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Activities of the Assembly's Bureau and Standing Committee (16 April – 20 June 2011)

Progress report

Bureau of the Assembly

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Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Activities of the Bureau since the last part-session	2
2.1. European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)	2
2.2. Ad hoc committees of the Bureau for the observation of elections and referenda	2
2.3. Issues raised by committees	3
2.4. References and transmissions to committees	3
2.5. Requests for extension of references	3
2.6. Other business	4
3. Activities of the Standing Committee (Kyiv, 27 May 2011)	4
Appendix 1 – Appointments of Assembly Representatives for official activities	5
Appendix 2 – Press release of the delegation which observed the parliamentary elections in Turkey on 12 June 2011	6

1. Introduction

1. On 15 April 2011, the Bureau appointed me rapporteur for this report. Since the last part session of the Assembly, the Bureau has met in Kyiv on 26 May 2011. The Standing Committee met also in Kyiv on 27 May 2011.

2. In line with my predecessors, this progress report covers the period outside of Assembly sessions, leaving aside the decisions which have already been ratified by the Assembly. Thus, the first part of this report presents the Bureau's activities since the part-session of April 2011 and up until the June 2011 part session. The activities of the Standing Committee of 27 May 2011 are presented in the second part of the report.

3. The Bureau will hold its next meetings on Monday 20 June 2011 at 8 am and Friday 24 June 2011 at 8.30 am (in Strasbourg, during the part-session), then on 5 September 2011 (Caserta, Italy) following an invitation by the Italian delegation. The next meeting of the Standing Committee will be held in Edinburgh (United Kingdom) on 25 November 2011, following an invitation by the delegation of the United Kingdom.



2. Activities of the Bureau since the last part-session

2.1. European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)

4. At its meeting on 26 May 2011, concerning the list of candidates for the CPT in respect of Spain, the Bureau took note of the written information about the constitution of the list, provided by the Chairperson of the Spanish delegation and decided to transmit this list to the Committee of Ministers.

2.2. Ad hoc committees of the Bureau for the observation of elections and referenda

2.2.1. Kazakhstan: early presidential election (3 April 2011)

5. At its meeting on 26 May 2011, the Bureau approved the report of the ad hoc committee presented by Mrs Liovochkina.

2.2.2. "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia": early parliamentary elections (5 June 2011)

6. The pre-electoral mission to "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" took place on 17-18 May 2011 and, at its meeting on 26 May 2011, the Bureau took note of the related press release issued by the ad hoc Committee. The report of the ad hoc committee which observed the elections will be presented in the plenary on Monday 20 June 2011.

2.2.3. Turkey: parliamentary elections (12 June 2011)

7. The Bureau, on 10 March 2011, took note of the composition of the ad hoc committee for the observation of these elections and appointed Mrs Kerstin Lundgren (Sweden, ALDE) as Chairperson of the ad hoc Committee.

8. The pre-electoral mission to this country took place on 17 and 18 May 2011 and, at its meeting on 26 May 2011, the Bureau took note of the related press release issued by the ad hoc Committee¹.

2.2.4. Tunisia: election of a Constituent National Assembly (23 October 2011)

9. The Bureau decided to observe the election of a Constituent National Assembly in Tunisia and constituted an ad hoc committee, composed of 20 members in accordance with the D'Hondt system (EPP/CD: 7, SOC: 6; EDG: 3, ALDE: 3, UEL: 1). It further authorised a pre-electoral mission approximately one month ahead of the elections, composed of five members, one from each group, who are also members of the ad hoc committee.

10. Ad hoc committee of the Bureau on recent detentions, prosecutions and convictions of members of the opposition in Belarus

11. The ad hoc committee of the Bureau on recent detentions, prosecutions and convictions of members of the opposition in Belarus held its second meeting on 30 May 2011 in Paris. It held an exchange of views on a draft report presented by the Chairman, Mr Tomáš Jirsa (Czech Republic, EDG), on the detentions, prosecutions and convictions of members of the opposition in Belarus following the events of 19 December 2010 and instructed the Secretariat to update, enlarge and finalise the draft report proposed by the Chairman, with a view to presenting it to the Bureau at the latest during the fourth part of the 2011 Ordinary Session.

12. The next meeting of this ad hoc committee will take place on Tuesday 21 June 2011 in Strasbourg, during the third part of the 2011 Ordinary Session.

1. The press release of the delegation which observed these elections on 12 June 2011 appears as Appendix II to the present document.

2.3. Issues raised by committees

2.3.1. Follow-up to Resolution 1583 (2007) "Improving the participation of members in Assembly plenary sessions and committee meetings"

13. At its meeting on 26 May 2011, the Bureau took note of the oral and written report of the Chairperson of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs and invited the President of the Assembly to write to the chairpersons of the delegations with low participation rates and the speakers of the parliaments concerned, to inform them of the situation and possibly to hold a meeting with the chairpersons of the delegations concerned.

2.4. References and transmissions to committees

2.4.1. References approved by the Bureau subject to ratification by the Standing Committee

14. On 26 May 2011, the Bureau approved the following references, subject to ratification by the Standing Committee:

- [Doc. 12543](#), Motion for a Resolution, *The need for an international inquiry into the crackdown against the Belarusian opposition in December 2010*, to the Political Affairs Committee for report (reference no. 3768);
- [Doc. 12580](#), Motion for a Resolution, *Metsamor nuclear power station – a vital threat to Europe in the present and the future*, to the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs for information (reference no 3769);
- [Doc. 12582](#), Motion for a Resolution, *Fighting "child sex tourism" through committed legal and political action*, to the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee for report(reference no 3770);
- [Doc. 12584](#), Motion for a Resolution, *Strengthening consumer rights protection mechanisms*, to the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee for information, reference no 3771);
- [Doc 12585](#), Motion for a Resolution, *Improving user protection and security in cyberspace*, to the Committee on Culture, Science and Education for report (reference no 3772) and to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights for opinion;
- [Doc. 12586](#), Motion for a Resolution, *Reinforcing the selection processes of experts of the monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe*, to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights for report (reference no 3773);
- [Doc. 12617](#), Motion for a Resolution, *Lives lost in the Mediterranean sea: who is responsible?*, to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population for report (reference no 3774);
- [Doc. 12518](#), Motion for a Recommendation, *The state of media freedom in Europe*, to the Committee on Culture, Science and Education for report(reference no 3775).

2.4.2. Consultations

15. As regards [Doc. 12587](#), Motion for a Resolution, *Criteria for the definition of a political prisoner*, the Bureau decided to send it for consultation of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights for a possible follow-up to be given.

2.5. Requests for extension of references

16. On 26 May 2011, the Bureau approved the following extensions:

- following a decision by the Bureau, *The humanitarian consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia: follow-up given to Resolution 1648 (2009)*, to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, for report (reference no 3574), extension until 30 April 2012;
- [Doc. 11831](#), Motion for a Resolution, *Lack of appropriate follow-up, by the Committee of Ministers, to the work of the Parliamentary Assembly*, to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs for report (reference no 3541), extension until 31 January 2012;
- [Doc. 11922](#), Motion for a Resolution, *The definition of political prisoners*, to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, for report(reference no 3618), extension until 30 June 2012.

2.6. Other business

17. On 26 May 2011, the Bureau approved the report submitted by the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development on the *Analysis of the use made by the Assembly's political groups of their allocations for 2010*.

3. Activities of the Standing Committee (Kyiv, 27 May 2011)

18. The Standing Committee, meeting on 27 May 2011 in Kyiv (Ukraine) heard a welcome address by Mr Volodymyr Lytvyn, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and held an exchange of views with Mr Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

19. Following debates, the Standing Committee, on behalf of the Assembly, adopted the following texts which are available on the Assembly website:

- [Recommendation 1971 \(2011\)](#), The impact of the Eastern Partnership of the European Union on governance and economic development in eastern Europe
- [Resolution 1812 \(2011\)](#), The impact of the Eastern Partnership of the European Union on governance and economic development in eastern Europe
- [Resolution 1813 \(2011\)](#), Promoting microcredit for a more social economy
- [Resolution 1814 \(2011\)](#), Reforms of the Common Fisheries Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy
- [Resolution 1815 \(2011\)](#), The potential dangers of electromagnetic fields and their effect on the environment
- [Resolution 1816 \(2011\)](#), Health hazards of heavy and other metals

20. The Standing Committee ratified the changes in the composition of Assembly committees in respect of the delegations of Estonia and Moldova and in the composition of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs with regard to the EPP/CD political group.

21. The Standing Committee took note of the draft agenda of the third Part-Session of the Assembly (20-24 June 2011).

22. The Standing Committee ratified the references adopted by the Bureau on 26 May 2011 (see par. 2.5.1 above).

23. The Standing committee took note of the report of the Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau on the "Observation of the early presidential election in Kazakhstan (3 April 2011)" and of the information report by the Political Affairs Committee "Iran's nuclear programme: the need for an effective international response"².

24. The Standing Committee decided to hold its next meeting in Edinburgh (United Kingdom), on 25 November 2011.

2. See [Doc. 12615](#).

Appendix 1 – Appointments of Assembly Representatives for official activities

Ms Radolović-Šćepanovic (Montenegro, SOC), 9th Conference of Presidents of Parliaments of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), Becici (Montenegro), 13-15 June 2011 at no cost for the Assembly.

Appendix 2 – Press release of the delegation which observed the parliamentary elections in Turkey on 12 June 2011

Ref. PACE 028 (2011)

Turkey's well-managed, democratic elections demonstrated pluralism, but also showed a need for improvements on fundamental freedoms

Strasbourg, 13.06.2011 – The 12 June 2011 elections to the Turkish Grand National Assembly demonstrated that recent changes enacted by the Turkish government have improved the electoral system, yet there were some worrying developments, especially regarding freedom of expression, including media freedom. The electoral process was generally characterized by pluralism and a vibrant civil society. Voting and counting observed on Election Day showed a mostly calm and professionally-managed process.

Some elements of the legal framework continue to constrain activities of the media and political parties by limiting freedom of speech.

The 10 percent threshold for political party representation in Parliament – the highest in the OSCE region – remains one of the central issues that limit the representative nature of the legislature.

For the first time, contestants were allowed to buy political advertisements. Political parties are granted free airtime in the final week of the campaign on the main state-owned public television channel; additional airtime is granted to parties proportionally based on votes received in the last elections. Independent candidates do not qualify for free airtime and opposition parties claimed that they receive significantly less coverage in Turkish media compared to the governing party.

The registration of political parties and independent candidates offered voters genuine choices. The practical allowance for the use of other languages, including Kurdish, in political campaigning is an important change this year that strengthened the country's pluralistic, democratic debate.

Government control over influential media groups allegedly resulted in biased reporting and self-censorship, but journalists and NGOs said business interests also limit media freedom. Observers noted the detention and ongoing investigations of more than 50 journalists in Turkey, some linked to alleged connections with an attempted coup. Limiting freedom of the media is a violation of the 1990 Copenhagen Document and a host Council of Europe documents. On 2 May 2011 the Turkish Constitutional Court amended the Press Law to extend the statute of limitations for filing criminal cases against journalists from two months to eight years. This ruling has been cited by many observers, including the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, as putting journalists under the permanent threat of criminal lawsuits.

Procedures during the elections were generally well organized and conducted in an orderly and professional fashion, even though there were initial problems with the registration of some independent candidates. The Supreme Board of Elections (SBE) enjoyed broad public confidence and respect through its transparent, professional and efficient administration of the election. Voters had to present photo identification at polling stations. Transparent ballot boxes were used for the first time. In a technical improvement, the SBE had prepared voter lists for the elections based on a nationwide electronic civil registration system that links a voter's registered residence with a unique personal identification number. However, many stakeholders raised questions about remarkable changes in the number of registered voters in recent years, and the printing of a disproportionately high number of excess ballot papers.

Political parties had sufficient ability to convey their programs to voters. The election campaign took place in a polarized environment. The parliamentary observers welcomed the fact that the stakeholders mostly exercised restraint even if there was heavy police presence and tensions in parts of the South East, as well as isolated reports of physical attacks. At the same time, many rallies with large crowds of citizens occurred largely free of violence. Most importantly, the election day was overall carried out without violence.

The counting observed was done efficiently and in compliance with the existing regulations. Party representatives and observers had access to the results in the polling stations.

There is a need to broadly promote more participation and representation of women in the political life of the country. Less than 9 per cent of the seats in the outgoing parliament were held by women, and the candidate lists presented by the political parties did not meet promises made; women never made up even 20 per cent of the candidates on any party's candidate list.

On Election Day, observers witnessed the opening of polling stations, voting and the closing process, including the vote count. Local election officials and poll workers appeared well-trained, polling proceeded in a calm and well-organized manner. Turnout was reported at 84 per cent.

In keeping with its OSCE and Council of Europe commitments, Turkey invited parliamentarians from the OSCE and Council of Europe to observe these elections. The observers were mostly granted access to all levels of election administration and polling stations on Election Day. In order to remove any uncertainty and to comply fully with OSCE commitments, it is desirable that the law specifically allow international observers access to national election proceedings.

The observation, bringing together more than 70 observers, including 61 Members of Parliaments from 30 countries, was a joint effort of delegations from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA), led by OSCE PA Vice-President, and Member of the Danish Parliament Pia Christmas-Moeller, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), led by Member of the Swedish Parliament Kerstin Lundgren.

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