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Activities of the Assembly's Bureau and Standing Committee (28 June – 29 September 2013)

Progress report
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1. Introduction

At its meeting on 28 June 2013, the Bureau appointed me as rapporteur for this report. Since then, the Bureau has met once, on 2 September 2013 in Dubrovnik (Croatia).

This progress report covers the period from the last Bureau meeting of the third part-session (Friday 28 June 2013) to the first Bureau meeting of the fourth part-session (Monday 30 September 2013), leaving inside the decisions of the Bureau of 30 September which will be ratified at the opening of the fourth part-session of the Assembly.

The Bureau will hold its next meetings in Strasbourg on Monday 30 September 2013 at 8 am and Friday 4 October 2013 at 8.30 am (during the fourth part-session), then on 21 November 2013 in Vienna. The next meeting of the Standing Committee will also be held in Vienna on 22 November 2013.

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

2.1. Follow-up to the Assembly's Resolutions

2.1.1. Follow-up to the third part-session of 2013 (Strasbourg, 24-28 June)

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau approved the following proposals made by the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly:

– Resolution 1940 (2013) on the *Situation in the Middle East*: to invite the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy to make proposals regarding the implementation of paragraphs 16 and 18 of the Resolution;

– Resolution 1941 (2013) on the *Request for the opening of a monitoring procedure in respect of Hungary*: to discuss the implementation of paragraph 14 of the Resolution at its next meeting;

– Resolution 1942 (2013) on *the Evaluation of the partnership for democracy in respect of the Parliament of Morocco*: to refer the issue to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for report* and to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and to the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination *for opinion* (see list of references in chapter 2.4.1);

– Resolution 1943 (2013) on *Corruption as a threat to the rule of law*: to invite the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and the Committee on Rules, of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs to make proposals regarding the implementation of paragraphs 12 and 13 of the Resolution;

– *Current Affairs debate on State interference with privacy on the Internet*: to invite the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media to take into account the content of the debate in the preparation of the reports on *Improving user protection and security in cyberspace* and on *Internet and politics: the impact of new information and communication technology on democracy*;

– Resolution 1948 (2013) on *Tackling discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity*: to invite the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination to make proposals regarding the implementation of paragraph 11.3 of the Resolution;

On 2 September 2013, the Bureau approved the following proposal made by the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly:

– Resolution 1941 (2013) on the *Request for the opening of a monitoring procedure in respect of Hungary*: to refer the question of the situation in Hungary following the adoption of Assembly Resolution 1941 (2013) to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for report* and to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for opinion* (see list of references, chapter 3.2).

2.2. Fourth part-session of 2013 (Strasbourg, 30 September – 4 October)

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau drew up the preliminary draft agenda and decided to invite Ms Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children, in the context of the debate on *Children's right to physical integrity,*[1] and Mr Peter Maurer, President of the ICRC, in the context of the debate on *Missing persons from Europe's conflicts: the long road to finding humanitarian answers.*

On 2 September 2013, it drew up the draft agenda.

2.3. Election observation

2.3.1. Parliamentary elections in Albania (23 June 2013)

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau took note of the press release issued by the ad hoc committee. On 2 September 2013, it approved the final report of the ad hoc committee.

2.3.2. Presidential election in Azerbaijan (9 October 2013)

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau approved the composition of the ad hoc committee and appointed Mr Robert Walter (United Kingdom, EDG) as Chairperson. On 2 September 2013, it approved the updated composition of the ad hoc committee.

2.3.3. Presidential election in Georgia (27 October 2013)

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau approved the composition of the ad hoc committee and appointed Ms Meritxell Mateu Pi (Andorra, ALDE) as Chairperson. On 2 September 2013, it approved the updated composition of the ad hoc committee.

2.3.4. Schedule of elections 2013/2014

On 2 September 2013, the Bureau took note of the elections calendar 2013/2014 as presented in the memorandum prepared by the Secretary General of the Assembly.

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1. Ms Marta Santos Pais has had to decline the invitation to address the Assembly.

2.4. References and transmissions to committees

2.4.1. References approved by the Bureau

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau approved the following references, which were subsequently ratified by the Assembly:

– Doc. 13218, motion for a recommendation, The situation of women in emerging democracies following the Arab revolutions, to the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination *for report*;

– Doc. 13224 motion for a resolution, Kyoto Climate Change Protocol, to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for report*;

– Doc. 13234, motion for a recommendation, Impunity of perpetrators of crimes committed by totalitarian communist regimes in Europe, transmission to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for information*.

– Bureau decision, Evaluation of the partnership for democracy in respect of the Parliament of Morocco, reference to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for report* and to the committees on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and on Equality and Non-Discrimination *for opinion*;

2.4.2. Requests for extension of references

– Doc. 12557 (reference 3766 of 14 April 2011 – validity: 30 June 2013), motion for a resolution, The arrival of large numbers of irregular migrants to Italian coastal areas as a result of tensions in the southern Mediterranean countries: extension until 31 December 2013;

– Doc. 12676 (reference 3798 of 3 October 2011 – validity: 3 October 2013), motion for a resolution, Alternatives to Europe's sub-standard IDP collective centres: extension until 11 April 2014;

– Doc. 12678 (reference 3800 of 3 October 2011 – validity: 3 October 2013), motion for a resolution, Unaccompanied migrant children: what rights at 18: extension until 11 April 2014.

2.5. Issues raised by committees

2.5.1. Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau authorised Mr Jean-Marie Bockel (France, EPP/CD), rapporteur on *Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq: how to organise and support international assistance?*, to conduct a fact-finding visit to Lebanon, Turkey and possibly Syria in August 2013, in the framework of the preparation of his report. The visit to Lebanon and Turkey was carried out from 19-22 August 2013.

2.5.2. Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau authorised Ms Liliane Maury Pasquier (Switzerland, SOC), rapporteur on the *Parliamentary contribution to solving theWestern Sahara conflict*, to conduct a fact-finding visit to Algeria, and Mr José Maria Beneyto (Spain, EPP/CD), rapporteur on the *Political transition in Egypt* to conduct a fact-finding visit to Egypt, in the framework of the preparation of their respective reports.

2.6. Communications

The Bureau took note of communications by the President of the Assembly and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

2.7. World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 27-29 November 2013)

On 28 June 2013,the Bureau took note of an information memorandum, containing a draft programme of the World Forum, prepared by the Secretariat. It decided to ask national delegations and members of the Bureau to submit suggestions on the content of the programme before 15 July 2013 and, meanwhile, to defer the decision on constituting an ad hoc committee of the Bureau to participate in the 2013 World Forum for Democracy to the next meeting of the Bureau.

On 2 September 2013, the Bureau took note of the suggestions from national delegations and members of the Bureau on the content of the draft programme of the Forum, held an exchange of views with Snejana Samardzic-Markovic, Director General for Democracy of the Council of Europe, and decided to constitute an ad hoc committee of the Bureau to participate in the Forum, to be composed of members proposed by all Assembly's committees before the Bureau meeting on 4 October 2013 (see chapter 3.1).

2.8. Relations with the European Parliament

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau took note of an information memorandum prepared by the Secretariat regarding co-operation between the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe during the period from January to June 2013.

2.9. Václav Havel Human Rights Prize

On 2 September 2013, the Bureau took note that the three candidates shortlisted by the Selection Panel of the Prize at its meeting in Prague on 26 August 2013 were (in alphabetical order): Mr Ales Bialiatski (Belarus), the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (Georgia) and the Rights Defence Network (China).

2.10. 2013 North-South Prize of the Council of Europe: call for nominations

On 2 September 2013, the Bureau invited its members to submit names of potential candidates for the 2013 North-South Prize.

2.11. International Day of Democracy, 15 September 2013

On 2 September 2013, the Bureau approved a declaration, which was published in the framework of the International Day of Democracy (see Appendix 1).

2.12. Bureau statements

On 2 September 2013, the Bureau approved statements on the situation in Egypt and Syria (see Appendices 2 and 3 respectively).

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

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau drew up the list of candidates for the CPT in respect of Austria, Denmark, Republic of Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, which it forwarded to the Committee of Ministers.

2.14. Composition of the Monitoring Committee and the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

2.14.1. Composition of the Monitoring Committee

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau appointed Mr Brynjar Nielsson (Iceland, EDG) and Mr Luc Recordon (Switzerland, SOC), on the basis of proposals submitted by the European Democratic Group and the Socialist Group respectively, subsequently ratified by the Assembly.

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

On 28 June 2013, the Bureau appointed Mr Konstantinos Triantafyllos (Greece, SOC), on the basis of a proposal submitted by the Socialist Group, subsequently ratified by the Assembly.

2.15. Meetings elsewhere than in Strasbourg and Paris

During the reference period, the Bureau authorised the following meetings:

– *Sub-Committee on the Europe Prize* (of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development): Tata, Hungary on 20 August 2013 and Altötting, Germany on 14 September 2013;

– *Ad hoc Sub-Committee on the reform of international football* (of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media): Nyon, Switzerland on 9 September 2013;

– *Ad hoc Sub-Committee to participate in the Lisbon Forum* (of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Lisbon, Portugal on 6-7 November 2013;

– Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy: Lisbon, Portugal on 8 November 2013;

– *Sub-Committee on Media and Information Society* (of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media): Belgrade, Serbia, 6-7 November 2013;

– Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development: Geneva, Switzerland, 12-13 November 2013.

2.16. Appointment of Assembly representatives for official activities

The following members were appointed during the reference period:

– Mr Paolo Corsini (Italy, SOC) to participate in the *Council of Europe 2013 Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue* on 2-3 September 2013 in Yerevan;

– Mr Zoran Vukčević (Montenegro, SOC) to participate in the Fall Meetings of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, to be held in Budva, Montenegro, on 13-15 October 2013;

2.17. Meetings of the Standing Committee and the Bureau in 2014

On 2 September 2013, the Bureau approved the dates for meetings in 2014 (see Appendix 4).

3. Decisions of the Bureau requiring ratification by the Assembly

3.1. World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 27-29 November 2013)

On 2 September 2013, the Bureau decided to constitute an ad hoc committee of the Bureau to participate in the Forum, to be composed of members proposed by all Assembly's committees before the Bureau meeting on 4 October 2013.

3.2. References and transmissions to committees

On 2 September 2013, the Bureau approved the following references, subject to ratification by the Assembly:

– Doc. 13253, Motion for a resolution, Students and sport activities, to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for information*;

– Doc. 13254, Motion for a resolution, Young people preference for videogames and sports, to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for information*;

– Doc. 13255, Motion for a resolution, Serious setbacks in the fields of human rights and the rule of law in France, to the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) *for preparation of a written opinion in accordance with paragraphs 3 and 4 of the terms of reference of the Monitoring Committee*;

– Doc. 13256, Motion for a recommendation, Equality and inclusion for people with disabilities to the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination *for report*;

– Doc. 13257, Motion for a resolution, Discrimination against transgender people in Europe, to the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination *for report*;

– Doc. 13260, Motion for a resolution, Mandate of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, *no further action*;

– Doc. 13289, Request for an opinion from the Committee of Ministers, Draft Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs, to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for report* and to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for opinion*;

– Bureau decision, Request by the Parliament of Jordan for the status of Partner for Democracy with the Assembly, to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for report*, and to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination *for opinion*;

– Bureau decision, Situation in Hungary following the adoption of Assembly Resolution 1941 (2013), to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for report* and to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for opinion*.

3.3. Composition of the Monitoring Committee

On 2 September 2013, it appointed Mr Jonas Gunnarson (Sweden, SOC), on the basis of a proposal submitted by the Socialist Group, subject to ratification by the Assembly.

The Assembly is invited to ratify these Bureau decisions.

Appendix 1 – International Day of Democracy, 15 September 2013

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

Today many voices continue to be raised in alarm claiming that the world is not only facing a financial and economic crisis but that citizens' trust in democratic institutions is also in crisis, as evidenced by voter fatigue and a decline in the public image of politicians. Populist, radical or xenophobic political movements, protest votes and the emergence of hate speech are gaining ground. The increasing importance of supranational decision-making organisations such as WTO, EU, IMF, etc... reinforces the feeling of powerlessness of political institutions, in the context of an increasingly globalised economy, whereas democratic legitimacy remains at national level. Extremist parties grow in influence by providing populist, but easy to understand responses, based on a closure of borders, in the face of a complex reality and an uncertain future. Furthermore, democracy today is in a process of transformation, as it grapples with the new realities of a post-modern era where political parties are no longer the only vehicles for citizens' participation in political life. Social networks and civil society highlight new emerging challenges.

In this regard, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe welcomes the 2013 Day of Democracy's focus on strengthening voices for democracy. It urges national parliaments to adapt to societal and technological developments and improve communication channels with the public. Through Internet, social networks, parliamentary television channels and/or civil society associations, parliaments can improve contact with the younger generations. Parliaments should also promote new ways for the people to express their views, beyond the traditional forms of mandate and delegation: the setting up of participatory and deliberative processes and structures, transnational networks formed by citizens to address specific issues, citizenship education and political training can be useful tools. Improving the transparency of rules of financing political parties and campaigns and bringing corrupt politicians and officials to justice would restore public trust in parliaments. A greater inclusion of women, youth and minorities would reinforce their representativeness and credibility.

The Parliamentary Assembly firmly believes that the Council of Europe is in a unique position to bridge the confidence gap and bring together elected politicians with civil society leaders. Together, they could better find ways to enable representative democracy face current societal and technological challenges, such as those raised by the social media. In this context, it wishes to highlight particularly the forthcoming World Forum for Democracy organised by the Council of Europe which is this year entitled "Re-wiring Democracy: connecting institutions and citizens in the digital age" (Strasbourg, 27-29 November 2013). The Forum will provide a timely platform for a genuine, inclusive dialogue on change and the future of democracy and help to shape future action by the Organisation, its institutions and member States.

Appendix 2 – Statement by the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly on Egypt

Strasbourg, 02.09.2013 – The Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), meeting today in Dubrovnik (Croatia), called for an inclusive reconciliation process and political dialogue in Egypt which would prevent any further recourse to violence, allow a return to stability and create conditions for the organisation of free and fair elections as soon as possible. A military intervention is not a solution for democratic deficits. The interim authorities should implement without delay a roadmap for the normalisation of the political climate in the country and for the restoration of democratic rule in Egypt.

Shocked by the number of deaths caused by the intervention of the police in dispersing pro-Morsi gatherings, but also concerned about acts of violence committed by demonstrators, including attacks against religious minorities' places of worship, the Bureau called for an independent investigation into the killings and all acts of violence, whoever has committed them.

The Assembly, through its Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, is following closely the situation in Egypt. The Committee will hold a hearing on Egypt at its meeting on 4 September 2013 in Paris.

Appendix 3 – Statement by the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly on Syria

Strasbourg, 02.09.2013 - The Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), meeting today in Dubrovnik (Croatia), condemned the apparent use of chemical weapons in Syria which, on 21 August 2013, caused the death of hundreds of people, including a large number of children. Any use of chemical weapons anywhere by anybody, under any circumstances, constitutes a violation of international law and a crime against humanity. The Bureau calls on the international community to take action to pressurise those countries which have not yet done so to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention. It also calls for urgent action to bring the stocks of chemical weapons in Syria under international control to prevent access to them by those supporting or opposing the current Government.

The Bureau recalls that in its Resolutions 1878 (2012) on the situation in Syria and 1902 (2012) on the European response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, the Assembly urged a political solution to the conflict in Syria. Today, more than a year and a half later, the escalation of violence makes the need for a diplomatic process more urgent than ever. All parties concerned, both inside and outside the country, should, without further delay, move beyond their differences towards a peace conference on Syria. The use of arms can never lead to sustainable peace and is therefore not an option; only a political solution can put an end to the spiral of violence, but also to the dramatic situation of refugees and displaced persons.

The Bureau of the Assembly is particularly appalled by the huge number of refugees, especially of children, forced to flee Syria which, according to UN estimates, has reached one million. It urges once more the provision of unhindered humanitarian assistance to the wounded, refugees, displaced persons and all those in need both in Syria and in the neighbouring countries.

Appendix 4 – Meetings of the Standing Committee and the Bureau in 2014

Preliminary proposals for dates[2]

January

Monday 27 January, 8.00 am Strasbourg (part-session), Bureau

Friday 31 January, 8.30 am Strasbourg (part-session), Bureau

March

Thursday 6 March, 3.00 pm, Paris, Bureau

Friday 7 March, 9.00 am, Paris (to be confirmed), Standing Committee

April

Monday 7 April, 8.00 am, Strasbourg (part-session), Bureau

Friday 11 April, 8.30 am, Strasbourg (part-session), Bureau

May

Thursday 22 May, Baku, Azerbaijan, Bureau

Friday 23 May, Baku, Azerbaijan, Standing Committee

(CM Presidency)

June

Monday 23 June, 8.00 am, Strasbourg (part-session), Bureau

Friday 27 June, 8.30 am, Strasbourg (part-session), Bureau

September-October

Monday 1 September, 9.30 am, Paris, Bureau

Monday 29 September, 8.00 am, Strasbourg (part-session), Bureau

Friday 3 October, 8.30 am, Strasbourg (part-session), Bureau

November

November, Brussels, Belgium (date to be confirmed), Bureau and Standing Committee

(CM Presidency)

December

Monday 15 December, 9.30 am, Paris, Bureau

2. Dates of meetings due to be held elsewhere than in Strasbourg and Paris are subject to the conclusion of a formal agreement with the Parliament of the country concerned.