



Recommendation 1161 (1991)¹

Crisis in the Soviet Union

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly expresses its deep satisfaction at the failure of the coup of 18 to 21 August 1991 in the Soviet Union and pays tribute to the Parliament and President of the Russian Republic, and to the courage of the citizens who risked their lives to preserve democratic principles and the rule of law
2. The Assembly also acknowledges the opposition to the coup of the Soviet President, Mr Mikhail Gorbachev, who has greatly contributed to democratic reforms in the Soviet Union in the past years. It notes the decisions to suspend the activities of the Communist Party, which clearly provided inspiration and organisational support for the coup.
3. It welcomes the restoration of independent statehood in the Baltic republics and notes that the independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania has now been recognised by the Soviet Union, the Russian Republic and by most member states of the Council of Europe, whose example should rapidly be followed by the others, in the light of the Declaration by the Committee of Ministers of 30 August.
4. It notes that declarations of independence have also been made by the parliaments of several other republics in the USSR and that many decisions have been taken to strengthen significantly the competence and prerogatives of the republics
5. It notes that most republics of the Soviet Union now regard themselves as sovereign and aspire to develop their own international relations. It also notes that interim constitutional structures have been adopted by the Congress of People's Deputies and that discussions are continuing on a new union treaty aimed at defining the division of functions between the union and the sovereign republics.
6. The Assembly expresses its concern about the threats to European and global security that might result from insufficient democratic, political control over the nuclear arsenal of the Soviet armed forces, and demands that the power of decision on nuclear arsenals remain with the central government.
7. It is also concerned about the proliferation of ethnic and other tensions in the area and insists that high standards of minority rights protection are necessary to prevent and resolve such conflicts.
8. It is fully aware of the enormous economic difficulties facing the peoples of the Soviet Union and the continuing hardship which seems certain to be aggravated as winter approaches. It is convinced that Western support is required, especially in the form of technical and humanitarian assistance, and by the removal of obstacles and encouragement of trade. It emphasises the need for stabilisation measures necessary to expand the opportunities for domestic and foreign investments in the East European economies.
9. The Assembly supports the efforts of the authorities of the sovereign republics to develop their democratic and, in particular, parliamentary institutions and the rule of law. The process of paving the way towards pluralistic democracy and a market economy leaves no privileged role for the Communist Party.
10. The Assembly also insists on the rigorous application of fundamental human rights, which should be guaranteed to everyone in all circumstances.

1. Assembly debate on 19 September 1991 (10th and 11th Sittings) (see [Doc. 648](#) [Doc. 648](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, Rapporteur : Mr Soares Costa ; and [Doc. 6484](#), report of the Committee on Relations with European Non-Member Countries, Rapporteur : Mr Tarschys). Text adopted by the Assembly on 19 September 1991 (11th Sitting).



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11. It calls upon the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to increase substantially the resources of the Organisation in order to make available to the central and republican authorities of the Soviet Union all constitutional, legal and other assistance for the consolidation of democracy as may be requested.
12. It also calls on the Committee of Ministers to speed up its work on drawing up a convention on minority rights, as was requested in [Recommendation 1134](#) adopted on 1 October 1990.