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Discussion of the communication on the activities of the Committee of Ministers

Parliamentary questions

1. Question from Mr Bender

Recalling that at least one child is killed every second as a result of a process known as abortion, that the Holy See has recently called for a moratorium on abortion, and that such a moratorium on the death penalty for convicted criminals was widely accepted several years ago, wonders whether a moratorium on killing innocent children would be much more important,

Asks the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, whether he will support a moratorium on abortion in the Council of Europe in order to protect innocent human life.

2. Question from Mr Iwiński

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, if the Council of Europe, bearing in mind the related environmental challenge, intends to comment on the construction of the Nord Stream pipeline.

3. Question from Mr Badré

In keeping with the conclusions of the Warsaw Summit, the Swedish chairmanship plans to put the focus back onto the Council of Europe's fundamental tasks and hence to strengthen the system for protecting human rights which it put in place;

Considering that:

- the Council of Europe is, however, still somewhat powerless in the face of the difficulties the European Court of Human Rights is encountering in processing applications within a reasonable time. There are currently 100 000 applications pending and the number of applications has been growing by 5% per year;
- the way out of this deadlock lies in Protocol No. 14, which has been ratified by 46 of the 47 member states;
- while the Swedish chairmanship clearly intends to address the problem, I am somewhat sceptical about the measures it plans to take. The colloquy which was held no more than two weeks ago and the good practices which are expected to follow on from this cannot provide an effective remedy,

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, if the chairmanship plans to hold a proper discussion on this subject in the Committee of Ministers, and intends to propose arrangements for the partial application of Protocol No. 14 if Russia continues to refuse to ratify it.



4. Question from Mr Branger

Noting that:

- on 22 January 2008, the Slovakian chairmanship stated before this Assembly that the Council of Europe wished to be involved in future in the framing of the European Union's European Neighbourhood Policy;
- some of the countries concerned by this policy, such as Belarus and the Maghreb and Mashreq countries, are already the focus of special attention from the Council, including regular exchanges on the local human rights situation;
- our negotiating partners in these countries acknowledge the Council of Europe's expertise and legitimacy in this field, which may also be of some considerable use to the European Union in the course of its work. The report on the implementation of the neighbourhood policy in 2007, presented by the European Commission on 2 April 2008, reflects the Commission's growing concern about the state of civil liberties in the countries concerned. Increased complementarity with the Council of Europe would also be in keeping with the Juncker report,

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, if the Committee of Ministers has established initial contacts with the European Commission with a view to putting this partnership into practice and, if it goes ahead, how it will be arranged.

5. Question from Mr Vareikis

Recalling that more than ten years ago you said that the Baltic states are the litmus test for the West: this test shows how far western society is ready to accept the Baltic states, that were recently occupied by Soviet Union, as part of the Euro-Atlantic community. It seems that the Baltic litmus test was positive,

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, what region is, according to your understanding, the litmus test now: Ukraine, the South Caucasus, the Western Balkans, or Turkey?

6. Question from Mr Reimann

Noting that, at an official meeting between the German and Swiss Ministries of Foreign Affairs on 6 June 2008, the Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Micheline Calmy-Rey, called for more direct democracy in Europe. Her idea is to enhance the public's feeling of involvement in politics, particularly European politics, by holding, for example, regular referendums,

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, if the Committee of Ministers would be prepared to support a move to enhance certain aspects of direct democracy.

7. Question from Ms Fiala

Noting that, in Sweden, all the major political parties have expressed their support for Turkish membership of the European Union, but that it would seem that the more moderate sections of Islam in Turkey are growing weaker, and one of the main effects of this has been a slow-down in progress towards gender equality,

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, what steps he plans to take to support the development in Turkey of a European version of Islam.

8. Question from Ms de Pourbaix-Lundin

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, what action he will take to ensure that all political parties in Armenia have an opportunity to operate freely and to ensure that democracy and human rights are upheld in Armenia.

9. Question from Mr Pozzo di Borgo

Considering that:

- convergence between the Council of Europe and the European Union has been frequently evoked, particularly since the Juncker report of April 2006;

- the European Council decided, on 14 December 2007, at France's instigation, to set up a discussion group charged with planning for the European Union's future between 2020 and 2030;
- the group will be chaired by the former head of the Spanish Government, Mr Felipe González, and its final composition should be known during the French presidency of the Union, which starts in a few days;
- among the subjects which it should address is the question of the rule of law, which is one of the Council of Europe's core areas of expertise,

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, if he plans to involve the Council of Europe and, in particular, the Assembly in the work of the discussion group, and what measures would be taken to ensure that there are contacts between the two institutions in this connection.

10. Question from Mrs Ojuland

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, in order to avoid double standards, why does the Committee of Ministers not monitor the honouring of obligations and commitments undertaken by member states upon accession.

11. Question from Mr Matušić

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, what is his opinion of the results of the referendum held in Ireland on the Lisbon Treaty and on the prospects of the EU enlargement in that context.

12. Question from Mr Zelenskiy

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, how will the Committee of Ministers implement the recommendation made by the Assembly in its Resolution 1612 (2008) on chemical munitions buried in the Baltic Sea to urge "the United Kingdom and United States governments and NATO to declassify immediately military information on the location of all chemical munitions dumping sites present in the Baltic Sea".

13. Question from Mr Kosachev

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, what measures will the Swedish presidency of the Committee of Ministers take to make use of the Council of Europe potential in order to stabilise the situation in Kosovo on the basis of [Resolution 1244](#) of the United Nations Security Council.

14. Question from Mr Tulaev

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, what is the opinion of the Swedish chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers with regard to the relations between the EU and Kaliningrad.

15. Question from Mrs Nakashidzé

The Council of Europe has done much to promote freedom and respect for human rights across the continent. Thanks in large part to its work, today there are very few areas left in Europe where injustice and contempt for basic rights exist. One of the few exceptions is Georgia's province of Abkhazia, where hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons are deprived of the right to return to their homes and their property is sold in clear contempt of basic property rights and international law. Russia is clearly preparing to annex the territory and is raising tensions by deploying illegal military units and building military infrastructure in Abkhazia, in violation of its commitments to the Council of Europe,

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, what would you propose that the Council of Europe should do to encourage dialogue between Georgians and Abkhaz, and to encourage Russia to become a partner for peace so as to promote true security in the region.

16. Question from Mrs Däubler-Gmelin

With a view to the Swedish chairmanship's intention to focus on the "implementation of human rights",

To ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, what chances he sees for promoting the entry into force of Protocol No. 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights and what measures he plans to take in order to strengthen two central institutions of the Council of Europe: the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights.