Resolution 1102 (1996)[1]

Situation in Belarus

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Belarus applied for membership of the Council of Europe in March 1993, thus expressing its acceptance of the values of human rights and freedoms, pluralist democracy and the rule of law. These values entail the principle of the separation of powers, and, in particular respect by the executive of a free and independent parliament and an independent judiciary.

2. In September 1996 the President of Belarus proposed a revision of the present constitution, adopted by the parliament in 1994. This revision would greatly increase the powers of the President. It would weaken the role of the parliament to a degree which would call into question its ability to function as an independent legislature and to exercise democratic control over the executive.

3. The parliament has accordingly made its own proposal for a referendum, with additional questions to be submitted to the electorate and an alternative set of constitutional amendments.

4. The Assembly recognises the sovereign right of the Belarus people to carry out necessary reforms to the constitution. Such reforms should be well prepared, with proper opportunities for the Belarus people to discuss them - notably through free and pluralistic institutions of the media, which as of now are hardly able to exist in Belarus. The elected parliament and the constitutional court must fully exercise their prerogatives, in accordance with the existing constitution and without interference.

5. The Assembly calls for the present constitutional crisis to be resolved in such a way as to strengthen the democratic process and ensure political stability. The freely expressed will of the Belarus people, through its institutions, must be respected.

6. Only thus will Belarus stay on the path of democratisation, which is a pre-condition for Council of Europe membership.

7. The Assembly calls for the holding of a "round table" of representatives of all interested parties and institutions, with a view to providing an opportunity for productive political dialogue and for a more consensual approach to reform of the constitution.

1. See Doc. 7701, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Sir Dudley Smith. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 7 November 1996.