Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1422 (1999)[1]

South-east Europe following the Kosovo conflict: political situation

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly welcomes the recognition in the Sarajevo Summit declaration of 30 July 1999 of the Council of Europe's important role in the implementation of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe.

2. The Assembly welcomes the appointment of Mr Max Van der Stoel, current OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, and a former outstanding member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, as Chairman of the Stability Pact's Working Table 1 on democratisation and human rights. To emphasise the Council of Europe's particular responsibility in this field, it should be ensured that a person nominated by the Council of Europe be closely associated with the Chairman.

3. The Assembly recalls that its Political Affairs Committee will organise a conference on the parliamentary contribution to the Stability Pact in Sofia on 26 November 1999.

4. The Assembly reiterates its position that the basis for the normalisation of the situation in Kosovo should be full and strict implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and considers the establishment of normal conditions for the operation of all components of KFOR as an important prerequisite for the progress of the political settlement.

5. As regards the Kosovo conflict, while understanding the gravity of the events that may have provoked it, the Assembly strongly condemns the organised and systematic violence against the remaining Serb and Roma populations, and other minority groups, and the continuing criminal destruction of Orthodox cultural heritage. The United Nations civil police should become fully operational as soon as possible. Regrouping of the population at risk for security reasons should not lead to permanent segregation.

6. The Assembly again calls on the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to comply with KFOR's demand for its disarmament. It further calls on all Kosovo Albanian political forces to publicly and unequivocally condemn violence against Serbs, Roma and other minority groups.

7. The Assembly considers that there is a genuine need to establish democratically elected local institutions by next summer. However, it is essential that all ethnic groups can participate in free and fair local elections

8. The Assembly fully supports the setting up of a training institute to train future administrative staff in Kosovo, to which the Council of Europe could make a major contribution through its experience and know-how in the field of local democracy.

9. The Assembly believes that lasting peace and democratic stability in the area can only be achieved if appropriate cultural and educational policies are rapidly put in place. These should exclude ethnic hatred and promote democratic values, respect for human rights and cultural difference. The reconstruction of civil society, with special reference to young people, is just as important as the reconstruction of cultural heritage.

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1. Assembly debate on 22 and 23 September 1999 (29th and 30th Sitting) (see Doc. 8533, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteurs: MM. Bársony and Bloetzer; Doc. 8537, opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Akçali; Doc. 8535, opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education, rapporteur: Mr Hegyi; and Doc. 8540, opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, rapporteur: Mr Martínez Casañ. Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 September (30th Sitting).

10. The Assembly welcomes the recent opening of a Council of Europe office in Pris?tina. The office should be given maximum political and material support to enable it to ensure an appropriate and effective Council of Europe contribution to the work of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (Unmik). An early visit by the new Secretary General to Pris?tina would be a clear demonstration of such support.

11. The Assembly further welcomes the detailed proposals concerning the Council of Europe's contribution to Unmik, notably as regards human rights standards as well as local government, police, judicial, and media issues. In this respect, the Assembly emphasises the paramount importance of rendering the standards contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and relevant case-law directly applicable in Kosovo.

12. The Assembly again expresses its support for all democratic forces in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and urges them to work together more closely.

13. The Assembly endorses the recent decision of the European Union to lift sanctions against Kosovo and Montenegro. While supporting international pressure on the Yugoslav authorities to meet democratic standards, it considers that the oil embargo against Serbia should also be lifted for political and humanitarian reasons.

14. International assistance to meet the basic needs of the Serbian people, including energy, should be provided, with any consequent necessary adjustments to sanctions. Further hardship, especially during the coming winter, would only weaken the democratic forces and consolidate the position of the current regime in Belgrade.

15. The Assembly expresses its support for the policy and democratic reforms of the Government of Montenegro. Immediate large-scale economic assistance is essential if popular support for these policies is to be strengthened.

16. The Assembly takes note of the proposals by the Montenegrin authorities to redefine the constitutional framework of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It welcomes the decision of the Montenegrin authorities to consult the Council of Europe's Venice Commission on their proposals.

17. For these reasons, the Assembly:

a. resolves:

1. to set up task forces:

to assist forthwith the electoral process in Kosovo;

to support co-operation between the political parties in Kosovo;

to contribute to the work of the new local institutions;

to work on the reconstruction of the educational system;

b. recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

1. welcome, on behalf of the Organisation, the chairmanship of Mr Van der Stoel of Working Table 1 of the Stability Pact and request that a person nominated by the Council of Europe be closely associated with the Chairman;
2. draw up proposals for action in the fields of culture, education - in particular history teaching - and the media for immediate implementation in Kosovo and, more generally, in the area as a whole;
3. as regards Kosovo, ensure that the Council of Europe's proposals for assistance to the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (Unmik) be given adequate political support, also through the representatives of Council of Europe member states at the United Nations;
4. ensure Council of Europe involvement in the process of voter registration for the future local elections in Kosovo;
5. increase its political, financial and technical support for effective and concrete action to be undertaken by the Council of Europe office in Pris?tina;
6. vi. open similar Council of Europe offices in Podgorica and Belgrade.