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Communication by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly to the Bureau of the Assembly

**President's activities between the first and the second part of the Ordinary
session of 2012**

Communication

President of the Assembly



Contents	Page
1. PAST VISITS AND MEETINGS	3
2. PRESS RELEASES	8
3. SPEECHES	9

1. PAST VISITS AND MEETINGS

1.1. Meetings with political and economic actors of the Alsace region : improvement of the accessibility of Strasbourg and strengthening of the links between the Alsace region and the Parliamentary Assembly (January - February 2012)

1.1.1. Strengthening the links with the Alsace region

I took up contact with the Mayor of Strasbourg, the President of the Urban Community and the Presidents of the General and Regional Councils in order to improve the knowledge on Assembly in Alsace and of Alsace for parliamentarians.

A first concrete result will be the reception organised by the General Council of the Bas-Rhin in honour of the parliamentarians of the Assembly on April 25, 2012.

1.1.2. Accessibility of Strasbourg

I met the main persons in charge of this file, locally and nationally, to identify solutions to improve the air accessibility to Strasbourg.

I welcome the firm commitment of the locally elected representatives, of the French Government and of Air France, the leading company serving Strasbourg, to rapidly find solutions. One of the most promising tracks would be to move towards alignment of taxes paid by the airlines in Strasbourg on the level of those paid in the major competing airports and, in return, in 2012, the opening of new lines between Strasbourg and various European cities.

1.1.3. List of meetings held within this framework:

26 January 2012 : Meeting with Mr Roland Ries, Mayor of Strasbourg

1 February 2012 : **Meeting with** Mr Jacques Bigot, President of the Urban Community of Strasbourg

7 February 2012 : Meeting with Mr Philippe Richert, minister in charge of the local and regional authorities, President of the Regional Council of Alsace

8 February 2012 : Hearing of the European Affairs Committee of the Senate

Meeting with Mr André Flajolet, French Deputy of Pas-de-Calais on the participation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in the world water Forum in Marseille

22 February 2012 : Meeting with the management of Air France

- Mr Zoran Jelkic, Head of the Private Office of the President Director General of Air France
- Mr Claude Malacan, Director of Program
- Ms Patricia Manent, in charge of the relations with the European Parliament and Institutions
- Mr Thomas Dubus, director of the Strasbourg airport
- Mr Claude Leibermann, President of the Council of supervision of the Strasbourg airport

These meetings follow those held before my election, namely with the President of the General Council of the Bas-Rhin, Mr Guy-Dominique Kennel, and the President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr Jean-Luc Heimbürger.

1.2. Meetings in the European Parliament (Strasbourg, 15-16 February 2012)

During these two days in Strasbourg, I met the Chair of the Group of the European People's Party, Joseph Daul, the Chair of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, Hannes Swoboda, the Co-Chair of the Greens/European Free Alliance, Rebecca Harms, the Chair of the European Conservatives and Reformists, Martin Callanan, and the Head of the European Union Delegation to the Council of Europe, Luisella Pavan-Woolfe. I also took part in the meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, which held an exchange of views with Alain Juppé, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France.

The main focus of these meetings was increased co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament. In particular, I advocated better reciprocal participation in activities of common interest organised by the two institutions, including joint field visits. I also called for efforts to be stepped up to avoid duplication of Council of Europe and European Union activities, particularly with regard to the Fundamental Rights Agency, which is already in place, and to the European Union's plans to set up a European Endowment for Democracy and appoint a Special Representative for Human Rights. Among other issues, we addressed the situation in Hungary and Ukraine, Europe's frozen conflicts and European Union accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.

On this occasion, I also met Françoise Grossetête, Chair of the High-Level Contact Group for Relations with the Turkish Cypriot Community in the northern part of the island, with whom we agreed to carry-out a joint visit to Cyprus in September 2012.

I was extremely pleased with these meetings and the interest expressed by our European Parliament counterparts to co-operate on specific issues of common interest. It is my intention to closely follow the work of the European Parliament both in Strasbourg and Brussels and use every appropriate opportunity to promote the work of our Assembly

1.3. Meetings at the United Nations (New York, 27-29 February 2012)

I travelled to New York on the occasion of a series of events held as part of the 56th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

I seized the opportunity to make contact with the highest United Nations officials to discuss ways of stepping up our co-operation and combining our efforts in seeking solutions to the crises and most serious problems affecting our societies. In particular, I met Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary General of the UN for Political Affairs, and Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary General of the UN for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

During the meetings with Ban Ki-moon and Lynn Pascoe, I called for a strong partnership between the Council of Europe and UN bodies in crisis management. I proposed extending the co-operation between the two organisations, in particular with co-ordination of positions on international crises such as Syria and consultations during Assembly debates on these issues. I emphasised that the Parliamentary Assembly can help to support UN efforts to resolve these crises by stirring European parliaments and, through them, European governments into action.

I also stressed the need for all states fully to respect on the international arena - and in particular within UN bodies - the values which they signed up to on joining the Council of Europe.

For his part, the UN Secretary General accepted in principle an invitation to address the Parliamentary Assembly in Strasbourg. He commended the Assembly's commitment to defending human rights and placed particular emphasis on its role in combating violence against women.

During the meeting with Michelle Bachelet, I thanked her warmly for the excellent co-operation between the Assembly and UN Women, as reflected, for instance, in her participation in the Assembly's debates during the January 2012 part-session. I told her how much the Assembly members had appreciated her participation and urged her to come and take part in other relevant debates in future.

For her part, Ms Bachelet enthusiastically agreed to continue promoting the Council of Europe Convention on Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) throughout the world and urged the Assembly to redouble its efforts to promote the participation of women in politics.

I also held bilateral meetings with ambassadors from member countries and observers and partners of the Assembly, in particular those of Cyprus, Georgia, France, Russia, Israel and Palestine, with whom I exchanged views on conflict management in Council of Europe member States and our immediate neighbourhood. In particular, we discussed the situation in Cyprus, the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia and the situation in the Middle East.

I had extremely positive inter-institutional meetings with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Abdelwahed Radi, and the IPU Secretary General, Anders Johnsson, as well as the Director of the UN Alliance of Civilisations, Marc Scheuer. We found areas of convergence and identified many issues on which we can work together.

Lastly, I gave speeches at two events held as part of the 56th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. On 27 February, I took part in an event on preventing violence against women through the implementation of international standards, held jointly by the Council of Europe, UN Women and the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations. On 29 February, I also took part as a panellist in a parliamentary meeting on "Empowering rural women: what role for parliaments?" held by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women.

1.4. Working visit in Brussels (6-7 March 2012)

The main purpose of my visit to Brussels was to discuss the possibilities of increasing co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union institutions in specific areas such as conflict prevention and settlement, activities in the Council of Europe's southern neighbourhood - particularly in the countries having partner for democracy status with the Assembly - the fight against corruption and money-laundering, and the situation of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers.

I also brought up the need to avoid any duplication of effort between the Council of Europe and the European Union, and the European Union's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.

During this visit, I spoke with Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, Elmar Brok, Chair of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, Michel Barnier, European Commissioner for Internal Market and Services, Cecilia Malmström, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Pierre Vimont, Executive Secretary General of the European External Action Service, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union, Mr Korneliou.

I also met Wilfried Martens, President of the European People's Party, Nicolas Beger, Director of the Amnesty International Office at the European Union, and Antoine Madelin, Director of IGO Activities - Worldwide Human Rights Movement.

In addition, I was also a key guest on the programme "Ici l'Europe" on the France 24 News channel.

My message to Brussels was extremely clear - the activities of the Council of Europe and the European Union complement each other, seeking to pursue a shared objective, that of creating an area of human rights protection throughout the whole continent, in the interests of all European citizens. To my great satisfaction, this message was very well received by those with whom I spoke.

I also suggested looking to set up new synergies by working together on specific issues, particularly with regard to countries subject to monitoring or involved in the post-monitoring dialogue implemented by the Assembly, and also regarding those in difficult legal or political situations, such as was currently the case in Hungary.

Lastly, I would like to thank Ambassador Torbjørn Frøysnes, Special Representative of the Secretary General and Director of the Brussels Office, for his valuable assistance in the preparations for and during this visit, and for his remarkable work in Brussels to enhance the profile of the Council of Europe and intensify our co-operation with the European Union

1.5. Meetings in Strasbourg (13-14 March 2012)

During this visit, I had meetings with:

- Mr Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- Mr Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the UN General Assembly
- Ms Françoise Grossetête, Chair of the "High-Level Contact Group for Relations with the Turkish Cypriot Community in the Northern Part of the Island"
- Cypriot members of the European Parliament
- Ms Nadezhda Neynsky, MEP, Bulgaria
- Ambassador Theodora Constantinidou, Permanent Representative of Cyprus
- Ambassador Luís Filipe Castro Mendes, Permanent Representative of Portugal
- Mgr Giordano, Permanent Observer, Special Envoy of the Holy See

- Ms Gabriella Battaini, Director General of Programmes at the Council of Europe
- Mr Costa, former President of the European Court of Human Rights.

1.6. Meetings in Strasbourg (20-21 March 2012)

Following the tragic shooting at a school in Toulouse which claimed the life of four people, including three children, I went on the morning of 20 March to the Aquiba School in Strasbourg to express my personal sympathy and the solidarity of the Parliamentary Assembly with the Jewish community.

Alongside pupils and the Principal of the Aquiba School, the Chief Rabbi of Strasbourg, the Principal of the Beth Hannah School and other representatives of the Strasbourg Jewish Community, I joined in a minute's silence in memory of the victims.

In addition, during my visit to Strasbourg, I held meetings with:

- Mr Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, United Kingdom-
- Mr Vlasak, Vice-President of the European Parliament
- Sir Nicholas Bratza, President of the European Court of Human Rights
- Mr Gianni Buquicchio, President of the Venice Commission
- Ambassador Fuller, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom
- Ambassador Tatiana Pârvu, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova
- Ambassador Josep Dalleres, Permanent Representative of Andorra
- Hegumen Philip (Ryabykh), representative of the Patriarch of Moscow in Strasbourg.

I also went to the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe where I held an exchange of views with the group of "Youth Peace Ambassadors" who were attending a seminar in the Centre.

1.7. Official visit to Monaco (23-24 March 2012)

In response to an invitation from the National Council of Monaco, I made an official visit to the Principality on 23 March 2012. During the visit, I met the President of the National Council, Mr Jean-François Robillon, the Minister of State, Mr Michel Roger, the leaders of the political groups in the National Council and the members of Monaco's delegation to the Assembly. I was also received by HRH Prince Albert II of Monaco.

During these meetings, I praised Monaco's efforts to modernise its institutions and encouraged the authorities to adopt the most modern international standards to address the current challenges of international co-operation, particularly the four most recent Council of Europe conventions, on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, the counterfeiting of medical products, preventing and combating violence against women, and cybercrime. I also thanked the authorities for their steadfast support for the Council of Europe's major projects, such as its Strategy for Children's Rights.

I drew my hosts' attention to the fact that in 2014, Monaco will be celebrating the 10th anniversary of its accession to the Council of Europe and expressed my hope that this major event would be an opportunity to make its contribution to the Council of Europe's activities even more visible and relevant.

I stressed that the current post-monitoring dialogue was a practical and effective means of intensifying our co-operation and said that I would like the Monitoring Committee's next report to take stock of the progress made so that headway could be made in areas where further effort was still necessary, while showing due regard for the special features of Monaco, of which we are all aware.

1.8. Ceremony of award of the North-South Prize at the Council of Europe North-South Center (Lisbon, 27 March 2012)

In my speech at the North-South Prize award ceremony, which was granted this year to Boris Tadic and Souhayr Belhassen, I pointed out that by their action and their courage, the two laureates of the award had helped to shape today's world, with democratic debates in the South Mediterranean and in the Balkans, now peaceful and involved in the process of European integration.

In particular, I mentioned the personal commitment of President Tadic, thanks to whom "South-Eastern Europe is no longer a zone of instability, but a region where most of the players have the political desire to cooperate for peace, stability and the prosperity of all Europeans who live there". I also recalled the fight for human rights led by Ms Belhassen in the South Mediterranean, and I pointed out that she was the first woman as well as the first representative of the Arab world to become President of the International Federation for Human rights.

In the margins of the ceremony, I had a very interesting and constructive meeting with the Portuguese delegation to the Assembly.

1.9. Official visit to the Republic of Moldova (2-5 April 2012)

At the invitation of the Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament, Mr Marian Lupu, I paid an official visit to the Republic of Moldova from 2 to 5 April last. During my stay I visited Chişinău, where I met with Mr Lupu, and also the President of the Republic Mr Nicolae Timofti, the Prime Minister Mr Vlad Filat, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Mr Iurie Leanca, the Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Mr Eugen Carpov, and the leaders of the political parties represented in Parliament, the Moldovan delegation to the Assembly and NGO representatives.

On 4 April I visited the Transnistrian region and met with Mr Shevchuk, the leader of Transnistria, Mr Kaminski, the Head of the Supreme Soviet, and various NGO representatives, in Tiraspol. In this connection, I also held talks in Chişinău on 2 April with the Ambassadors of the "5+2" Group responsible for the negotiations on settling the conflict in Transnistria.

In Chişinău I congratulated the President of the Republic, Mr Timofti, on his election, which marked the end of the political deadlock in which the country had been immersed for three years and a new start in Moldovan political life. During our meeting the President confirmed his willingness to address the Parliamentary Assembly at one of our forthcoming part-sessions.

In my statements to the Moldovan press I called on all the players in the country's political life to look constructively to the future and to accept the democratic legitimacy of the institutions, particularly that of a President who had been elected in accordance with constitutional requirements.

The country must now concentrate on implementing the reforms, and I urged the country's political forces to find the optimum ways of working together to this end, including the revision of the Constitution, making use of the expertise of the Venice Commission in the drafting of legal reforms.

I assured the authorities of our Assembly's support in their efforts towards European integration, stressing that progress in the honouring of the obligations and commitments entered into by the Republic of Moldova in the context of the Council of Europe is the best way to speed up this integration process.

In this connection, I welcomed the preparation of a draft action plan on Moldovan compliance with its commitments vis-à-vis the Council of Europe, which is shortly due to be approved by the Moldovan authorities.

During my visit to Tiraspol in the Transnistrian region, I underlined that the Assembly could help reinforce the climate of trust by using the tools of parliamentary democracy in order, for example, to restore dialogue between the members of the Moldovan Parliament and the members of Transnistria's Supreme Soviet.

After my talks with the highest authorities of the Republic of Moldova and the Transnistrian leaders, I am convinced that the Assembly could step up its contribution to resolving the conflict in Transnistria. Mr Shevchuk's election and the resumption of negotiations within the 5+2 framework are creating the right conditions for real progress, to which the Assembly could make a useful contribution.

I would therefore like to propose that the Assembly, through the intermediary of its Sub-Committee on conflict prevention through dialogue and reconciliation (of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy) , should act as a dialogue platform for representatives of the Moldovan Parliament and the Transnistrian Supreme Soviet. I secured a preliminary agreement from both sides on this proposal, which must obviously be formally confirmed by all the bodies involved. I am also intending to consult our colleagues in the European Parliament and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on this matter.

After my encounters in Tiraspol I visited the family of Vadim Pisar, a citizen of the Republic of Moldova killed on 1 January 2012 when crossing a checkpoint on the boundary with the Transnistrian region. I was appalled by this dreadful misunderstanding, which shows the potentially lethal consequences of the very existence of these so-called "frozen" conflicts.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Moldovan authorities, especially the Parliament and its Speaker, Mr Lupu, for their excellent organisation of my visit and their highly constructive attitude during our discussions. I would also express my gratitude to the Head of the Council of Europe Office in the Republic of Moldova, Mr Ulvi Akhundlu, and his team for their valuable assistance, particularly in organising my visit to the Transnistrian region.

1.10. High Level Conference on the Future of the European Court of Human Rights (Brighton, United Kingdom, 18-19 April 2012)

In my speech presented to the ministers and State representatives at the opening of the high-level conference on reform of the European Court of Human Rights in Brighton, I stated that the States must first and foremost guarantee the effective protection of human rights at national level, which would enable the Court to play its role to the full, together with the political action of the Council of Europe as a whole.

I asked if the Court had become a victim of deficiencies at the national level, pointing out that about 80 per cent of applications to the Court come from just ten states out of the 47 covered by its jurisdiction.

I also called for enhanced recognition of the role of the Parliamentary Assembly and national parliaments in ensuring compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights. I stressed that it is important that national parliaments systematically check that draft legislation is compatible with the Convention, that they closely monitor the action taken to execute judgments against their States, and that they ensure that changes to national legislation are in line with the measures recommended by the Court.

2. PRESS RELEASES

1. Jean-Claude Mignon from France elected PACE President (23 January 2012)
2. Jean-Claude Mignon to lay a wreath at the Strasbourg war memorial (23 January 2012)
3. Jean-Claude Mignon to David Cameron: 'it is essential to remain united and committed' (25 January 2012)
4. Jean-Claude Mignon, Nils Muiznieks: 'We can do better together' (25 January 2012)
5. PACE President commemorates International Holocaust Remembrance Day (26 January 2012)
6. PACE President has 'serious doubts' over convictions of Minsk bombers, appeals against their executions (27 January 2012)
7. Jean-Claude Mignon: 'The slaughter in Syria must cease immediately' (2 February 2012)
8. Cold snap in Europe: 'We all have a moral duty to show solidarity', says Jean-Claude Mignon (6 February 2012)
9. Jean-Claude Mignon meets the members of the French Senate's European Affairs Committee (13 February 2012)
10. The media are an essential tool for promoting cultural diversity, says PACE President (14 February 2012)
11. Jean-Claude Mignon calls for less duplication and increased co-operation between PACE and the EP (15 February 2012)
12. Syria: PACE President shocked at the death of two journalists in Homs (23 February 2012)
13. PACE President to meet Ban Ki-Moon in New York (24 February 2012)
14. Jean-Claude Mignon: adoption of the Istanbul Convention is a victory, but its entry into force is essential (27 February 2012)
15. Ukraine: PACE President calls for the release of Yuriy Lutsenko (28 February 2012)
16. Jean-Claude Mignon: we must promote the empowerment and emancipation of rural women (29 February 2012)
17. PACE President, meeting Ban Ki-Moon, calls for 'a strong partnership' between the Council of Europe and the UN (29 February 2012)

18. Jean-Claude Mignon: high-level talks in Brussels with representatives of the European institutions (6 March 2012)
19. PACE President in favour of reinforced partnership between the '47' and the European Union (7 March 2012)
20. Arab Spring: PACE President says 'no democracy without respect for women's rights' (7 March 2012)
21. Jean-Claude Mignon, meeting the President of the UN General Assembly, calls for more co-operation (13 March 2012)
22. PACE: last-ditch appeal for clemency for Dmitry Konovalov and Vladislav Kovalev (15 March 2012)
23. Republic of Moldova: Jean-Claude Mignon welcomes the election of the new President and announces a visit to the country (16 March 2012)
24. Belarus: 'An irreparable act has been committed' (18 March 2012)
25. PACE President expresses his solidarity with the Jewish community at the Aquiba School in Strasbourg (19 March 2012)
26. Shooting in Toulouse: PACE President condemns a cowardly and despicable act (19 March 2012)
27. PACE President visits the Principality of Monaco (21 March 2012)
28. Jean-Claude Mignon praises Monaco's efforts to modernise its institutions (23 March 2012)
29. Senegal: Jean-Claude Mignon congratulates the President-elect (27 March 2012)
30. North-South Prize: two winners 'who have shaped today's world' (27 March 2012)
31. PACE President makes official visit to the Republic of Moldova (29 March 2012)
32. Jean-Claude Mignon firmly condemns executions in Japan (29 March 2012)
33. Republic of Moldova: PACE President welcomes the end of the institutional deadlock (3 April 2012)
34. PACE President in Transnistria: frozen conflicts must not cause any more killing (4 April 2012)
35. Joint statement on the situation in Syria (10 April 2012)
36. Jean-Claude Mignon: executions by Gaza authorities are in contempt of Council of Europe values (11 April 2012)
37. PACE President welcomes release of Belarusian opposition leader and campaign aide (16 April 2012)
38. PACE President addresses Brighton Conference on the future of the Court (17 April 2012)
39. PACE President in Brighton: states must first and foremost guarantee human rights at national level (19 April 2012)

3. SPEECHES

1. Opening speech by the newly elected President of the Assembly (23 January 2012)
2. Welcome words for Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (23 January 2012)
3. Welcome for Mr David Lidington, Minister for Europe of the United Kingdom (24 January 2012)
4. Welcome speech for Ms Irina Bokova, General Director of Unesco (24 January 2012)
5. Speech before the Committee on Equality and Non-discrimination (24 January 2012)
6. Speech on the occasion of the International Day of commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust (25 January 2012)
7. Welcome speech for Mr Grigol Vashadze, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (25 January 2012)
8. Welcome speech for Ms Tarja Halonen, President of Finland (25 January 2012)
9. Welcome speech for Mr David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (25 January 2012)
10. Welcome speech for Ms Michelle Bachelet, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations and executive Director of UN Women (26 January 2012)

11. Welcome speech for Mr Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights (26 January 2012)
12. Speech at the opening of the colloquy " Les médias de l'expression de la diversité culturelle, constats et perspectives " (The media of expression of cultural diversity, facts and prospectives), organised by the Unesco Chair of the Strasbourg University (14 February 2012)
13. Speech on the occasion of the side event of the 56th session of the Committee on the condition of women on the prevention of violence against women by the application of international standards, organised by the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations, UN Women and the Council of Europe (New York, 27 February 2012)
14. Speech at the parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the session of the UN Commission on the status of women, organised by IPU and UN Women : empowerment of rural women : the role of parliaments (New York, 29 February 2012)
15. Speech of solidarity at the Jewish school Aquiba in Strasbourg following the shooting in Toulouse (20 March 2012)
16. Speech on the occasion of the ceremony of award of the 2011 North-South Prize (Lisbon, 27 March 2012)
17. Speech on the occasion of the Ministerial Conference on the future of the European Court of Human Rights (Brighton, 19 April 2012)