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Activities of the Assembly's Bureau and Standing Committee (25 June-3 October 2011)

Progress report

Bureau of the Assembly

Rapporteur: Mr Dick MARTY, Switzerland, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

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1. Introduction

1. On 24 June 2011, the Bureau appointed me rapporteur for this report. Since the last part-session of the Assembly, the Bureau has met in Caserta (Italy) on 5 September 2011. The Standing Committee has not met during the period covered by this report.

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 June 2011 and up until the October 2011 part-session, that is to say, essentially the meeting of 5 September 2011.

3. The Bureau will hold its next meetings on Monday 3 October 2011 at 8 a.m. and Friday 7 October 2011 at 8.30 am (in Strasbourg, 4th part-session), then on 24 November 2011 in Edinburgh following an invitation by the United Kingdom delegation. Further to that same invitation, the next meeting of the Standing Committee will also be held in Edinburgh (United Kingdom) on 25 November 2011.



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

2.1. Election of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

4. The term in office of the present Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Thomas Hammarberg, will come to an end on 31 March 2012. Further to the adoption by the Ministers' Deputies on 29 June of the timetable for the preparation of the list of candidates, the deadline for the submission of candidates has been set for 31 October 2011. According to practice and to [Order 547 \(1999\)](#) of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Bureau has taken note of the calendar for the election of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and asked the Assembly's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights to organise the interviews of candidates for the post of Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights in time for the Assembly's first part-session of 2012, preferably in December 2011. The sub-committee on human rights of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights will meet for this purpose on 13 December 2011 in Paris.

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

2.2.1. Election of a Constituent National Assembly of Tunisia

5. This election will take place on 23 October 2011. The Bureau decided, at its meeting on 26 May 2011 in Kyiv, to observe this election and constituted an ad hoc committee to observe these elections, composed of 20 members in accordance with the D'Hondt system (EPP/CD: 7, SOC: 6; EDG: 3, ALDE: 3, UEL: 1). The Bureau also authorised a pre-electoral mission composed of five members, one from each group, who are also members of the ad hoc committee. This pre-electoral mission took place from 14-17 September 2011 (see press release in Appendix I)

2.2.2. Meeting of the Chairpersons of Ad Hoc Committees for the observation of elections, Strasbourg, 4th part-session 2011

6. Further to various requests from chairpersons of ad hoc committees of the Bureau for the observation of elections to discuss the organisation of election observation by the Assembly, the Bureau decided that this meeting would be held in Strasbourg on 4 October 2011 at 6pm in Room 5 during the part-Session of October 2011. Participants would include chairpersons as well as members of ad hoc committees in recent years.

2.2.3. Parliamentary elections in Turkey (12 June 2011)

7. Mrs Lundgren (Sweden, ALDE) presented the written report¹ of the ad hoc committee which observed these elections to the Bureau on 5 September 2011. The Bureau approved this report which will be submitted to the Assembly in the framework of the present progress report of the Bureau on 3 October 2011.

2.2.4. Presidential election in the Kyrgyz Republic (30 October 2011)

8. The Assembly received an invitation from the Central Electoral Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic to observe the presidential election which will take place on 30 October 2011. The Bureau decided to observe this election and constituted an ad hoc committee for this purpose, composed of 5 members, one from each political group.

2.2.5. Parliamentary elections in Morocco (25 November 2011)

9. Parliamentary elections in Morocco have been scheduled for the 25 November 2011. In the framework of the Partnership for Democracy and subject to the receipt of an invitation, the Bureau decided to observe these elections and to constitute an ad hoc Committee for this purpose composed of 20 members, in accordance with the D'Hondt system (EPP/CD: 7, SOC: 6; EDG: 3, ALDE: 3, UEL: 1) and to authorise a pre-electoral mission of 5 members (one from each political group) approximately one month ahead of the elections.

1. [Doc. 12701](#).

2.2.6. Parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation (4 December 2011)

10. The Assembly received an invitation from the Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation to observe the elections which will take place in the Russian Federation on 4 December 2011. The Bureau decided to observe these elections and constituted an ad hoc Committee for this purpose composed of 40 members, in accordance with the D'Hondt system (EPP/CD: 13, SOC: 12; EDG: 7, ALDE: 6, UEL: 2). The Bureau also authorised a pre-electoral mission of 5 members (one from each political group) approximately one month ahead of the elections. This mission will take place from 9-11 November 2011 (date to be confirmed).

2.2.7. Parliamentary elections in Egypt (date to be confirmed)

11. The Bureau invited the President to convey to the competent authorities in Egypt the Assembly's interest to observe these elections.

2.3. Issues raised by committees

2.3.1. Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

12. The Bureau endorsed the proposals made in the information memorandum on "Freedom of access and movement for Parliamentary Assembly members in Council of Europe member states".²

13. The Bureau decided to propose to the Assembly that its committees do not hold any meetings for a period of two years in member states which fail to honour their commitments vis-à-vis the freedom of movement of its members, particularly in connection with the issue of visas to Assembly members wishing to attend meetings or visit the country in question as a member of the Assembly travelling on Assembly business.

The Assembly is invited to ratify this decision.

14. Furthermore, the Bureau reminded Assembly committees that in such a context, they have the possibility to cancel a meeting themselves.

2.3.2. Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

15. The Bureau took note that Ms Theresa May, Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities of the United Kingdom, be invited to address the Standing Committee, at its meeting in Edinburgh on 25 November 2011, in the context of the debates on "Psychological violence" and "European norms concerning the enforcement and supervision of restraining orders in case of gender-based violence".

2.3.3. Political Affairs Committee

16. On 5 September 2011, the Bureau authorised the visit by Mr Gardetto (Monaco, EPP/CD) to Egypt, in the framework of his report on "Co-operation between the Council of Europe and emerging democracies in the Arab World" and by Mr Vrettos (Greece, SOC) in the framework of his report on "the Situation in the Middle East".

2.4. References and transmissions to committees

17. On 5 September 2011, the Bureau approved the following references, subject to ratification by the Assembly:

- [Doc. 12652](#), Gender equality and the status of women in the Council of Europe southern neighbourhood, motion for a recommendation presented by Ms Bergamini and others, to the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men *for report*
- [Doc. 12654](#), Parental leave as a way to foster gender equality, motion for a resolution presented by Mr Rigoni and others, to the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men *for report* and to the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee *for opinion*

2. AS/Pro (2011) 06 def.

- [Doc. 12655](#), Support for a European sign language dictionary on the Internet, motion for a recommendation presented by Ms de Pourbaix-Lundin and others, to the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee *for information*
- [Doc. 12657](#), The promotion of active citizenship in Europe, motion for a resolution presented by the Earl of Dundee and others, to the Political Affairs Committee *for report*
- [Doc. 12659](#), Promoting alternatives to imprisonment, motion for a resolution presented by Mr Gardetto and others, to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for report*
- [Doc. 12661](#), Counteraction to manifestations of neo-nazism and xenophobia, motion for a resolution presented by Mr Kosachev and others, to the Political Affairs Committee *for report*

The Assembly is invited to ratify these references.

2.5. Requests for extension of references

18. On 5 September 2011, the Bureau approved the following extensions
 - [Doc. 11982](#), Population transfer as a human rights violation, motion for a resolution presented by Mr Lotman and others, Ref. 3604 of 2 October 2009 – Validity: 2 October 2011, extension until 31 March 2012
 - [Doc. 11903](#), The inadmissibility of restrictions on freedom of movement as punishment for political positions, motion for a resolution presented by Mr Gross and others, Ref. 3620 of 20 November 2009 – Validity: 20 November 2011, extension until 31 March 2012
 - [Doc. 11976](#), Ad hoc judges: a problem for the legitimacy of the European Court of Human Rights, motion for a resolution presented by Mrs Bemelmans-Videc and others, Ref. 3600 of 2 October 2009 – validity: 2 October 2011, extension until 30 November 2011

2.6. Other business

19. The Bureau approved the declaration of the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly for the international day of democracy on 15 September 2011. The declaration appears in Appendix IV.
20. With regard to the Forum for the Future of Democracy (Cyprus, 13-14 October 2011), the Bureau took note of the programme and decided to invite Maghreb Parliaments to participate in the Forum.
21. Further to the receipt of an invitation to the international conference “*Women as drivers of change in the Mediterranean*” Rome, 24 and 25 October 2011, the Bureau decided to accept this invitation and to constitute an ad hoc Committee of the Bureau composed of up to three members of the three following Committees – the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the Committee on Culture, Science and Education and the Political Affairs Committee – to participate in the meeting.
22. Exceptionally, in the framework of the appointment of Assembly representatives for official visits, the Bureau wished to remind members that visiting a country they can only speak on behalf of the Assembly after having been appointed by the Bureau or a committee to an official visit to this country. The Bureau also approved the proposals for appointments as set out in Appendix II. Moreover, the Bureau authorised the meetings elsewhere than in Strasbourg or Paris as set out in Appendix III.

Appendix 1 – Press release

Tunisia: Statement by the pre-electoral delegation of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly

Ref. PACE 074 (2011)

Strasbourg, 16.09.2011 – A delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has made a pre-electoral visit to Tunis to evaluate the electoral campaign prior to elections to Tunisia's National Constituent Assembly on 23 October 2011. The delegation met Mouldi Kefi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ridha Bellhadj, Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister, Yadh Ben Achour, President of the Higher Political Reform Commission, the leaders of the main political parties taking part in the elections, the Secretary General of the Higher Independent Body for Elections, as well as representatives of the international community and non-governmental organisations.

The pre-electoral delegation notes with satisfaction that the Tunisian authorities have swiftly devised a legal framework for organising pluralist elections and, in this respect, it encourages them to step up cooperation with the Council of Europe's Venice Commission. The effective and transparent functioning of electoral administration is a decisive factor in guaranteeing the democratic nature of the entire electoral process and strengthening the confidence of political players and citizens in the elections.

Democratic elections mean more than the proper running of the ballot itself. The delegation has been informed of the delay in drawing up voter lists, concerns over the organisation of voting for Tunisian citizens living abroad and the possible risk of tensions during the electoral campaign. In this connection, the Parliamentary Assembly delegation calls on the country's political leaders to refrain from any aggressive rhetoric, pressure or actions contrary to European standards for fair and democratic elections and to comply with the Code of good practice in the field of political parties.

The pre-electoral delegation welcomes the diversity of media in the country and hopes that coverage of the election campaign will be balanced and detached from political leanings. Concerning the funding of political parties, the delegation considers that current legislation must be applied in good faith.

The pre-electoral delegation welcomes the willingness of the Tunisian authorities to allow a large number of national and international observers to monitor the National Constituent Assembly elections. It considers that the role of international observers is to make the international community's experience available to Tunisian society and monitor the proper running of the elections, but in no circumstances to interfere in the electoral process or lecture on how elections should be held.

The elections of 23 October will be the first free elections since Tunisia's independence in 1956. In this connection, the pre-electoral delegation wishes to underline the crucial importance of democratically electing a National Constituent Assembly to ensure the legitimacy of its power. That legitimacy is absolutely vital for forming the institutions of a democratic and functional State so that the efforts of the public authorities may then focus on resolving the urgent problems facing the citizens of Tunisia.

The pre-electoral delegation praises the considerable efforts made by the Commission chaired by Mr Yadh Ben Achour and the agreement signed on 15 September by the leaders of 11 political parties with a view to guaranteeing a democratic transition of power after the elections of 23 October 2011.

The Parliamentary Assembly will send a 20-member delegation to observe the elections to the National Constituent Assembly on 23 October 2011.

Pre-electoral delegation members:

- Andreas Gross (Switzerland, SOC), Head of delegation
- Jean-Charles Gardetto (Monaco, EPP/CD)
- Christophe Chope (United Kingdom, EDG)
- Anne Brasseur (UEL, France)

Appendix 2 – Appointments of Assembly Representatives for official activities

The Bureau approved the following appointments:

- a. Mr Schneider (France, EPP/CD): Enter! Youth Meeting, Strasbourg, 15 September 2011;
- b. Ms Lundgren (Sweden, ALDE): International Conference on “The Council of Europe – the European Union Facing the challenges of the modern world”, Warsaw, 15 September 2011;
- c. Mr Pourgourides (Cyprus, EPP/CD): Conference on the Prevention as part of human rights’ protection mechanism organised within the framework of the Ukrainian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Kyiv, 20-21 September 2011
- d. The Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, subject to his availability: Round table on the role of the supreme Court in the protection of human rights at national level, Kyiv, 22 September 2011
- e. Sir Alan Meale (United Kingdom, SOC), Summit of Mayors on Roma, Strasbourg, 22 September 2011
- f. Mr Volontè (Italy, EPP/CD): 2011 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Warsaw, 26 September – 7 October 2011 (at no cost for the Assembly)
- g. Mr Gardetto (Monaco, EPP/CD): OSCE PA’s Fall Meetings, Dubrovnik (Croatia), 7-10 October 2011 (at no cost for the Assembly)
- h. Mr Preda (Romania, EPP/CD): 57th Annual Session of the NATO PA, Bucharest, 7-10 October 2011.

Appendix 3 – Meetings elsewhere than in Strasbourg and Paris

- a.* Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development (of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs): Kyiv, 19 September 2011;
- b.* Sub-Committee of the Europe Prize (of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs): Landerneau (France), 15 October 2011;
- c.* Sub-Committee on Crime Problems and the Fight against Terrorism (of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights): Belgrade, 28 October 2011;
- d.* Sub-Committee on Children (of the Committee on Social, Health and Family Affairs): Monaco, 20-21 November 2011.

Appendix 4 – International Day of Democracy, 15 September 2011

Statement by the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The celebration of the International Day of Democracy takes on a very special meaning this year at a time when movements of popular protest have broken out in the Arab world, bringing changes both spectacular and unexpected. The protagonists of the “Arab Spring”, who have forged rapid links via the social networks and Internet, want democratic change founded on trust and transparency: they aspire to dignity, freedom, social justice and respect for human rights in a law-based state. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe salutes the courage and supports the commitment of the emerging pro-democracy movements in the Arab states which still display a great diversity of situations.

This support must now be accompanied by strong actions and signals. The Council of Europe and its member states must seize this opportunity to involve themselves tangibly and aid the transition to democracy in the Arab world. Reaffirming its commitment to a cohesive Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe would turn to account its experience of assistance to countries in transition and of election monitoring. The Parliamentary Assembly offers the parliaments of non-member states in the neighbourhood “Partner for Democracy status”, which the Parliament of Morocco already gained in June this year, while the Palestinian National Council’s accession to it is in progress. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is more determined than ever to pursue this innovative process of democratic partnership.