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Procedural implications of Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1600 (2008) on "the Council of Europe and its observer states – the current situation and a way forward" and related Assembly texts

Report[1]
Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs
Rapporteur: Mr Erol Aslan CEBECİ, Turkey, Group of the European People's Party

Summary

The Parliamentary Assembly has on many occasions reaffirmed its commitment to developing co-operation with Council of Europe non-member states, in particular through the various status they may enjoy. Its will to further the observers' role and to associate them more fully with its activities resulted, in 2007, in the granting of additional rights.

The Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs has been instructed to report on the consequences for the Assembly's procedure and practice of the proposals contained in Resolutions 1598, 1599 and 1600 (2008) and 1680 (2009). It considers that the contribution of non-member states' delegations to the work of the Assembly and its committees should be further developed. However, such delegations cannot enjoy rights identical to those of members of the Assembly in the full exercise of their parliamentary prerogatives and functions.

The committee therefore proposes to amend some provisions of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure related to observer status, as well as to incorporate in the rules provisions related to the new partnership for democracy status. Moreover, it invites the Bureau of the Assembly to prepare guidelines on the participation of parliamentary delegations from non-member states in the work of the Assembly and its committees.

1. Reference to committee: Bureau decision of 27 November 2008, Rule 66.2.

Contents **Page**

A. Draft resolution 3
B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Cebeci, rapporteur 5
1. Introduction 5
2. Proposals in Resolution 1600 (2008) involving changes to the Rules of Procedure 5
2.1. Participation of observers and representatives of partner parliaments of non member states in plenary debates 5
2.2. Participation of observers in committee meetings and sub-committee meetings 6
2.3. Consequences of a possible amendment of Rule 60.4 concerning the rights of observers for those of special guests in Assembly committees 6
3. Rule change concerning participation in Assembly debates of delegations of non member parliaments without observer status (implementation of resolutions 1598 and 1599 (2008)) 7
4. Implications of other proposals in Resolution 1600 (2008) and related texts not requiring changes to the Rules of Procedure 7
4.1. Specific possibilities of action concerning Assembly plenary sessions and meetings of the Standing Committee 7
4.2. Initiation by observers of current affairs debates 7
4.3. Possible participation of observers in election observation 7
4.4. Co-operation with parliamentarians from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (paragraph 20 of Resolution 1598 (2008)) 8
4.5. Preparation of draft guidelines on the participation of parliamentary observer delegations in the work of the Assembly and its committees [(paragraph 30.7 of Resolution 1600 (2008)] 8
5. Preliminary considerations concerning procedural consequences of the adoption by the Assembly of Resolution 1680 (2009) on the establishment of a “partner for democracy status” with the Parliamentary Assembly 8
5.1. General 8
5.2. Reasons for the creation of the new status 8
5.3. Conditions for obtaining the status (eligible parliaments, commitments required) 9
5.4. Main procedural issues 9
5.5. Implications of partner for democracy status in connection with the proposals made for changes of the provisions concerning special guest and observer status 10
6. Final remarks 10
Appendix – Elements for good practice concerning relations with observers, special guests and partner parliaments of non-member states 11

A. Draft resolution

1. The Parliamentary Assembly has on many occasions reaffirmed its commitment to developing co-operation with Europe's neighbouring regions and to contributing to the consolidation of democracy and the promotion of respect for human rights and the rule of law beyond its member states' borders. This commitment is set out, inter alia, in its Resolution 1506 (2006) on the external relations of the Council of Europe, its Resolution 1600 (2008) on the Council of Europe and its observer states – the current situation and a way forward, as well as in Resolutions 1598 (2008) on strengthening cooperation with the Maghreb countries and 1599 (2008) on the situation in the Republics of Central Asia. These texts include, in particular, proposals on how to enhance relations between the Assembly and the relevant parliaments. Furthermore, the Assembly refers to its Resolution 1680 (2009) on establishment of a "partner for democracy" status with the Parliamentary Assembly, which is a follow-up to Resolutions 1598 and 1599 (2008).

2. The Assembly has instructed the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs to report on the consequences for the Assembly's procedure and practice of the proposals contained in Resolutions 1598, 1599 and 1600 (2008) and Resolution 1680 (2009).

3. The Assembly welcomes the observer states' contribution to the work of the Council of Europe and to its own activities and would like their involvement to be maintained and reinforced. In this connection, it points out that its will to further the observers' role and to associate them more fully with its activities resulted, in 2007, in the granting of additional rights.

4. The Assembly considers that strengthening the procedural possibilities for action by observers and by members of other partner parliaments in the plenary and in committees will enable the Assembly and its members to gain more benefit from their input and support. However, in accordance with the principles of good governance, it considers that members of non-member states' delegations cannot enjoy rights identical to those of members of the Assembly in the full exercise of their parliamentary prerogatives and functions. This applies in particular to procedures linked to the obligations and responsibilities of members or of their national delegations.

5. Consequently, the Assembly decides to amend its Rules as follows:

5.1. in Rule 35.6:

– in the first sentence, replace "members" with "members or members of special guest, observer or partner for democracy delegations";

– in the last sentence, replace "member" with "member or a member of a special guest, observer or partner for democracy delegation";

5.2. replace the first sentence of Rule 47.5 with the following text:

"Subject to paragraph 6 below, members of special guest, observer and partner for democracy delegations appointed to a committee may participate in its meetings and speak if called by the committee chairperson; they shall not have the right to vote.";

5.3. replace the first sentence of Rule 59.8 with the following text:

"Members of special guest delegations may participate in committee meetings as provided in Rule 47.5. They may submit to the committee chairperson proposals concerning the draft agenda of committee meetings and proposals for amendments to draft texts examined in these meetings. The committee chairperson shall decide on any further action.";

5.4. replace the first sentence of Rule 60.4 with the following text:

"Members of observer delegations may participate in committee meetings as provided in Rule 47.5. They may submit to the committee chairperson proposals concerning the draft agenda of committee meetings and proposals for amendments to draft texts examined in these meetings. The committee chairperson shall decide on any further action.";

5.5. replace Rule 60.5 with the following text:

"The President of the Assembly may invite representatives of parliaments of other non-member states to attend a debate in the Assembly".

6. The Assembly also decides that the rules related to partner for democracy delegations shall follow the above-mentioned Rules 59.8 and 60.4 related to observers and invited guest delegations.

7. The Assembly decides that these changes shall enter into force upon their adoption.

8. Furthermore, the Assembly recalls that in paragraph 30.7 of Resolution 1600 (2008) the Assembly has invited the Bureau of the Assembly to prepare guidelines, taking into account good practice, on the participation of parliamentary observer delegations in the work of the Assembly, including in the Standing Committee and in committee meetings. It refers in this respect to the elements for good practice concerning relations with observer, special guest delegations and partner parliaments of non-member states, which are appended to Doc. 12072.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Cebeci, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. At its meeting on 30 September 2008, the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs approved an opinion to the Bureau of the Assembly on the implementation of the proposals contained in Resolution 1600 (2008) on the Council of Europe and its observer states: the current situation and a way forward. This opinion (document AS/Pro (2008) 06 def) contains various proposals for changes to Rules 35.6, 47.5, 47.6, 59.8 and 60.4 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure. The opinion also includes elements for good practice on relations with observers and friendly parliaments of non-member states (see appendix to document AS/Pro (2008) 06 def), which could be taken into account by the Bureau concerning the drafting of guidelines on the participation of observer delegations in plenary debates, in the Standing Committee and in committee meetings.

2. The purpose of this exercise is to enable Parliamentary Assembly members and the Assembly to benefit from the contribution of observers in appropriate circumstances.

3. On 27 November 2008, the Bureau of the Assembly accordingly instructed the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs to prepare a report under Rule 66.2. This report will first deal with those proposals in Resolution 1600 which imply changes of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure and subsequently examine the consequences of the remaining proposals which do not require changes, but do have a bearing on the Assembly's practice.

4. It is recalled that during its external relations debate on 23 January 2008 the Assembly adopted not only Resolution 1600 (2008) on the Council of Europe and its observer states but also Resolution 1598 (2008) on strengthening co-operation with the Maghreb countries and Resolution 1599 (2008) on the situation in the Republics of central Asia. The two latter resolutions contain proposals for strengthened dialogue between the Assembly and the parliaments concerned.[2] Where appropriate, these parliaments and other partner parliaments of non-member states will be taken into account in this report. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the Assembly has gone one step further in its relations with certain partner parliaments by adopting Resolution 1680 (2009) on the establishment of a "partner for democracy" status.

2. Proposals in Resolution 1600 (2008) involving changes to the Rules of Procedure

5. The Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs has already examined in detail the implications of Resolution 1600 (2008) for the Assembly's procedure and practice (see in particular document AS/Pro (2008) 06 def). Consequently, the suggested changes are only summarised. They refer to participation of observers in plenary sessions and committee meetings.

2.1. Participation of observers and representatives of partner parliaments of non member states in plenary debates

6. Under current Rule 35.6 members may ask for the floor for one minute on the first day of a part-session "to draw the Assembly's attention to a matter of political importance which is not the subject of a report by an Assembly committee". At the moment, this provision is not used by Assembly members. Nevertheless, it could be envisaged to give also members of observer delegations similar rights.

7. Therefore Rule 35.6 could be modified as follows.

> *"For a period not exceeding 15 minutes the President may, on the first day of a part-session, give the floor to members or to members of special guest, observer or partner for democracy delegations for one minute to draw the Assembly's attention to a matter of political importance which is not the subject of a report by an Assembly committee. They shall indicate beforehand the subject of their statement to the Table Office. If time permits, the President may allow similar shorter speaking periods during the*

2. In Resolution 1598 the Assembly asks the Bureau and the Committee on Rules of Procedure to take account of the report on the Maghreb countries and to include it in the general discussion under way on the future structures and external relations of the Assembly with a view to determining the place of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia in the special relations to be established with the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean; in Resolution 1599 (2008) the Assembly considers inviting representatives of the parliaments of central Asian Republics to follow those Assembly plenary sessions, committee meetings and other activities which deal with topics of common interest.

same part-session. A member or a member of a special guest, observer or partner for democracy delegation shall not be given the right by virtue of this provision to speak more than once during the same part-session".

2.2. Participation of observers in committee meetings and sub-committee meetings

8. The current rights of observers in committee meetings are laid down in Rules 47.5 and 60.4 As indicated in the above-mentioned document of the Committee on Rules of Procedure (AS/Pro (2009) 6 def) the time may have come for enabling observers also to table amendments to draft texts examined in committee meetings. This possibility would not alter decision-making in committees, as they are free to accept amendments or not. Committee chairpersons would decide whether an amendment tabled by the member of an observer delegation is in order, in the same way as for all other proposals for amendment.

9. It has also been suggested that members of observer delegations should have the possibility to make proposals concerning the draft agenda of committee meetings, it being understood that the committee chairperson shall decide on any further action.

10. For the sake of transparency both proposed new possibilities for observer delegations should be included in Rule 60.4. On this occasion the current wording of this provision could be slightly adapted with a view to harmonising terminology used in the Assembly's rules concerning observer delegations. Rule 60.4 could therefore be amended and adapted as follows:

"Members of observer delegations may participate in committee meetings as provided in Rule 47.5 They may submit to the committee chairperson proposals concerning the draft agenda of committee meetings and proposals for amendments to draft texts examined in these meetings. The committee chairperson shall decide on any further action. They may sign motions for resolutions and recommendations and written declarations. However, they shall not be taken into account for the number of signatures required. Members of observer delegations may participate in the work of political groups according to the conditions established by the groups".

11. In addition to Rule 60.4, the wording of the first sentence of Rule 47.5 should be clarified as follows:

"Subject to paragraph 6 below, members of special guest, observer and partner for democracy delegations appointed to a committee may participate in its meetings and speak if called by the committee chairperson; they shall not have the right to vote."

12. Paragraph 27.2 of Assembly Resolution 1600 (2008) invited members of observer delegations to participate regularly in the work of sub-committees. In 2008 observers were, however, present only in meetings of sub-committees of the Political Affairs Committee. Where appropriate, the contribution of observers to the work of further sub-committees could be encouraged and mentioned in the elements for good practice which are appended to this report.

2.3. Consequences of a possible amendment of Rule 60.4 concerning the rights of observers for those of special guests in Assembly committees

13. It has been a constant practice of the Assembly, when giving new rights to observers or special guests, to adapt accordingly the corresponding provisions of the other status with the Assembly. The rights of special guests with respect to committee meetings are laid down in Rule 59.8. Therefore, this provision should be amended as follows:

"Members of special guest delegations may participate in committee meetings as provided in Rule 47.5. They may submit to the committee chairperson proposals concerning the draft agenda of committee meetings and proposals for amendments to draft texts examined in these meetings. The committee chairperson shall decide on any further action. They may sign motions for resolutions and recommendations and written declarations. However, they shall not be taken into account for the number of signatures required. Members of special guest delegations may participate in the work of political groups according to the conditions established by the groups."

14. It goes without saying that this provision shall equally apply to partner for democracy delegations.

3. Rule change concerning participation in Assembly debates of delegations of non member parliaments without observer status (implementation of resolutions 1598 and 1599 (2008))

15. According to Rule 60.5 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure, "The Bureau may, by a two thirds majority, invite representatives of parliaments of other non-member states to attend a debate in the Assembly". In this connection "parliaments of other non-member states" are those having no observer, special guest or partner for democracy status with the Assembly. With a view to Resolutions 1598 and 1599 (2008) mentioned in paragraph 4 above and to other Assembly texts governing relations with parliaments of non-member states, the procedure foreseen in Rule 60.5 could be simplified. Instead of the Bureau, it should be left to the President of the Assembly to authorise – in line with the Assembly's policy – members of parliaments of non-member states to attend Assembly debates.

16. Consequently, Rule 60.5 could be worded as follows:

"The President of the Assembly may invite representatives of parliaments of other non-member states to attend a debate in the Assembly".

4. Implications of other proposals in Resolution 1600 (2008) and related texts not requiring changes to the Rules of Procedure

17. Resolution 1600 (2008) and the above-mentioned Resolutions 1598 and 1599 (2008) include other proposals which have a bearing on the Assembly's procedure and practice, without requiring Rule changes.

4.1. Specific possibilities of action concerning Assembly plenary sessions and meetings of the Standing Committee

18. Resolution 1600 (2008) proposed the possible extension of the special rules governing the Assembly's OECD debates to other debates of particular interest for observers. The Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs has analysed this proposal. It agrees that it would be useful to give observer delegations not only in OECD debates but also in some further specific debates of common interest the same rights as to Assembly members. However, at the present stage, this would further reduce the little time available for ordinary Assembly debates in plenary and could raise organisational problems (see document AS/Pro (2008) 06 def).

19. The Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs considers that the Standing Committee would be a more appropriate forum for special enlarged debates with observers, where the provisions for OECD debates could apply mutatis mutandis. The Bureau of the Assembly could agree with observers to test this procedure. Such a possibility should be included in the elements for good practice which are appended to this report.

20. More generally, due to its flexible and simple procedures (for example, no formal list of speakers is established), the Standing Committee could be an interesting forum for observers. However, according to the statistics available, observers rarely participate in its meetings.

21. Furthermore, as is specified in paragraph 20 of Resolution 1598 (2008), the Standing Committee could be used for a dialogue with parliamentarians from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia on subjects of common interest.

4.2. Initiation by observers of current affairs debates

22. If appropriate, observer delegations may propose to an Assembly national delegation or political group to request the holding of a current affairs debate on a subject of common interest. This type of debate has the advantage of offering almost similar rights to members of the Assembly and observers, as neither reports nor texts are presented for adoption and thus no amendments tabled.

4.3. Possible participation of observers in election observation

23. The Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs has analysed this proposal. While admitting its interest, it concluded that there may be some obstacles to its implementation. In certain cases the authorities of the country where an election is taking place may not wish that observers to the Assembly are included in ad hoc election observation committees. Moreover, the co-operation arrangements between the Assembly, the European Parliament and the OSCE Assembly and ODIHR are currently being

reviewed. Therefore, the Committee on Rules of Procedure considered that in the present circumstances it would not be appropriate to support participation of observers to the Assembly in Assembly election observation.

4.4. Co-operation with parliamentarians from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (paragraph 20 of Resolution 1598 (2008))

24. To a certain extent, these proposals have been superseded by Resolution 1680 (2009) on partner for democracy status. However, pending the granting of this status to the respective parliaments, the following proposals could be implemented. The possibility of using Standing Committee meetings as a forum for dialogue with these parliamentarians has been included in the draft elements for good practice which are appended to this report. This is also the case for two other proposals contained in Resolution 1598 (2008):

– inviting the three parliaments concerned to be represented at Assembly plenary sessions with the possibility of intervening in relevant debates;

– encouraging Assembly committees to invite delegations from the parliaments present at Assembly part-sessions to attend their meetings if issues of common interest are on the agenda.

4.5. Preparation of draft guidelines on the participation of parliamentary observer delegations in the work of the Assembly and its committees [(paragraph 30.7 of Resolution 1600 (2008)]

25. On the basis of this report, elements for good practice concerning relations with observers and partner parliaments of non-member states have been prepared and are appended. The Bureau of the Assembly could take them into account for the elaboration of guidelines in accordance with paragraph 30.7 of Resolution 1600 (2008).

26. The draft guidelines could also refer where appropriate to special guests and partners for democracy, in keeping with the Assembly's constant practice to align – insofar as their rights are concerned – observer and special guest status. Such references could also include partners for democracy as this status is often defined in terms similar to special guest status.

5. Preliminary considerations concerning procedural consequences of the adoption by the Assembly of Resolution 1680 (2009) on the establishment of a "partner for democracy status" with the Parliamentary Assembly

5.1. General

27. On 26 June 2009 the Assembly adopted Resolution 1680 (2009). On the same day, the Bureau of the Assembly asked the Committee on Rules of Procedure to take into account Resolution 1680 in the preparation of the report on amendment of various provisions of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure (rapporteur: Mr Holovaty) (see also paragraph 16 of Resolution 1680). However, because of a close link between Resolutions 1598 and 1599 (2008) and Resolution 1680 (2009) on the establishment of a partner for democracy status, the rapporteur has included in the present report some preliminary considerations on the procedural consequences of Resolution 1680, it being understood that specific rule changes are included in Mr Holovaty's report (see Doc. 12071).

5.2. Reasons for the creation of the new status

28. The partner for democracy status was established:

– In order to develop co-operation with neighbouring regions as a means of consolidating democratic transformations and promoting stability, good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law;

– as a response to the interest expressed by several parliaments of the neighbouring countries with which the Assembly has established working contacts (Algeria, Kazakhstan, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as with the Palestinian Legislative Council) in upgrading the status of the existing co-operation by establishing a relationship on a permanent basis;

– as a remedy to the absence of an approximate framework for a strengthened co-operation with these parliaments in the Assembly's Rules of Procedure.

29. Partner for democracy status is the sole competence of the Assembly, applies only to it and is different from special guest status and observer status.

5.3. Conditions for obtaining the status (eligible parliaments, commitments required)

30. According to paragraph 15 of Resolution 1680 (2009) the national parliaments of all southern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries participating in the Union for the Mediterranean - Barcelona Process (including the Palestinian Legislative Council) and of central Asian countries participating in the OSCE (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) should be eligible to request partner for democracy status. Furthermore, the same paragraph specifies that requests from parliaments of other states may also be considered if the Bureau of the Assembly so decides.

31. Requests for this status should be addressed to the President of the Assembly by the President of the respective parliament (or by the Presidents of the chambers, if appropriate, in case of bicameral parliaments) which should contain the elements (commitments and obligations, etc.) listed in paragraphs 12.2.1 to 12.2.7 of Resolution 1280 (e.g. reference to the values of the Council of Europe, moratorium on death penalty, free and fair elections). Furthermore, when a request for partner for democracy status is examined, particular consideration has to be given to the existence of a multi-party composition of the parliament and to the respect of the rights of the opposition. Finally, the Assembly committee concerned may, depending of the particular situation of each country, propose that specific conditions be met before or after the status has been granted.

5.4. Main procedural issues

32. The Committee on Rules of Procedure could usefully discuss four issues:

– the number of seats of partner for democracy delegations;

– the composition of these delegations;

– reporting on progress made by partner for democracy parliaments;

– the modalities for granting, suspending and withdrawing partner for democracy status;

5.4.1. Number of seats

33. It is the Assembly's practice to fix the number of a national delegation's seats between a lower limit of 2 seats and an upper limit of 18 seats, the principal determining factor being the population of each member state. For special guest delegations, the number of seats (without substitutes) is the same as that they would be entitled to as members of the Council of Europe (see Rule 59.5 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure). Observer delegations to the Assembly are generally allocated half the number of seats they would be entitled to as members of the Council of Europe (see Doc. 7792, paragraph 18). However, the maximum number of seats allocated to an observer delegation is 6 (see Doc. 8561, paragraph 58).

34. Concerning seats of partner for democracy delegations, either the system established for observers or that for special guests could be applied. This would mean in practice that a possible partner for democracy delegation from Morocco or Algeria would have either 6 (observer model) or 12 seats (special guest model). The rapporteur considers that it would be preferable to apply to partners for democracy the observer model as this would keep the number of partners for democracy at a reasonable level. Therefore, it could be proposed that the number of seats allocated to delegations of partners for democracy, which should not exceed six (and the same number of substitutes), should be half the number of seats they would be entitled to as members of the Council of Europe.

5.4.2. Composition of delegations

35. According to paragraph 12.3 of Resolution 1680 (2009), the composition of partner for democracy delegations shall respect, as far as possible, the principles set forth in Rule 6.2.a of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure:

– fair representation on the delegation of political groups or parties in the respective national parliament (if the number of members allows for this);

– inclusion of the under-represented sex in the delegations at least in the same percentage as is present in their parliaments and, in any case, one representative of each sex.

36. It could be proposed that the parliaments enjoying partner for democracy status should not transmit credentials to the President of the Assembly but (less than one week before the opening of an ordinary session) a list of members appointed with the approval of the respective parliament (or its chambers in a bicameral parliament) for the whole duration of the session (parliamentary year). It should be understood that,

if appropriate, the President may submit the list to the Bureau of the Assembly to consider whether the above-mentioned criteria have been fulfilled. In case of problems, the Bureau should be able to refer the matter to the Political Affairs Committee for report and any other committees (including the Committee on Rulesof Procedure) for opinion.

5.4.3. Regular reporting on progress made by parliaments enjoying partner for democracy status

37. One of the reasons for the introduction of a partner for democracy status is the Assembly's wish to promote the Council of Europe's core values in the respective countries. That is why paragraph 12.4 of Resolution 1680 stipulates that the Assembly shall periodically review the progress made by the parliaments concerned in the framework of the partner for democracy status. Moreover, paragraph 12.2.7 of the resolution obliges these parliaments regularly to inform the Assembly on the state of progress in implementing Council of Europe principles.

38. The aim of these arrangements is to allow the Assembly to accompany the respective parliaments in the process of democratisation and modernisation of their countries. It could be envisaged that the parliaments or delegations of parliaments enjoying partner for democracy status should submit an annual written report on progress made via the President to the Assembly's Bureau, which should refer it for comments to the Political Affairs Committee and other relevant committees. The Bureau should also have the possibility to ask the parliaments /delegations having partner for democracy status to prepare an interim report, when appropriate.

5.4.4. Modalities for suspending and withdrawing partner for democracy status

39. Resolution 1680 (2009) stipulates that the decision on granting, suspending and withdrawing the partner for democracy status shall be taken by the Assembly following a debate on the report by the Political Affairs Committee and opinions of the other relevant committees.[3] The only open question relates to initiating a suspension or withdrawal procedure. Obviously, the Political Affairs Committee should have the right to take an initiative by submitting a reasoned written application to the Bureau. The Bureau would then have to decide if it refers the matter for report to the Political Affairs Committee and for opinion to the other committees concerned. In case of urgency, the Bureau should also have the possibility to ask the Political Affairs Committee directly and the other committees concerned to elaborate a report and an opinion.

5.5. Implications of partner for democracy status in connection with the proposals made for changes of the provisions concerning special guest and observer status

40. For procedural purposes, it is proposed to define partner for democracy status in terms similar to observer status. The draft resolution in this report presents changes to Rules 35.6 and 47.5 concerning special guests and observers, so it is proposed to include the changes regarding partner for democracy status with these.

6. Final remarks

41. The Assembly is invited to examine and adopt the draft resolution included in this report, which should be presented to the Standing Committee (Bern, 20 November 2009).

42. The elements for good practice appended to this report could be forwarded to the Bureau for further consideration.

43. The relevant considerations developed in section V above on partner for democracy status have been taken into account in Mr Holovaty's report on the amendment of various provisions of the Rules of Procedure. Furthermore it could be useful to foresee that, in future, the Assembly (rather than the Bureau) should, on the basis of a report and opinions of its competent committees, decide on the granting, suspension or withdrawal of special guest status.

3. It could be proposed that in future the Assembly and no longer the Bureau should take similar decisions regarding special guest status

Appendix – Elements for good practice concerning relations with observers, special guests and partner parliaments of non-member states

Regarding Assembly plenary sessions:

– holding debates on issues of common interest for the Assembly and observers/special guests/partners for democracy and on subjects of concern in the respective states;

– possibility for observer, special guest, partner for democracy and other invited delegations, after having informed the President of the Assembly, to present a written communication concerning Assembly debates of common interest; under Rule 23.2.k of the Rules of Procedure, the President may order that the communication be registered as an official Assembly document;

– on subjects of common interest, inviting speakers of parliaments having a special status with the Assembly and members of the respective governments to address the Assembly;

– if appropriate, invitations to plenary Assembly sessions with the possibility of intervening in relevant debates (see Rule 60.5) of representatives of other non-member parliaments:

  - having concluded a co-operation agreement with the Assembly or having applied for a special status with the Assembly;

  - having been designated as a partner for co-operation in a text adopted by the Assembly;

  - having participated regularly in the Assembly's enlarged OECD debates;

  - having agreed to be included in the framework of regular Assembly debates on the state of human rights and democracy (Resolution 1600 (2008)).

– if appropriate, observer, special guest and partner for democracy delegations may propose to an Assembly national delegation or political group to request the holding of a current affairs debate on a subject of common interest.

Regarding the Standing Committee:

– participation of observers, special guests and partners for democracy in meetings of the Standing Committee could be encouraged;

– representatives of other parliaments of non-member states could be invited to debates of the Standing Committee on subjects of common interest;

– if politically appropriate and if the budgetary and organisational conditions are fulfilled, the Bureau may propose the holding during a Standing Committee meeting of a special debate with observers, special guests and partners for democracy, where the provisions on enlarged OECD debates could apply mutatis mutandis.

Regarding Assembly committees:

– the participation of observers and partners for democracy in committees and, where appropriate, in sub-committees could be encouraged;

– subject to prior agreement by the committee chairperson, observers, special guests and partners for democracy may present to committees such documents as position papers, complementary information memoranda or draft declarations;

– involvement of members of delegations with special status in the preparation of committees' reports on subjects of special interest could be encouraged;

– these members may propose in the relevant committee, after prior information of the committee chair, the holding of a debate (in plenary or in the Standing Committee) on a subject of common interest under urgent procedure;

– involvement of observers, special guests and partners for democracy in the organisation of hearings and conferences by committees on issues relevant to them could be encouraged;

– if appropriate, representatives of parliaments of other non-member states present at plenary sessions could be invited to attend committee meetings where issues of common interest are on the agenda.

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Reporting committee: Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

Reference to committee: Bureau decision of 27 November 2008, Rule 66.2

Draft resolution unanimously adopted by the committee on 1 October 2009

Members of the committee: Mr John **Greenway** (Chairperson), Mr Rudi **Vis** (1st Vice-Chairperson), Mr **Lintner** (2nd Vice-Chairperson), Mr Agius, Mrs **Bemelmans-Videc**, Mrs Benaki, Mr **Cebeci**, Mr Chope, Mrs **Err**, Mr Gross, Mr Haibach, Mr Höfer, Mr **Holovaty**, Mr Huseynov, Mr Islami, Mr **Kumcuoğlu**, Mrs **Lilliehöök**, Mrs Mendonça, Mrs Pernaska, Mr **Rowen**, Mr Rustamyan, Mr **Saar**, Mr **Van Overmeire,** Mr **Vareikis**

N.B.: The names of the members who took part in the meeting are printed in **bold**

Secretariat of the committee: Mr Heinrich, Mrs Clamer