of the Council of Europe, which thought it would be a good idea to constitute it, decided that partisan enforcement would not be possible.

Now, when we think about the Council of Europe, when these things were set up, it wasn't such a possibility of an enforced implementation because this organisation is not a supranational body of integration like the European Union; it doesn't have its own will. All it has is the will of the member states, which are part of it. No more than that. So some things are being claimed here which are not foreseen in the Convention, and which are not what state parties to the Convention want because state parties to the Convention have already agreed on that. They are not going to agree on any more. That is obvious. Does this mean that the unimplementation of the judgments of the Court does not have any consequences? No. The consequence is simple, which is proper for an international organisation. That is, if the Council were to consider that a state does not comply with the Court's judgments and that merits the state's expulsion, then it is expelled from the organisation, the Council of Europe. At the same time, a state that is told that it is not complying can temporarily leave the Council of Europe.

That is the legally acceptable way of dealing with this and agreed upon by its member states. Anything else is illusory to expect to change what the Council of Europe is at the will of the member states that are part of it.

I must say there are other states, I believe by mistake, such as Spain have foreseen the implementation of the judgments of the ECHR by adapting its national legislation. I say this was the case of Spain, because in 2015, the Popular Party, under RAJOY, modified the Organic Law on Judicial Power that, under article 5 bis, makes it possible, on the basis of the judgment of the Court, to review final judgments issued in Spain. But that's an anomaly in our law. It is a question of political will because the Spanish government wanted to go beyond what the Convention demands. We are against something of this nature, inter alia, because of the difference in the criteria – a huge difference – in some areas that is between what's been solved by the Spanish Constitutional Court or the ECHR.

For example, and I conclude, Madam President, the compliance of sentences of terrorist crimes or slander against the Head of State.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Madam Kostadinovska-Stojchevska, you have the floor.

**Ms Bisera KOSTADINOVSKA-STOJCHEVSKA (North Macedonia, SOC):** Respected Madam President,

Dear colleagues,

Allow me to first congratulate the rapporteur Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU for this report on the importance of the implementation of the judgments of the European court of human rights.

There are many improvements that the executions of judgments have brought to the member states.

In 2024, the most recent annual report of the supervision of the execution of judgments and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, says that almost 4 000 judgments concerning member states are impending execution. Bulgaria is one of the 10 states that have not executed 164 judgments, out of which 89 are classified as leading cases.

For 18 years Bulgaria has failed to execute the one and same verdict: to allow registration of organisations with the goal to recognise the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. And it is still an issue that the registration agency and the Bulgarian court fail to comply. Bulgaria has been a member state since 2007, which is 18 years! The exact time that they have been not executing the judgments.

Even in the latest communication to the Committee of Ministers in the beginning of this year, instead of giving a probable explanation as to why they still are reluctant to give people their own right, they issued a political pamphlet blaming the organisations and defaming individuals.

A number of Macedonian organisations sought registration under the Non-Profit Legal Entities Act (NPLEA). None of them received registration. The Registration Agency (RA) and the court issued refusals on arbitrary grounds, distorting the requirements of the law with reasons that were used for refusal only of Macedonian associations. A large part of the reasons relate to alleged formal inconsistencies of their statutes with the requirements of the law, although there were some based on the non-acceptance of the goals of the associations.

The Plovdiv Court of Appeal declared the requirement to specify the exact time and the exact address where the founding assembly took place as unlawful, because there is no such requirement in the law.

The Registration Agency has registered other non-profit organisations without asking them to specify in the minutes of their founding assemblies the exact time and the exact address where the founding assembly took place.

On 29 October 2024, the Society of the Repressed Macedonians made another attempt to register. It filed a new application using the statute of a recently registered association, the "Boxing Club NIBO", and changed only the goals. However, two days later the request was rejected by the RA. According to the RA, the minutes of the founding assembly did not include the exact time and the exact address of the meeting (which was not included in the boxing club's minutes later).

To cut a long story short, this member state, that has been failing for 18 years to execute judgments that give people the basic human rights, is imposing illogical requests to candidate countries.

We as an Assembly have to make sure that this will no longer be the case, we have to put an end to the outdated talks of some of the colleagues present here. Vancho MIHAYLOV has long been dead and this is the 21st century.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Madam Chakrabarti, you have the floor.

**Baroness Shami CHAKRABARTI (United Kingdom, SOC):** Madam President and Colleagues. [spoken in French]

Even from the privileged vantage point of this beautiful assembly, I see the Court of Human Rights as the jewel in the crown of the Council of Europe. But I am a life-long human rights lawyer and internationalist. I appreciate that to those of a more nationalist and law-sceptical persuasion the Apex Court of our Continent may look a little less attractive.

To them, I offer the suggestion that it is through visible, accessible and effective justice that we best attempt to maintain peace. In addition to protecting 700 million people from oppression, human rights, as an essential component of the rule of law, preserve conditions that distinguish our precious and fragile democracy from tyranny.

As an international court, the Court of Human Rights is in a constant, practical and jurisprudential dialogue with both national courts and governments across our territories and even beyond them.

Unlike so many esteemed colleagues here today, I have never served as a government minister, but I was a UK government lawyer in the 1990s. I have seen the sometime irritation and occasional hostility with which politicians across the left-right spectrum greet court judgements that go against them. A former UK Prime Minister once caught public attention and arguably even stoked populist euroscepticism by complaining that he felt "physically sick" on having lost a case in the Strasbourg Court. From a rule of law perspective, I say it is dangerous for the captain of a team to clobber the referee. From a political perspective, the gentleman in question played an "own goal" as he later led and lost the Remain Campaign that preceded our leaving the European Union (EU).

I commend the Report, to those who aren't chatting over there, and its detailed consideration of the continuing problem of non or delayed implementation of judgements by some states. But undermining rhetoric may be just as dangerous to the system and values which bind us together.

So, colleagues, in addition to the procedural recommendations in this fine report, may I suggest that we should champion the Court even, and perhaps especially, when we disagree with it. It's not designed to make us comfortable, it was built to keep us free.

**Mr Clement SHOPOV (Bulgaria, NR):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

The implementation of the European Court of Human Rights' (ECHR) judgments is a cornerstone of the Convention system, ensuring the uniform and effective application of the European Convention on Human Rights across all member states. Yet, as we mark the 75th anniversary of this foundational treaty, we must confront a troubling reality: the Convention's principles are being twisted and misapplied.

Over the past two decades, the ECHR has increasingly strayed from its role as an impartial international jurisdiction, instead transforming into a politically motivated instrument. It now operates as a platform for NGO activists aligned with the so-called "Open Society" agenda, issuing rulings under the guise of legal judgments. Investigations—including one by a respected French publication—reveal that over 70% of the Court's judges have ties to these ideological networks.

A glaring example of this judicial overreach is the *UMO Ilinden and Others v. Bulgaria* case. These so-called "judgments" have nothing to do with upholding fundamental freedoms under Article 11 of the Convention. Instead, they seek to impose upon Bulgaria a fabricated minority identity—the "Macedonian minority"—in direct defiance of our constitutional order. Bulgaria's Constitution is unequivocal: ours is a unified nation with no recognized ethnic minorities. Yet, the ECHR presumes to reinterpret the Convention so radically that it seeks to rewrite our national sovereignty.

This is not justice—it is judicial activism masquerading as law. The Court has far exceeded its statutory mandate, attempting to impose political agendas rather than protecting human rights. And while the ECHR may issue its decrees, let me be clear: as long as Bulgaria's Constitution remains in force, neither our courts nor our institutions will comply with rulings that violate our foundational legal principles.

The ECHR was never meant to be a supranational legislature, nor a mouthpiece for activist elites. It is time to restore its original purpose: a fair and balanced guardian of human rights, not a political weapon. We call for a pragmatic, principled reform—one that returns the Court to its proper role and ensures it serves justice, not ideology.

**Mr Oğuzhan HASIPOĞLU (Cyprus\* [Resolution 1376 (2004)]):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

The issues related to the situation in Cyprus and the wordings used by the rapporteur are highly politicized. The rapporteur used the word invasion for describing Turkish intervention to the island in 1974.

The PACE Resolution 573 adopted in 1974 states that Türkiye had exercised its right of intervention in accordance with the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee.

The rapporteur uses selective language and does not even mention the Immovable Property Commission, which is the main remedy mechanism of redress in respect to Greek Cypriot claims relating to abandoned properties in Northern Cyprus, established by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 2005, in accordance with the ECHR guidance.

As reaffirmed in several cases by the ECHR, the IPC has proved to be an effective domestic remedy mechanism for Greek Cypriot property claims.

As of 4 April 2025 almost 518 million British Pounds have been awarded to the Greek Cypriot applicants and the total number of applications lodged with the Commission is 8092. The IPC grants compensation, restitution and exchange.

On the other hand, the Greek Cypriot side does not provide any remedy for the Turkish Cypriots who had left their properties in the South side of the island.

The politicization of issues related to the situation in Cyprus, also exist at the Committee of Ministers, which has the duty of supervising the implementation of the judgments.

Unfortunately, on the "property cluster" in Cyprus, despite the fact that the Turkish Cypriot side has done all on its part and the Secretariat has proposed the Committee for the closure of the supervision of this cluster on several occasions; the Committee was not able to close the supervision due to political reasons / pressure of the Greek Cypriot Administration exerted on member States.

The rapporteur has chosen not to reflect these aspects of the supervision processes in his report.

The report makes no reference to the Immovable Property Commission, as a redress mechanism.

On the one hand, the administration which is internationally recognised as the so-called republic of Cyprus fully ignores the effective remedy mechanism established in Northern Cyprus. moreover, TRNC which is not recognised internationally fully implements the ECHR judgments by way of IPC.

The Greek Cypriot side recently started to illegally arrest the European citizens on the basis that they are doing business in the TRNC. Such actions are a clear example of the breach of ECHR judgments.

**Mr Saša MAGAZINOVIĆ (Bosnia and Herzegovina, SOC):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Bosnia and Herzegovina has implemented 83% of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. However, for a long time we are waiting for the implementation of judgments that should abolish discrimination in the Constitution and the Electoral Law and to allow all citizens to be candidates for the Presidency and the House of Peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Changes to the Constitution and the Electoral Law are possible under normal political and security conditions. Unfortunately, currently there is an attack on the constitutional order in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Russian proxy and separatist Milorad Dodik. He forced the Assembly of Republika Srpska to adopt laws that prohibit the work of the state police and judicial institutions in the Republika Srpska entity. He is a threat to the peace and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. He is a person who is running away from the Prosecutor's Office and the Court of BiH, which demanded his arrest. He is the man who expelled German Minister Anne Lührmann from Republika Srpska with threats to her safety. He is threatening with conflicts with the police of Republika Srpska if the state police try to arrest him. Of course, he has the support of Putin, Vučić and Orban.

In such conditions, even discussion about the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights is not possible. Attempts to abuse the current situation to change the Election Law, after which people will continue to be discriminated against, are also not acceptable.

The priority in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the preservation of peace, protection of the state institutions and assistance in the arrest of separatists. All of this is exactly something where all of you from the countries of the European Union can help. We must not allow separatist forces in Europe to become stronger. There is no time for slow reactions and there is no time for the illusion that everything can be solved through negotiations.

We are grateful to the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany and Austria for the sanctions imposed on Milorad Dodik and his followers. I invite other countries to follow them.

My wish is for the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina to be normalized as soon as possible so that we can continue to discuss changing the Constitution and the Electoral Law ensuring that all citizens have the same right to run for office. The precondition for this is the arrest of Milorad Dodik.

**Ms Nadejda IORDANOVA (Bulgaria, NR):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Dear Madam Chair,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we are discussing how to ensure that the values of the European Convention on Human Rights are not just ideals on paper but real safeguards in our lives. This means guaranteeing justice even when it involves powerful actors—like investigating a murder thoroughly, even if the suspect is a state official; protecting citizens' property from unfair confiscation; or preventing the misuse of surveillance tools.

In this regard, Bulgaria remains a committed and active member of the Council of Europe. Our cooperation with the Council, especially in implementing judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, has been constructive and results-driven. Our national practices are increasingly aligning with the European human rights standards.

One strong indicator of this progress is the decline in the number of complaints filed against Bulgaria—from 2,450 in 2013 to fewer than 500 in 2024. This reflects the improved functioning of our national remedies and legal mechanisms, including the evaluation of draft laws for compliance with the Convention. More and more often, justice is being delivered at the national level, reducing the need for citizens to turn to Strasbourg.

Nevertheless, some of the challenges remain. A number of Court judgments are still pending implementation, and we must continue our efforts with focus and determination. In 2022 - 2023 notable progress has been made in key cases such as Velikova and S.Z./Kolevi v. Bulgaria, but further steps are needed, especially regarding cases related to Roma evictions, healthcare in detention, misuse of surveillance, and property rights. The authorities are making efforts toward implementation of the OMO Ilinden Judgement and I strongly object to the attempts of its politicization.

More coordination among institutions is essential for full compliance across the board.

In this context, I strongly support Bulgaria's initiative to establish a national coordination mechanism for the timely execution of Court judgments. This was made possible with the valuable support of our Norwegian partners.

The joint mission with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, particularly in the Yordanova v. Bulgaria case, is a great example of meaningful, on-the-ground cooperation.

Let us build on this momentum. By remaining firmly committed to human rights and the rule of law, we not only uphold our obligations—we also strengthen our democracy and deliver justice for all.

Thank you.

**Ms Regina BASTOS (Portugal, EPP/CD):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

Mr. President

Colleagues

The implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights is not only a compliance of requirements exercise.

It's about making human rights real in people's everyday lives.

The Rapporteur Colleague Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU, whom I congratulate for this important report, urges us to move beyond traditional legal formalities and look deeply into the systemic obstacles that hinder timely compliance. Rightly points out that delays in implementation are often not legal issues—they're political ones.

Whether it's lack of political will, slow bureaucracies, or outdated systems, these obstacles put the credibility of our human rights system at risk.

Just look at the Kavala case. This case highlights how political interests can sometimes override judicial mandates. Compromising individual rights and the rule of law.

It's not just about one person—it's about the message it sends when a Council of Europe member refuses to comply with a binding ruling.

If that can happen, what message are we sending to citizens?

That rights are optional?

Portugal, my country, has taken meaningful steps by reforming its judicial processes, reducing delays, and demonstrating that progress is possible.

We all need strong parliamentary oversight, proper resources, and a political culture that sees human rights as a shared commitment, not a burden.

Let us seize this moment to reframe implementation as a shared responsibility and a chance to strengthen the very foundations of democracy and human rights in Europe and in the world.

We have the tools.

What we need now is the determination to use them.

Thank you very much.

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

Let us be clear and bold:

The judgments of the European Court of Human Rights are not recommendations. They are legally binding obligations – a cornerstone of the system of human rights protection that the Council of Europe has built over decades.

After all, 75 years after its signature, the European Convention on Human Rights is more than a legal document. It is a moral and political commitment to uphold the dignity, liberty, and rights of every person under their jurisdiction.

This is so perfectly described in the report, and I warmly thank Kostis Efstathiou for his excellent work.

Yet today, we are witnessing a deeply worrying trend: systematic non-implementation of ECtHR judgments by certain member States.

And it is right here that we have to draw a line, to make a clear distinction. Because this is not a technical failure. But rather a political choice, and one with far-reaching consequences.

Indeed, when member states ignore or delay compliance with these judgments, they actually undermine the rule of law, the authority of the Court, and ultimately, the rights of millions of European citizens.

Some of the most emblematic cases – Osman Kavala, Selahattin Demirtaş – are not only about individual injustice. They are symbols of institutional resistance to democratic accountability and judicial independence.

This is much more than a domestic issue. After all, we all agree that we find ourselves amidst a serious European crisis of trust – a challenge to the very principles we stand for in this Assembly: democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

We must not allow these violations to become normalized, to become a trend.

It is our responsibility – as parliamentarians – both here in this Assembly and mainly in our national parliaments to demand full and prompt compliance with the Court's judgments. To support civil society and independent institutions in countries where pressure is mounting. And to hold governments accountable.

It is as clear as that: there can be no credible and reliable human rights system without respect for its provisions and without enforcement of the respective judgments. The European Convention on Human Rights must be implemented in full – not selectively, but consistently.

This is the only way to strengthen the trust of European citizens to justice and democracy.

Thank you.

**Mr Konur Alp KOÇAK (Türkiye, NR):** *(Undelivered speech, Rules of Procedure Art. 31.2)*

The role of the European Court of Human Rights in safeguarding human rights is beyond dispute. But in the interest of the very justice we all champion, we must be careful about how we present statistical data on the implementation of the judgements of the Court.

In 2024, Türkiye is recorded as having 137 pending leading cases – the highest in absolute terms. At first glance, this may seem alarming. Still, I would like to emphasize that absolute numbers alone is misleading. For instance, while Türkiye ranks the last in absolute numbers, it ranks 19th in terms of per capita numbers.

As Türkiye is the most populous member state, its interaction with the Court inevitably results in a higher volume of applications and pending cases. But if we consider its population size, Türkiye's number of pending cases equals just 1.6 per 10,000 people – a rate lower than 27 other member states.

Relying solely on raw figures risks doing a grave injustice – not only to Türkiye, but also to countries like Italy, Poland, and Ukraine, whose absolute figures may appear high, yet whose per capita rates are significantly better than the average.

Conversely, this approach turns a blind eye to some smaller member states such as Albania, Armenia, Cyprus or Malta whose per capita performance falls well below the average – yet this fact is not reflected in the current report.

As of today, the average number of unimplemented leading cases across all member states stands at 25, and 16 member states have more pending cases than this average. This indicates that the challenge of execution is not isolated – it is widespread and systemic.

In this context, what we need is a new, fairer approach to analyzing and presenting this data – an approach that enables us to assess the true performance of each member state in context, and one that supports the credibility and impact of this institution.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

I must interrupt the list of speakers.

Registered speakers who are present in the chamber but are unable to speak may, within four hours, send their typed speech in electronic format to the Session Office for publication in the minutes. It should not exceed 400 words.

I now call for the committee's reply.

Mister rapporteur, you have the floor.

Yes, you have the floor. Thank you for your time.

**Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU (Cyprus, SOC, Rapporteur):** Thank you.

I wish to thank all the interventions.

And what comes out from the interventions is that it is obvious that we need a stronger political will. Governments must treat judgments as opportunities to prove, to reform, and to progress.

The second is that national parliaments need to play a more active role in overseeing implementation. Transparency, accountability, and civil society participation are crucial.

The third is that we must strengthen the tools at the disposal of the Council of Europe and the Committee of Ministers to hold states accountable consistently and firmly. Introducing penalties or sanctions, measures for countries that are not implementing the Court judgments unequivocally and unconditionally.

Azerbaijan's later statement, unfortunately two or three hours ago, reveals, unfortunately, the situation where the implementation of judgment turns into a political tool. Totally strange to human rights, rule of law, democracy, and dignity.

Before concluding, I want to thank the magic team of the Secretariat of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Mr Guillem CANO PALOMARES, Mr George STAFFORD, and Mr Rafal SOKOL. All the staff and of course the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. And Mr Günther SCHIRMER for the excellent job and assistance I had from them.

Dear colleagues, both the court and we must never forget that we deal with people's rights, and lives.

Giorgos Seferis was a great Greek poet and Nobel Prize winner. Among the poems he wrote, one is special to me at least. There is one verse in which the poet says that the nightingales singing do not let you sleep at night in Platres. Platres is a picturesque mountain village on the Olympus Mountain in Cyprus. This verse has inspired me for the poem I wrote, which I will now read to you for the first time, very first time in Greek.

But there is a translation.

**Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU (Cyprus, SOC, Rapporteur)\*:** No. It is not the nightingale's song, nor the dog's howl which disrupts the sleep. It is the un-liberty, it is the oppression of the silent, it is the agony and the drowning cry of the wronged.

**Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU (Cyprus, SOC, Rapporteur):** Dear colleagues, if we want to have a calm night's sleep, let us not tolerate any wrongdoing to any single human being. Let us not allow any form of injustice to go on.

Thank you.

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

Mister Vice-Chairman, do you wish to reply?

Mr Pablo HISPÁN.

You have the floor.

**Mr Pablo HISPÁN (Spain, EPP/CD, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Colleagues, a huge amount of work has gone into this report.

My friend Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU has told us a poem. Perhaps another poem of a Greek poet, Constantine CAVAFY, could serve also in this work. Ithaca.

It has been a long journey and I think he has enjoyed the journey, as CAVAFY states in the poem.

In his journey, Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU included fact-finding visits to two states, three hearings focused on particular countries, and a wide range of bilateral meetings carried out by the rapporteur.

The Committee adopted the draft resolution by an overwhelming majority and the draft recommendation unanimously.

This report is the 12th from the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights on the implementation of the Court's judgments. The Committee is absolutely adamant that urgent steps are needed to implement the ruling of the Strasbourg Court. But it is not just the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights that can act on this issue.

The Reykjavík declaration is clear.

Parliamentarians must get more involved in the implementation of the Court's judgments.

This is why the draft resolution proposed the creation of a parliamentary network for the implementation of the European Court of Human Rights judgments open to members of other Committees.

Members of the Assembly can also learn more about the implementation of the European Court of Human Rights judgments in their own country through briefings to national delegations carried out by the Department of the Execution of the Judgments of the Council of Europe.

I encourage you all to attend these briefings when they are organised in your state.

We can all play a role in ensuring the judgments of the Court are implemented in a timely and effective way.

I want also to say thank you for all of the tremendous work of the members of the Secretariat at the Committee on Legal Affairs and also Mr Günter SCHIRMER.

Thank you.

## **Vote: Implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights**

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your contribution.

The general discussion is closed.

The Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights has presented a draft resolution, to which one amendment has been tabled, and a draft recommendation, to which no amendments have been tabled (Doc. 16134).

We begin by examining the draft resolution.

I have been informed by the committee chair that Amendment 1 was rejected by the committee by a two-thirds majority of votes cast.

Is this the case, Mister Pablo Hispán?

**Mr Pablo HISPÁN (Spain, EPP/CD, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights):** Yes. [spoken in French]

**Ms Bernadeta COMA (Andorra, ALDE, President of the Assembly):** If no one objects, I consider this amendment definitively rejected.

Is there any objection?

If there are no objections, we'll have to check that the objection has the required support.

No, I'm sorry. There are no objections.

*Amendment 1 to the draft resolution is therefore rejected and will not be called.*

We shall now proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in Doc. 16134.

A simple majority is required.

The ballot is opened.

*The draft resolution is adopted.*

*(Applause)*

We shall now proceed to vote on the draft recommendation contained in Doc. 16134.

I remind you that the majority required is two thirds of the votes cast.

The vote is open.

*The draft recommendation is adopted.*

*(Applause)*

The next public session will take place tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. in accordance with the agenda for this part-session.

The meeting is now adjourned.

We wish you a pleasant evening.

**The sitting is closed at 8 p.m.**