Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1452 (2000)[1]

Parliamentary contribution to the implementation of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly reiterates its position that the Stability Pact is a remarkable concept, both politically and humanely; it is a key element of European foreign policy today. It is an important tool for resolving the problems that persist in southeastern Europe and safeguarding stability, respect for human rights and economic development.

2. While the Stability Pact is an opportunity for that region, it is not easy to implement. Since its adoption in June 1999, several meetings and conferences have taken place and many different organisations have become involved. Yet most of the declarations made have so far failed to be followed by action.

3. The present structure of Working Tables and Task Forces, together with an influx of seminars on related topics, risks delaying the implementation of the Stability Pact and therefore threatening the process of democratisation and restructuring of the region. Furthermore, it diminishes the high expectations of the peoples concerned by the Pact.

4. The Assembly underlines how important it is that the countries participating in the Stability Pact, and in particular those from southeast Europe, are firmly committed to it and directly involved in fixing its priorities and implementing it. Moreover, they should take greater responsibility for their own economic development.

5. The Assembly is in favour of including Moldova in the Stability Pact as a full member.

6. The Conference on the parliamentary contribution to the implementation of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, organised by the Assembly's Political Affairs Committee in Sofia on 25 and 26 November 1999, confirmed that the parliamentary dimension is an essential element of democratic control over the Pact, its mechanisms and its implementation.

7. The Sofia Declaration underlines the importance of the direct involvement of national parliaments in the implementation of the Stability Pact through national parliamentary debates and bilateral parliamentary relations as well as multilateral parliamentary co-operation.

8. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has a central role to play in controlling effective implementation of the activities carried out in the framework of the Stability Pact. With the exception of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, all the countries involved in the Stability Pact are represented in the Council of Europe.

9. The Council of Europe has special expertise in areas such as the protection of human and minority rights, local democracy, culture and education, the media, youth policies and judicial systems. The Assembly notes with satisfaction that the Council of Europe has started projects in nearly every field of planned action. Nevertheless, it deeply regrets that, now that the Council of Europe has succeeded in becoming involved in certain of its fields of competence, an increased contribution - and even, in some cases, maintaining the present level of its involvement - depends on additional financial resources.

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1. Assembly debate on 4 April 2000 (11th Sitting) (see Doc. 8665, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Bársony). Text adopted by the Assembly on 4 April 2000 (11thSitting).

10. The Assembly urges the Committee of Ministers to secure the financing of the Council of Europe's Priština office, which has been operational since August 1999, for the rest of the year 2000. It reiterates its earlier recommendation to open similar offices in Podgorica and Belgrade.

11. The Assembly notes with satisfaction that at the Regional Funding Conference for South-Eastern Europe (Brussels, 29-30 March 2000), donors pledged more than the amount of money required to fully finance the "quick start package".

12. At this stage, the highest priority should be given to improving the economy, infrastructure and the quality of day-to-day life. Stability and respect for human rights cannot be reinforced if the economy is not developed. Communications and transport infrastructure are amongst the priorities.

13. Any efforts in the field of the economy would be incomplete without taking into account the importance of building a civil society based on the principles of respect for human rights, cultural diversity and tolerance. Education and cultural co-operation should be considered as powerful means of creating a climate of tolerance and mutual understanding in the region.

14. The Assembly regrets the persistence of violent incidents in the region, notably in Kosovska Mitrovica, and in the southeast provinces of Serbia where some extremist ethnic Albanian people are active.

15. The Assembly welcomes the decision by the Kosovo Serb leaders to end their boycott of the Interim Administrative Council.

16. The Assembly expresses its support for democratic forces in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It reiterates its earlier position that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia must be brought to meet the necessary conditions in order to be readmitted to the international community, democratic parliamentary elections being one such condition. Stability in the region will be incomplete without the full participation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Ways must be found so that the people of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia benefit from the Stability Pact.

17. The Assembly notes that civil registration, as well as the registration of political parties, will begin soon so that municipal elections can be held later this year. It underlines the importance of including on the electoral roll those who left the province, and calls upon the Serb community to participate in these elections.

18. In order to improve parliamentary control of the implementation of the Stability Pact, the Assembly resolves to:

18.1. invite the Chairs of the Working Tables to report at regular intervals to the committees concerned on what has been achieved and future plans;

18.2. organise regular meetings of the national parliaments of the region, the European Parliament, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and other regional assemblies to evaluate progress or lack of progress, and to put forward proposals.

19. It also recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

19.1. do all it can to find additional resources to ensure the Council of Europe's continued involvement in the implementation of the Stability Pact;

19.2. make resources available for the Council of Europe's Priština office so that it will be able to continue its activities beyond 31 March 2000 and open similar offices in Podgorica and Belgrade;

19.3. appeal to the countries involved in the Stability Pact to commit themselves fully to its implementation;

19.4. invite its member states to contribute in an appropriate way in intensifying economic co-operation in the region in order to rapidly re-establish the communications and transport infrastructure;

19.5. call on all countries concerned with the Stability Pact to consider including the cultural dimension in its programmes and to invest in assistance programmes in the fields of education, culture, heritage and youth involvement;

19.6. explore ways of bringing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to meet the necessary conditions in order to be readmitted to the international community and to become fully involved with the implementation of the Stability Pact.