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Activities of the President of the Assembly between the fourth part of the Ordinary session of 2014 and the first part of the Ordinary session of 2015

Communication

President of the Assembly

1. Visits and meetings

1.1. President's activities between 29 September and 17 November 2014

1.1.1. Situation in Ukraine

1. I continued to focus on developments in Ukraine, especially taking into account the conclusions of the current affairs debate on the consequences of the crisis in Ukraine held during the October 2014 part-session of the Assembly.
2. On 3 October 2014, condemning resolutely the continued violence and violations of the ceasefire agreement, I called on the urgent need to conduct impartial and effective investigations into killings and human rights violations.
3. Speaking at the meeting of the Ministers' Deputies on 8 October 2014, I summed up the conclusions of the current affairs debate held during the October part-session, stressing the need to respect the ceasefire agreement. The ceasefire is an opportunity to create the necessary conditions for reconciliation, but also an opportunity to work to ensure that there is no impunity for human rights violations. Full and transparent investigations are needed into all alleged human rights violations.
4. Furthermore, I pointed out that it was essential to ensure that the parliamentary elections of 26 October be held in the best possible conditions, taking into account the situation on the ground, and I informed the Ministers' Deputies of the state of preparation of the Assembly observation mission.
5. Referring to the conclusions of the Assembly's observers, on 29 October 2014 I addressed a letter to the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, congratulating the Ukrainian people on holding early parliamentary elections which to a large extent complied with Ukraine's democratic commitments and aspirations. Moreover, I stressed the need to move forward on much-needed reforms relating to Ukraine's membership in the Council of Europe, as well as to the advancement of the country's European integration agenda, expressing the hope that the political actors in Parliament would soon agree on an inclusive, stable and reform-oriented majority coalition, so as to continue ongoing reform projects, in co-operation with the relevant Council of Europe bodies and, in particular, the Venice Commission. Furthermore, I reaffirmed the Parliamentary Assembly's support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, stressing that a solution to the current crisis should be found by means of an inclusive national dialogue, respecting Ukraine's Constitution, laws and the recently agreed peace initiatives.
6. Ahead of the holding of the so-called 'parliamentary' and 'presidential elections' in the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, I deplored the decision of the self-appointed authorities to proceed with the 'voting' on 2 November 2014. I stressed that these 'elections' were in violation of the Minsk Protocol



signed on 5 September 2014, that they would hinder the implementation of the already fragile peace agreement, and pointed out that they would not be recognised by the Assembly. Instead, I called on the leadership of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics to facilitate the holding of local elections, in line with Ukrainian legislation, as foreseen in the Minsk Protocol. In addition, I urged the Russian authorities to honour their commitments under the Minsk Protocol and not to recognise the outcome of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics 'elections', which would undermine the peace process and risk further undermining stability in the region.

1.1.2. Relations with the Russian delegation

7. On the basis of the discussions in the Presidential Committee during the October part-session, it was decided to move ahead with organising a meeting between the Presidential Committee, the representatives of the State Duma of the Russian Federation and the members of the Russian Delegation to the Assembly, in Moscow, on 13 November 2014. In the margins of these meetings, I held a bilateral meeting with the Speaker of the State Duma, Mr Sergey Naryshkin.

8. The aim of these meetings was to look, in priority, at the participation of the Russian Delegation in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly.

9. In my discussions, I stressed that as Parliamentarians we have a special responsibility to find solutions to problems together, whether these are at national level or at the European level, on the basis of the Council of Europe standards on democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

1.1.3. Role of parliaments in ensuring the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights

10. The promotion of active participation of Parliaments in ensuring the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights is one of the priorities of my mandate as President of the Assembly. In pursuing this aim, on 31 October 2014 I participated in the seminar on "The role of national parliaments in the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights" organised in the Spanish Parliament by the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. I would like to thank the Committee, as well as the Spanish authorities, for the excellent organisation of this event. The discussions were extremely interesting and stimulating, especially as regards the presentation and analysis of the various parliamentary experiences that exist in this field in our member states.

11. During the discussion, I stressed that non-implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights and of the judgments of the Strasbourg Court threatened the very survival of the Convention system. I pointed out that it was our duty as elected representatives to guarantee that the Convention is applied in our country and, if it is not, that the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights be implemented without delay.

12. Praising the examples of national parliaments which had set up procedures and structures to monitor the implementation of the Strasbourg Court rulings – notably in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Romania and Poland – I called on the parliaments of our member states to take a more active part in monitoring the execution of the Court's judgments at national level and ensuring that laws adopted complied with the standards of the Convention.

13. I will continue to follow closely the Assembly's activities on this and provide political support to the sharing of experiences and good practices between parliaments in this field.

1.1.4. High level conference on the European Social Charter (Turin, 18 October 2014)

14. On 18 October 2014, I participated, together with the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament, Ms Laura Boldrini, in the High level conference on the European Social Charter, held in Turin, and made an opening presentation devoted to the implementation of social rights in Europe. In my opening speech, I recalled that social rights must be considered as fundamental human rights, indivisible, interdependent and complementary. With a view to ensuring consistency of national measures in the field of social rights, I called for the ratification of the relevant texts by all member states, hence creating a harmonised European landscape. Furthermore, I encouraged national parliaments to use both the Charter and the Case Law of the European Committee of Social Rights when drafting national and regional legislation to ensure the implementation of the European Social Charter. I would like to thank the organisers and the Italian authorities for the excellent organisation of this conference.

1.1.5. World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 3-5 November 2014)

15. On 3 November 2014, I participated in the Opening of the 2014 World Forum for Democracy, moderating a round table on “Young people – actors of global change”. In my introductory remarks, I stressed that the divide between young people and democratic institutions was a matter of concern. Their exclusion from political party leadership and electoral participation leads to a growing democratic deficit and delegitimation of democratic institutions.

16. Furthermore, in the current context of crisis, young people who are excluded from employment and education tend to be marginalised politically and socially. This may push them towards extremist groups.

17. To respond to this challenge, we may need new standards or practices to ensure that the ideas, needs and demands of youth are better heard. Therefore, our main challenge is to encourage and channel young people’s civic commitment in a meaningful way and “inject it” into the political system.

18. This year’s Forum provided an excellent discussion platform to identify mechanisms that could help us address this challenge effectively.

1.1.6. Working visit to Spain (Madrid, 29-31 October 2014)

19. On 30 October 2014, in the margins of my participation in the Madrid seminar on “The role of national parliaments in the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights”, I held bilateral meetings with the Spanish authorities, including with the Speakers of the Congress of Deputies and Senate of the Spanish Parliament, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the Interior. I would like to again thank the Spanish authorities for the excellent organisation of these meetings. In my discussions, I praised the Spanish authorities for their commitment to human rights, especially, as regards the implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, fight against intolerance and racism, as well the promotion of our standards and values in Europe’s southern neighbourhood.

20. Speaking about the human rights challenges of migration and the very specific challenges the Spanish authorities have to address, I stressed the need for European states to share responsibilities between them and called for greater solidarity at European level.

21. Referring to the situation in Ceuta and Melilla, I stressed the need to find appropriate solutions that comply with international and European human rights standards, but which are also tailored to the specific situation of these territories, in order to address the needs of those requiring international protection. In this context, I offered the Council of Europe’s support and expertise to the Spanish authorities, as required.

1.1.7. Other activities

22. On 6 October 2014, in Strasbourg, I attended a conference organised to mark the 50th anniversary of the European Pharmacopoeia (EDQM). In particular, I praised the positive impact of the European Pharmacopoeia on public health activities across Europe. Moreover, I stressed that the counterfeiting of medicines had recently grown into an industry that killed hundreds of thousands of people a year whilst generating huge profits for counterfeiters. In this context, regretting that the Medicrime Convention, which had been initiated by the Parliamentary Assembly to combat the counterfeiting of medicines, had only been ratified by four member States so far, I reminded participants that it was important to make lawmakers aware of the challenges in the field of medicines as the ratification of the convention was in their hands.

23. During this period, I continued to follow closely the human rights situation in Azerbaijan. On 14 October 2014, reacting to the fact that the ECtHR decision in Ilgar Mammadov’s case became final, I called on Azerbaijan to free him, as well as to speed up reforms to implement the European Convention on Human Rights, in particular in areas where there exist systemic deficiencies, as highlighted by the Court’s decision in Ilgar Mammadov’s case. Moreover, on 31 October 2014, in the margins of the Madrid seminar (see Section 3 above), I met a representative of human rights defenders in Azerbaijan who had briefed me on the deteriorating situation, especially as regards the legislation governing the operation of NGOs. As I stressed during my visit to Baku in September 2014, in the light of the specific post-accession commitments taken by Azerbaijan, more progress is needed on this front. I encourage, once again, the Azerbaijani authorities to cooperate fully with the Venice Commission in this field. I will continue to follow this issue closely.

1.2. Activities of the President between 17 November and 10 December 2014

1.2.1. Situation In Ukraine

24. During this period, I continued to follow political developments in Ukraine and the negotiations between the political forces on the setting up of a new majority coalition following the parliamentary elections of 26 October 2014. To this end, and in order to keep myself up to date, I had a telephone conversation on 24 November with Mr Pavlo Klimkin, the Ukrainian Foreign Minister. During this conversation, I informed Mr Klimkin of the Assembly's work regarding the crisis in Ukraine, in particular the drafting of the report on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, scheduled to be debated during the first part-session of 2015, and of the contacts between the Presidential Committee and the Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation and the members of the Russian delegation to the PACE, in Moscow, on 13 November 2014. In our discussions, I reaffirmed the PACE's support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine. In addition, I stressed the need for the Ukrainian authorities to pursue the essential reforms relating to the commitments entered into with the Council of Europe, expressing the hope that the newly elected parliament could play a leading role in this process.

25. With regard to relations with the Russian delegation to the PACE, we stressed the need to continue the dialogue, with due regard for the positions of principle adopted by the PACE on the question of the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

26. We also agreed to make further contact as soon as possible, once the new parliament had been formed, to discuss the dates and arrangements for a working visit to Ukraine which I am planning to make in early 2015.

27. On 27 November 2014, I congratulated Mr Volodymyr Groysman, the new Speaker of the Ukrainian parliament on his election to this senior position. In my letter of congratulations, I restated the PACE's readiness and commitment to continue to support the Ukrainian authorities on the path of reform.

28. In order to discuss the priorities of our co-operation, I invited Mr Groysman to travel to Paris, or elsewhere, for a working visit. I also reiterated my readiness to travel to Ukraine in early 2015 to pursue our political dialogue with the authorities.

1.2.2. Assembly meetings in and official visit to Belgium (16-18 November 2014)

29. From 16 to 18 November 2014, I attended the meetings of the Presidential Committee, the Assembly Bureau and the Standing Committee, held in Brussels in the context of the Belgian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Alongside these meetings, I held a series of bilateral meetings with the Belgian authorities, in particular with Mr Siegfried Bracke, Speaker of the Chamber of Representatives, Ms Christine Defraigne, Speaker of the Senate, and Mr Didier Reynders, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers.

30. I also took part in the commemoration events for the victims of the First World War held in Ypres on 17 November. I would particularly like to thank the Belgian parliament and the Ypres local authorities for the excellent organisation of this visit which was a very emotional experience for all those who were able to attend.

31. In my bilateral meetings, I was able to discuss the main political challenges facing Europe today and co-operation between the Council of Europe and Belgium, in particular with regard to accession to the Council of Europe's legal instruments and parliamentary scrutiny of implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. In addition, I reiterated the Assembly's full support for the priorities and activities scheduled for the Belgian chairmanship, placing particular emphasis on the need to co-ordinate the actions taken by the various organisations that make up the European architecture.

1.2.3. Bilateral meetings with senior officials in the European Union institutions

32. During my working visit to Brussels, on 18 and 19 November 2014, I met the President of the European Parliament, Mr Martin Schulz, the President of the European Commission, Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Ms Federica Mogherini, and the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Mr Johannes Hahn.

33. During my meeting with the President of the European Parliament, we discussed several issues of common concern for both our parliamentary assemblies, in particular the rise of populism and extremist movements, relations between the majority and the opposition in parliaments, frozen conflicts in Europe and the crisis in Ukraine. In addition, we discussed recent political developments in several European countries, including Azerbaijan, Hungary and Russia.

34. With regard to co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament, we agreed to organise regular meetings between the leaders of the political groups in our two assemblies, in an informal setting and based on a precise agenda, to be attended by eminent guests who could introduce and provide input to our debates. We agreed that the first of these meetings would be organised by President Schulz, with the participation of a senior official from the European Commission as the eminent guest.

35. I was delighted that during our bilateral meeting, the President of the European Commission, Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, confirmed his visit to Strasbourg during the first part-session of 2015. His visit will doubtless help further develop our relations with the institutions of the European Union. In this context, I would like to mention the excellent bilateral contacts I was able to establish with Ms Federica Mogherini and Mr Johannes Hahn. In our talks, we agreed to pursue our regular consultations on subjects of common interest in order to fully explore the complementarity between the Council of Europe and the European Union.

1.2.4. Visit by His Holiness Pope Francis to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 25 November 2014)

36. On 25 November 2014, I had the immense honour and privilege to welcome to the Council of Europe, together with the Secretary General, His Holiness Pope Francis. I am convinced that his address to the Council of Europe institutions which focused on the values championed by our Organisation, the importance of respecting and capitalising on the differences which constitute Europe's wealth and the need for dialogue in order to pursue the harmonious development of our continent, will be a major source of inspiration for our work. In my speech on the occasion of the Pope's visit, I paid tribute to the commitment of His Holiness to defending the values underpinning the European Convention on Human Rights, which are values that unite all Europeans. Referring to his homely in Lampedusa last July in which he condemned "globalised indifference", I stressed that our common aim was to humanise and democratise this process of globalisation.

37. With regard to the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, I thanked Pope France for his proposal to create a new agora as a forum for dialogue and exchange. Such a dialogue is more important than ever, at a time when some quarters preach violence and cite their faith to justify the most serious violations of human rights; this discredits whole communities and cultures and the very essence of religion.

38. Lastly, I welcomed the message of His Holiness to promote dialogue. Our Assembly pursues the same objective and our duty, as European elected representatives, is to prevent the emergence of new divisions on our continent and in the minds and hearts of European citizens.

1.2.5. Visit by the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Mr Xavier Bettel (Strasbourg, 1 December 2014)

39. It was an honour for me to be able to welcome to Strasbourg on 1 December the Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Mr Xavier Bettel. During our talks, we discussed the major challenges facing Europe and our Organisation in order to defend the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We emphasised the fact that the main role of the Council of Europe and of our Assembly was to react, speedily and resolutely, to any attack on its values, while at the same time pursuing constant political dialogue with our member states.

40. With regard to co-operation between Luxembourg and the Council of Europe, we stressed the need to continue the work to promote the signature and ratification of the Council of Europe's key legal instruments.

1.2.6. Other activities

41. I had the opportunity to meet the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr Peter Maurer, and to discuss the humanitarian challenges facing us today in Europe and in the world. We concluded that it was necessary to secure the humanitarian space and that the conflicts and divisions in Europe had repercussions elsewhere in the world.

42. On 4 December 2014, I attended the Conference on the freedom of the media and the security of journalists organised by the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and the Media. This event gave me the opportunity to closely observe the important work carried out by the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and the Media in this field.

43. I intend to pursue my contacts with our Assembly's committees in order to contribute my political support to their work.

44. In this context, on 8 December, I attended the meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, taking part in the exchange of views on the question of co-operation with the European Union (in the discussion of the report by Ms Lundgren on the memorandum of understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union) and on the political consequences of the crisis in Ukraine.

1.3. Activities of the President between 9 December 2014 and 25 January 2015

1.3.1. Situation in Ukraine

1.3.1.1. Visit of the Presidential Committee to Ukraine

45. As far as the situation in Ukraine is concerned, my activities during this period focused on the organisation of the visit of the Presidential Committee to Kyiv. In this context, I met in Strasbourg, on 6 January 2015, the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the Council of Europe. Moreover, within the framework of the preparation of the visit, I met the Ambassadors of Ukraine and Russia in Luxemburg.

46. The visit of the Presidential Committee to Kiyv took place on 15 and 16 January 2015, at the invitation of the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, Mr Volodymyr Groysman. Within the framework of this visit, we met with the President of Ukraine, Mr Petro Poroshenko, the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, Mr Volodymyr Groysman, the Prime Minister, Mr Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr Pavlo Klimkin, as well as the leaders of different political forces represented in the Verkhovna Rada and members of the new delegation of Ukraine to the Parliamentary Assembly.

47. Summing up the results of our discussions, I called for the immediate implementation of the Minsk Peace Plan by all parties, including the Russian Federation, and respect for the territorial integrity of Ukraine. In particular, on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I expressed condolences over the tragic deaths of 12 civilians following a rocket attack near Volnovakha in eastern Ukraine, on 13 January 2015.

48. In this context, I highlighted the importance of the need for transparency and accountability for human rights abuses committed in Ukraine, whether during the Maidan events, or in Odessa, the East of the country, or elsewhere, stressing the role that the Council of Europe and the International Advisory Panel could play in this process in providing appropriate support.

49. Speaking about the reforms, I stressed that Ukraine needed the help and support of Europe to move forward in building democratic structures and coping with the economic crisis facing the country. Urgent reforms, including of the constitution, decentralisation of powers to the regions, reform of the judiciary and the election law, combating corruption and tackling, in a fair way, the issue of lustration, should be carried out, taking into account the Council of Europe standards in all these areas. We understand that these reforms would require tough decisions by tough people and would not be easy to negotiate. Therefore, I called on the government, the parliament, the President and civil society to work together.

50. On the issue of the high humanitarian toll of the conflict in the east of the country, I stressed that the only way to bring this humanitarian catastrophe to an end was to fully implement the Minsk Peace Process. In this context, I referred to the provisions of the Minsk protocol, including the need for the immediate release of all hostages and illegally held persons. In this context I called for the immediate release by the Russian authorities, of the Ukrainian pilot Nadiya Savchenko as well as others who are detained illegally. I stressed that I would take this issue up with the Russian authorities and I have already done this in a letter addressed to the Speaker of the State Duma, Mr Sergey Naryshkin.

1.3.1.2. Relations with the Russian delegation to the Assembly

51. As keeping the channels of dialogue open is essential to resolving the crisis in Ukraine, the Presidential Committee decided to hold a meeting with the members of the Russian delegation to the Assembly, in Strasbourg, before the opening of the 2015 first part-session. This meeting is to be held on 25 January 2015 with the participation, in particular, of Mr Naryshkin, Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, who has been appointed member of the PACE delegation.

1.3.2. Response to the terrorist attacks in France on 7 and 9 January 2015

52. I was deeply shocked by the massacre at the headquarters of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, on 7 January 2015, which was a frontal attack on the fundamental values of democratic societies and in particular freedom of expression – one of the most precious of the principles upheld by the Council of Europe. I expressed condolences and support to the French authorities in telephone conversations with the President of the Senate, Gérard Larcher, and the French Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe. Subsequently, I addressed letters of sympathy and support to Mr Claude Bartolone, President of the National Assembly, and Mr Gérard Larcher, Président of the Senate.

53. On 13 January 2015, within the framework of my official visit to Germany, I attended, at the invitation of the Speaker of the Bundestag, Mr Norbert Lammert, a public meeting at the Brandenburg Gate organised by the German Muslim community. Together with the political leadership of Germany and high representatives of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, I expressed solidarity with the victims of the terrorist attacks and spoke up for freedom of expression, freedom of religion and tolerance.

54. These terrorist attacks have highlighted, once again, the threats that radicalisation and extremism represent for democratic societies. The Council of Europe and our Parliamentary Assembly must address these threats and defend the basic values on which European societies are based. In the coming months, I shall give priority to supporting the Assembly's action on this front.

1.3.3. Official visit to France (Paris, 8-10 December 2014)

55. At the invitation of the French delegation to the Assembly, I paid an official visit to France from 8 to 10 December 2014. During this visit, I met Mr Claude Bartolone, President of the National Assembly, Mr Gérard Larcher, President of the Senate, Ms Christine Taubira, Minister of Justice, Mr Jacques Toubon, *Défenseur des droits*, Ms Elisabeth Guigou, Chair of the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee, and the French delegation to the PACE. I also held exchanges of views with the European Affairs Committees of the National Assembly and the Senate.

56. Summing up the conclusions of my discussions in Paris, I called for broad mobilisation of all democratic political forces and civil society actors, in particular in response to the rise in populism and intolerance. I welcomed the response of the French government and the country's political actors in combating racism, anti-Semitism and intolerance.

57. In particular, I welcomed the efforts by the Ministry of Justice and the initiatives by the *Défenseur des droits*, stressing that the Council of Europe's instruments and tools – notably, the future No Hate Parliamentary Alliance – were at the disposal of the French authorities, calling for the stepping up the co-operation between the relevant French structures and the Council of Europe bodies.

58. With regard to the issue of management of migration, I underlined the need to develop a real European policy in this area so as to promote solidarity between States and meet international commitments, in particular the standards of the European Convention on Human Rights, while taking account of the specific situations facing member States and the constraints affecting local communities. In particular, I welcomed the fact that the National Assembly and the Senate place particular emphasis on this issue in their work and praised the initiative by the members of the French delegation who recently visited a holding centre for migrants in Calais in order to examine the situation and help find solutions together.

59. My discussions also focused on the question of the implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and, in particular, the role which national parliaments should play in this process. In this context, I urged the National Assembly and the Senate to continue their discussions of the matter with a view to establishing a mechanism to enable parliamentarians to play an active part in monitoring the execution of the Court's judgments, in close co-operation with the executive and other national bodies, such as the *Défenseur des droits*.

60. With regard to the crisis in Ukraine and relations with Russia, I stressed the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue, as well as the political responsibility of members of Parliament to look for and identify solutions together.

61. Lastly, I called on France and all member States to continue providing the Council of Europe with the political and financial support which the organisation needs so that it can perform its tasks effectively and ensure compliance with Council of Europe standards in all member States.

1.3.4. Official visit to Germany (12-15 January 2015)

62. At the invitation of the Speaker of the Bundestag, Dr Norbert Lammert, I paid an official visit to Germany from 12 to 14 January 2015. During this visit, I met the President of the Republic, Mr Joachim Gauck, the Speaker of the Bundestag, Dr Norbert Lammert, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the Minister of Justice, Mr Heiko Maas, the Minister of Finance, Dr Wolfgang Schäuble, as well as the leaders of the political groups in the Bundestag. I also met a delegation of the Bundestag's Committee on European Affairs and participated in a meeting of its Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. Furthermore, I visited the German Institute for Human Rights and the Berlin Treatment Center for Torture Victims. In addition, I met a group of representatives of major German think tanks, organised by the Ambassador of Luxemburg to Germany.

63. As indicated above, on 13 January 2015, I attended a public meeting at the Brandenburg Gate to express solidarity with the victims of the terrorist attacks in France.

64. I would like to thank the Permanent of Germany, Ambassador Georg Luy, for providing support in the organisation of this visit and joining me for all meetings.

65. In my discussions, I addressed the following main issues:

- the possibility of a challenge to the credentials of the Russian delegation in the light of the ongoing annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in the east of Ukraine;
- the urgent need for reforms in Ukraine, including decentralisation, judicial reform and the fight against corruption;
- the difficult human rights situation in a number of member States, including the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Hungary;
- migration issues and the rise of xenophobic populist movements, including the so-called Pegida in Germany;
- the status of ratifications of Council of Europe Conventions by Germany and the implementation of recommendations addressed to Germany by the Parliamentary Assembly;
- the budgetary situation of the Council of Europe in the face of major new challenges.

66. All my interlocutors expressed support for the Council of Europe's action and encouraged us to continue upholding the values and principles of the Organisation.

67. Regarding refugees and migrants, we agreed on the need to find European solutions, which have to be both humane and realistic. Thousands of desperate refugees cannot be left to drown in the Mediterranean Sea, and the southern States cannot deal with this problem alone. In this context, I underlined that addressing the challenges of migration in a transparent way and in constant dialogue with the local population, was the best way to stem the rise of intolerance and xenophobia.

68. Last but not least, as indicated above, I did not fail to raise the difficult budgetary situation of the Council of Europe and the challenges the organisation is facing. I received encouraging signals from some of my interlocutors on this difficult issue.

69. Details of all my activities and meetings are to be found in the Appendix to this statement.

2. Press Releases

1. Lost lives in the Mediterranean: 2014 sets sad records (3 October 2014)
2. PACE President condemns ceasefire violations in east of Ukraine (3 October 2014)
3. 50 years of the European Pharmacopeia: a success story (6 October 2014)
4. PACE President calls on Azerbaijan to free Ilgar Mammadov (14 October 2014)
5. Social rights are not second class rights, says PACE President (18 October 2014)
6. Anne Brasseur congratulates Jean-Claude Juncker and his team (23 October 2014)
7. PACE President congratulates Ukrainian people on election (29 October 2014)
8. President deplores holding of so-called 'elections' in Donetsk and Luhansk (31 October 2014)

9. Parliaments must do more to ensure Strasbourg Court judgments are implemented (31 October 2014)
10. Anne Brasseur: improved protection for journalists (3 November 2014)
11. President marks a quarter century since fall of the Berlin Wall: 'let us tear down the walls that separate us' (7 November 2014)
12. PACE President meets in Moscow with the Speaker of the Russian State Duma (13 November 2014)
13. PACE President urges Belgian Parliament to look into implementation of the ECHR in domestic law (19 November 2014)
14. PACE President 'calibrates' human rights priorities with new EU leaders (20 November 2014)
15. Euromaidan anniversary: PACE President calls for urgent implementation of reform agenda (21 November 2014)
16. We must unite in order to combat what Pope Francis rightly calls 'the globalisation of indifference' (21 November 2014)
17. Anne Brasseur: 'Globalisation must be humanised and democratised' (25 November 2014)
18. Anne Brasseur congratulates new Ukrainian Speaker on his election (27 November 2014)
19. On World AIDS Day, PACE President backs UN 'close the gap' campaign for people living with HIV (1 December 2014)
20. Human rights, a watchword for the Luxembourg Prime Minister (1 December 2014)
21. Deep concern at the detention of Azerbaijani journalist Khadija Ismayilova (5 December 2014)
22. We must redouble our efforts to eliminate corruption, says Anne Brasseur (9 December 2014)
23. Pressure on Ilgar Mammadov's lawyer is unacceptable (10 December 2014)
24. 'The Council of Europe is more important than ever', says Anne Brasseur (11 December 2014)
25. President expresses grave concern at media arrests in Turkey (15 December 2014)
26. "Stop using language which discriminates against migrants" (17 December 2014)
27. Let's overcome hurdles to ensure EU accedes to the Human Rights Convention (18 December 2014)
28. 60th Anniversary of the European Cultural Convention (19 December 2014)
29. PACE President condemns Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack (7 January 2015)
30. Anne Brasseur marches for tolerance: 'we are united in defending democratic values' (14 January 2015)
31. Anne Brasseur in Berlin: we must uphold our values together, with all our force (15 January 2015)
32. Anne Brasseur in Kyiv: Ukraine needs the help and support of Europe to move forward (16 January 2015)
33. PACE President asks for help in securing Ukrainian pilot Nadiya Savchenko's release (21 January 2015)

3. Speeches

1. Opening speech of the Fourth part of the 2014 ordinary session (29 September 2014)
2. Speech on the occasion of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize award ceremony (Strasbourg, 29 September 2014)
3. Address on the occasion of the Opening Ceremony of the Living Library: Don't judge a book by its cover! No hate, no extremism (Strasbourg, 30 September 2014)
4. Opening of the International Conference organised by the EDQM Council of Europe: "EDQM: 50 years of leadership in the quality of medicines – paving the way for the future" (Strasbourg, 6 October 2014)
5. Speech at the University of Tübingen: the Council of Europe as defender of human rights, democracy and the rule of law - more important than ever (Tubingen, Germany, 6 October 2014)

6. Exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies at the 1209th meeting of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 8 October 2014)
7. Opening speech of the high-level Conference on the European Social Charter "Europe restarts in Turin" (Turin, Italy, 18 October 2014)
8. Welcome remarks at the seminar on the role of national parliaments in the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (Madrid, 31 October 2014)
9. Speech delivered at the Seminar and Inter-regional Dialogue on the protection of journalists: Towards an effective framework of protection for the work of journalists and an end to impunity (Strasbourg, 3 November 2014)
10. Moderating of the Round Table Young people – actors of global change (World Forum for Democracy) (3 November 2014)
11. Speech delivered at the Ceremony of commemoration at the Commonwealth military cemetery «Tyne Cot» (Ypres, Belgium, 17 November 2014)
12. Speech at the Standing Committee meeting (Brussels, 18 November 2014)
13. Address to His Holiness Pope Francis (Strasbourg, 25 November 2014)
14. Opening speech at the Symposium on transition of young people to autonomy and working life (Strasbourg, 1 December 2014)
15. Speech during the dinner debate at the "Maison de l'Europe Strasbourg Alsace" (Strasbourg, 1 December 2014)
16. Speech delivered at the opening of the Conference on media freedom and security of journalists organised jointly by the PACE Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media and the Committee on Culture, Education and Communication of the French Senate (Paris, 4 December 2014)

Appendix 1 – Activities between 29 September and 17 November 2014

1. Bilateral meetings (in chronological order)

PACE session (29 September – 3 October 2014)

Political personalities

- B'Tselem Israeli Information Center for Human Rights (Israel), the Jesuit Refugee Service (Malta) and Mr Asaf Mammadov, father of Mr Anar Mammadli, currently in detention (Azerbaijan (the three candidates shortlisted for the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize)
- Ms Yulia Tymoshenko
- Mr Juli Minoves Triquell, President, Liberal international
- Mr Luca Volontè, former PACE member, President of the Novae Terrae Foundation
- Mr Olemic Thommessen, President of the Norwegian Storting
- Mr Denis Krivosheev, Deputy Director of programmes for Europe and central Asia, Amnesty International
- Dr Andreas Schockenhoff, Vice-President, German parliamentary group CDU/CSU
- Mr Angel Gurría, Secretary General of the OECD
- Ms Anna Koj, Open Dialog Foundation
- M. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijdan, President of the Committee of Ministers
- Ms Karen Benn, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, and Ms Roswitha Britz, President elect, European Breast Cancer Coalition, Europa Donna
- Sir Suma Chakrabarti, President of the EBRD
- Mr Thierry Braillard, State Secretary for Sports of France

PACE members

- Ms Hermine Naghdalyan, Chairperson of the delegation of Armenia
- Mr Ivan Popescu, Chairperson of the delegation of Ukraine
- Mr Samad Seyidov, Chairperson of the delegation of Azerbaijan
- Mr José Maria Beneyto, Chairperson of the delegation of Spain
- Members of the Japanese delegation
- Mr Tedo Japaridze, Chairperson of the delegation of Georgia
- Mr Philippe Mahoux, Chairperson of the delegation of Belgium
- Mr René Rouquet, President of the delegation of France

Strasbourg (6 October 2014)

- Mr Michael Georg Link, Director, OSCE ODIHR

Tübingen, Germany (6 October 2014)

- Prof. Bernd Engler, Rector of the University Tübingen
- Mr Michael Theurer, MEP

Turin (17-18 October 2014)

- Mr Giuliano Poletti, Minister for Labour and social politics, Italy
- Mr Piero Fassino, Mayor of Turin
- Mr Michael Farrugia, Minister for Family and Social security, Malta
- Mr Faruk Çelik, Minister for Labour and social security, Turkey
- Ms Laura Boldrini, President of the Chamber of Deputies, Italy,

Madrid (29-31 October 2014)

- Ms Francesca Friz-Prguda, Representative of the HCR in Spain
- Mr José Manuel García-Margallo, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Spain
- Mr Jesús María Posada Moreno, President of the Congress of Deputies, Spain
- Mr Pío García-Escudero, President of the Senate
- Mr Rafael Catalá, Minister of Justice, Spain
- Mr Jorge Fernandez Diaz, Minister of Interior, Spain

Strasbourg (3 November 2014)

- Mr Bozo Ljubic, President, Chamber of Representatives, Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Mr Yves Leterme, former prime Minister of Belgium, General Secretary of IDEA

Moscow (13 November 2014)

- Mr Sergey Narychkin, President of the State Duma of the Russian Federation
- Members of the Russian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly

2. Meetings with Council of Europe personalities and organs (in chronological order)

- Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General
- M. Jean-Claude Frécon, President, Congress
- M. Zoltan Taubner, Director, Directorate of external relations
- M. Christos Giakoumopoulos, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Ukraine

3. Meetings with the diplomatic community (in chronological order)

- Mr Jari Vilen, Ambassador, Head of the delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe
- Ms Michèle Eisenbarth, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg
- Mr Mohammed Arrouchi, General Consul of Morocco
- Mr Markus Börlin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Switzerland
- Ms Amy Westling, Consul General, United States of America
- Mr Emin Eyyubov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Azerbaïdjan
- Mr Luis Javier Gil Catalina, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Spain
- Monseigneur Paulo Rudelli, Special Envoy and Permanent Representative of the Holy See

- Ms Theodora Constantinidou, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Cyprus
- Mr Armen Papikyan, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Armenia
- Mr Dirk Van Eeckhout, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Belgium
- Mr Julius Georg Luy, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Germany

4. Contact with the media between 29 September and 17 November 2014

MEDIA	TYPE	COUNTRY
Radio France RFI	Radio	France
Ria Novosti	Press agency	Russia
Voice of America, Russian service	Multimedia	Russia
Agence Europe, ANSA, EFE, Azer Press, Itar Tass, Radio-TV Pologne, NTV Turquie, Uradovyy Kuryer, Europea Pravda Ukraine	Meeting with local journalists	various
Véronique Leblanc, La Libre Belgique (correspondant in Strasbourg), Sophie Lejoly, Agency Belga, Philippe Regnier, Le Soir, Willem Staes, MO* Magazine	Meeting with Belgian journalists	Belgium
Fuad Gouloubeyli, Azer press	Press agency	Azerbaijan
Davit Sargsyan international news reporter and analytic programme producer	Public Television Company	Armenia
Various Russian media (press stand up at the Russian Duma)	Printed and electronic	Russia

Appendix 2 – Activities between 17 November and 10 December 2014

1. Bilateral meetings (in chronological order)

Belgium (17-18 November 2014)

- Mr Didier Reynders, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of Belgium, President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe
- Ms Christine Defraigne, President of the Senate
- Mr Siegfried Bracke, President of the Chamber of Representatives
- Ms Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission
- Mr Martin Schulz, President, European Parliament
- Mr Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy
- Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission

Strasbourg (24-25 November 2014)

- His Holiness Pope Francis
- Mr Tedo Japaridze, President of the Georgian delegation to the PACE

Strasbourg (1-2 December 2014)

- M. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Luxembourg
- Prof. Jean-Jacques Eledjam, President of the French Red Cross
- M. Peter Maurer, President, International Red Cross

Paris (8-10 December 2014)

- Mr Claude Bartolone, President of the Assemblée nationale
- Mr René Rouquet, President of the French delegation to the PACE
- Ms Christiane Taubira, Justice Minister
- Members of the Committee on European Affairs of the Assemblée nationale
- Mr Harlem Désir, State Secretary for European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development
- Mr Jacques Toubon, Rights defender
- Ms Elisabeth Guigou, President of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Assemblée nationale
- Members of the Committee of European Affairs of the Senate
- Mr Gérard Larcher, President of the Senate

2. Meetings with Council of Europe personalities and organs (in chronological order)

- Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General
- Mr Nils Muižnieks, Commissioner for Human Rights
- Mr Jean-Christophe Bas, Director, Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation, DGII Directorate General of Democracy
- Ambassador Torbjørn Froyshes, Head of the Liaison Office of the Council of Europe with the European Union in Brussels

3. Meetings with the diplomatic community (in chronological order)

- Mr Mykola Tochytskyi, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Ukraine
- Mr Erdogan Şerif Işcan, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Turkey
- Mr Luis Javier Gil Catalina, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Spain
- Mr Rudolf Lennkh, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Austria
- Ms Houria Yousfi, Consul General of Algeria
- Mr Santiago Oñate Laborde, Permanent Observer of Mexico
- Mr Paul Dühr, Ambassador of Luxembourg in France

4. Contact with the media between 17 November and 10 December 2014 (in chronological order)

MEDIA	TYPE	PAYS
Interview with Ms Anne-Bénédicte Hoffner, Service religions of the newspaper La Croix	Newspaper	France
ANSA - Samantha Agro	Internet	Italy
PIRAYA FILMS AS Andrei Nekrasov, Programme Director	Film on connection with Human rights, geopolitics in the West's relations with Russia	Norway

Appendix 3 – Activities between 10 December 2014 and 25 January 2015

1. Bilateral meetings (in chronological order)

Berlin (12-14 January 2015)

- Mr Thomas Oppermann, Chair of the SPD
- Mr Volker Kauder, Chair of the CDU/CSU
- Dr. Gregor Gysi, Chair of Die Linke
- Ms Claudia Roth, Vice-President of the Bundestag
- Mr Joachim Gauck, Federal President
- Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs
- Dr Mercedes Hillen, Director “Überleben”, Berlin Centre for the Treatment of Torture Victims
- Prof. Dr. Beate Rudolf, Director, German Institute of Human Rights
- Dr. Norbert Lammert, President of the Bundestag and joint commemoration ceremony
- Mr Gunther Krichbaum, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Bundestag
- Dr Anton Hofreiter, Co-Chair of Die Grünen
- Mr Heiko Maas, Minister of Justice
- Mr Georges Santer, Ambassador of Luxembourg
- Dr Wolfgang Schäuble, Minister of Finance
- Members of the Human Rights Committee of the Bundestag
- Mr Axel Fischer, Chairperson, and the members of the German delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly

Kyiv (16-17 January 2015)

- Mr Arseniy Yatseniuk, Prime Minister of Ukraine
- Mr Pavlo Klimkin, Minister for Foreign Affairs
- Mr Volodymyr Groysman, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine
- Representatives of political groups:
 - Mr Ihor Kononenko, First Deputy Chairman of the Petro Poroshenko Block fraction
 - Mr Andrii Teteruk, First deputy Chairman of the Popular Front fraction
 - Mr Oleh Bereziuk, Chairman of the “Samopomich” (Self-Help) fraction
 - Mr Oleh Lyashko, Chairman of the Radical Party fraction
 - Ms Yuliya Tymoshenko, Chairman of the Batkivschyna fraction
 - Mr Yuriy Boyko, Chairman of Opposition Block fraction
 - Mr Igor Yermeev, Chairman of the Will of the People fraction
 - Mr Vitaliy Khomutknyik, Chairman of the Economic Development fraction
- Mr Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine
- Members of the Ukrainian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly

Strasbourg (25 January 2015)

- Members of the Russian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly

2. Meetings with Council of Europe personalities and organs

- Ms Mireille Paulus, Secretary of the Committee of Ministers

3. Meetings with the diplomatic community (in chronological order)

- Mr Emin Eyyubov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan
- Mr Julius Georg Luy, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Germany
- Mr Mykola Tochytskyi, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Ukraine
- Mr Peter Gunning, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Ireland
- Mr Ihor Dolhov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to the Kingdom of Belgium and the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg
- M. Mark Entin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation in the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg

4. Contact with the media between 10 December 2014 and 25 January 2015 (in chronological order)

MEDIA	TYPE	PAYS
Parliamentary channel LCP	TV	France
Parliamentary channel RADA	TV	Ukraine
Interview with Newspaper JOURNAL	Written press	Luxembourg