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## **Communication by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly**

**President's activities between the third and the fourth part of the 2011  
Ordinary Session**

**Communication**  
President of the Assembly



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## **1. Past meetings and visits**

### **1.1. Official visit to Kyrgyzstan (27-28 June 2011)**

Upon the invitation of the President of the Speaker of the Kyrgyz Parliament, I visited Bishkek on 27 and 28 June 2011. During my visit, I met, in particular, the President of the Republic Mrs Roza Otunbaeva, the Speaker of Parliament Mr Akhmatbek Keldibekov, the Prime Minister Mr Almazbek Atambaev, the leaders of parliament's political groups as well as representatives of the Meskhetian Turks.

I welcomed the encouraging democratic changes that have taken place in Kyrgyzstan in the last year and offered closer contacts to encourage further change. In my opinion, Kyrgyzstan is on the right track in the implementation of reforms related to democratic institutions and basic freedoms; however, there is still a need to make progress in developing a democratic political culture.

I suggested that the parliament consider applying for Partner for Democracy status with the Assembly. The parliament had already fulfilled some important conditions for this status, such as abolishing the death penalty and a multi-party composition. In this connection, I invited a delegation from the Kirgiz Parliament to attend the Parliamentary Assembly's 2011 October part-session.

I also welcomed the country's on-going co-operation with the Council of Europe's Venice Commission and encouraged the authorities to ratify Council of Europe conventions that were open to non-member states. I also said that the Assembly would be ready to observe the Presidential election scheduled for October 2011.

### **1.2. Meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) (Astana, Kazakhstan, 29 June-1 July 2011)**

On 29 June 2011 in Astana, I addressed the meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Organisation for Islamic Co-operation. In my speech, I stressed that the OIC and the Council of Europe have much in common and must work together more closely to head off conflicts and counter intolerance. In my opinion, the two organisations have a huge potential for co-operation. We face the same challenges in the modern world and, therefore, we have to find a common response to these challenges, based on shared values and principles.

I also suggested the OIC could contribute – along with the European Union and United Nations Alliance of Civilizations – to a possible “platform for dialogue” between the Council of Europe, the main religious faiths and the main humanist organisations. The two Organisations should also make joint efforts to fight intolerance – be it Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, racism or xenophobia in general – by, for example, countering stereotypes in schoolbooks, the media and public discourse. In this connection, I called on politicians and elected representatives to speak out against extremism. For their part, Muslims and Muslim communities should also be the first to condemn and combat any form of political extremism under the cover of Islam.

On this occasion, I held bilateral meetings with Mr Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr Yerzhan Kazykhanov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Kanat Saudabayev, Secretary of State of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr Kairat Mami, Speaker of the Senate and Mr Ural Mukhamedzhanov, Speaker of Majilis of the Parliament.

### **1.3. Official visit to Gagauzia, Moldova (14-16 July 2011)**

Upon the invitation of the Bashkan of Gagauzia, Mr Mikhail Formuzal, I visited the autonomous territorial unit of Gagauzia (Moldova) and held meetings with the Bashkan and other officials and visited the Komrat University.

In my opinion, Gagauzia is a good model for the peaceful coexistence of different national communities in one country and the administrative arrangements for the region – where around 4.5 per cent of Moldova's population lives – could be used as a model for the reintegration of Transnistria.

I stressed that the Council of Europe remains ready to assist the Moldovan authorities to harmonise Gagauzia's laws with national legislation, help clarify the distribution of competences and consolidate the status of the region.

In Chisinau on 14 July, I met with the First Vice-Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament, Mr Vlad Plahotniuc, and the Chair of the External Policy Committee of the Moldovan Parliament, Mr Igor Corman, who is also a member of Moldova's delegation to Parliamentary Assembly.

**1.4. International round table “Ukrainian Constitution and Modern Parliamentary” (Odessa, Ukraine, 17-19 July 2011)**

On 18 July 2011, I addressed a round table at the Odessa National Academy of Law with a lecture on “The Council of Europe neighbourhood policy in the light of the upheavals in the Arab world”.

I said that the “winds of change” sweeping the Arab world offer huge opportunities for the creation of a neighbourhood to Europe which is more peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous. To achieve this objective, freedom, dignity and democracy should not remain just revolutionary slogans, but the challenge is to translate them into specific actions on the ground and begin the immense task of changing minds, attitudes and practices.

In this connection, I listed the steps the Council of Europe – and particularly the Assembly – was taking to share its deep knowledge of democratic transformation, but without giving lessons or imposing models.

**1.5. 2011 Ramadan reception and discussion evening (Copenhagen, 22 August 2011)**

Upon the invitation of Mr Hüseyin Araç, member of the Danish Parliament, and of the Scandinavian edition of the *Zaman* newspaper, I attended the 2011 Ramadan reception and discussion evening held on 22 August at the Danish Parliament. This event brought together Members of Parliament, representatives of the diplomatic community, academics and NGO representatives. On this occasion, I addressed the participants in order to share with them the Assembly’s contribution to the new Council of Europe’s neighborhood policy, with special focus on the events in the Southern Mediterranean region.

Moreover, I spoke about the challenges that multiculturalism has to face in Europe, especially, in the light of the recent tragic events in Norway, and the Assembly’s contribution in this respect as regards living together and the fight against extremism, racism, intolerance and xenophobia. In particular, I stressed that “the best model for living together” must be to bring cultures and religions together in a spirit of respect, dialogue and tolerance.

In the margins of this event, I met with the members of the Danish delegation to the Assembly to discuss with them the consequences of the recent tragic events in Norway and their political implications, possible Assembly actions in this respect, the Assembly’s contribution to the Council of Europe’s neighborhood policy, as well as the implications of the Assembly’s reform.

**1.6. Meetings of the Political Affairs Committee (Caserta, Italy, 6 September 2011) and the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (Paris, 9 September 2011)**

I attended meetings of these committees and held exchanges of views with members. At the meeting of the Political Affairs Committee, during which the Committee gave the go-ahead for granting the Partner for Democracy status to the Palestinian National Council, I concentrated on our relations with neighbouring non-member states.

At the meeting of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, I stressed, in particular, my personal commitment to non-discrimination on any grounds and discussed the question of the work of the Committee under its new mandate as from January 2012.

**1.7. 8th Yalta Annual Meeting: “Ukraine and the World: Common challenges, common future” (Yalta, 15-17 September 2011)**

An important number of personalities gathered at this meeting, including Mr Yanukovich, President of Ukraine, Mr Peres, President of Israel, Mr Azarov, Prime Minister of Ukraine, Mr Filat, Prime Minister of Moldova, Mr Bildt, Foreign Minister of Sweden, Mr Bagis, Minister for European Affairs of Turkey, Mr Sikorski, Foreign Minister of Poland, Mr Füle, EU Commissioner for Enlargement, and also Mr Blair, former United Kingdom Prime Minister, Mr Kwasnievski, former Prime Minister of Poland, Mr Solana, former EU High Representative for CFSP, a number of MEPs and others, including Mr Krugman, Nobel Prize Laureate.

I took part in a round table on “Human Rights and Democracy in Wider Europe” together with Mr Jagland Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Gryshchenko, Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Mr Yatsenyuk, MP, leader of “Front of Changes” party and Mr David, Member of the European Parliament.

In my speech, which was followed by a discussion, I stressed that all Europe is now facing unprecedented challenges unseen since the end of the 2nd World War and that the way forward goes only through strict adherence to the Council of Europe fundamental values. I also stressed that “wider Europe” goes beyond the

strictly geographical frontiers of our continent. Referring to the recently-established Partner for Democracy status, I added that the Assembly was pursuing a strategy of bringing non-member states closer to the Council of Europe and to its standards and I recalled that we had even intensified our efforts in the wake of the Arab revolutions.

**1.8. Conference on “A Common European Heritage – Value The Heritage, Sustainable Partnerships along Cultural Routes” (Shabo, Ukraine, 18 September 2011)**

At this conference, organised in the framework of the European Heritage Days, I focused on the importance of cultural heritage and inter-cultural dialogue. I expressed my appreciation for programmes such as the European Heritage Days, which create a platform for local partners to develop cross-frontier European projects. It is important to develop projects which focus less on the national angle than on the European dimension of heritage, put emphasis on the shared origins of much of this heritage and encourage a shared responsibility in its protection and development.

**1.9. Round Table on “Reducing Risks” (organised by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine) (Kyiv, 19 September 2011)**

Speaking at a round table on risk reduction, I emphasized that politicians bear responsibility for overcoming humanity’s past errors and moving the world community in a direction which will preserve civilization. I stressed that humanity could either move towards balanced development, with human rights and democracy at its core, or regress to promoting only short-term interests which could eventually lead to the destruction of civilization.

**1.10. Joint meeting with the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament (Brussels, 22 September 2011)**

Our traditional annual joint meeting with the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament took place in Brussels on 22 September 2011. Despite the limited time available for our exchange of views (1.5 hour), it was a very good opportunity for dialogue between political group leaders of both institutions.

In my introduction, I welcomed the good progress with regard to the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights, in particular the agreement reached on the modalities of participation of European Parliament representatives in Parliamentary Assembly meetings when the Assembly elects judges to the European Court of Human Rights.

I stressed that the format of a Joint Informal Body proved to be a very efficient and flexible co-ordination mechanism between the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament and, therefore, I suggested using this model in future for discussing other issues of common interest.

Also in my introduction, I stressed that the revolutionary changes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, as well as ongoing protests in Syria, present us with a great challenge and informed the European Parliament leaders about the success of the Assembly’s new Partner for Democracy status.

During the discussion which followed, I was very pleased by the firm support of the mainstream European Parliament political groups to the European Union accession to the ECHR. There was a clear political will of the European Parliament side to develop our cooperation. Among the issues mentioned by the European Parliament leaders in this connection were the influence and role of media in our societies and the serious challenges which the European Union was facing today.

**2. Press releases**

1. PACE President on World Refugee Day: too many deaths at sea (17 June 2011)
2. Partner for Democracy’ status awarded for first time in history of PACE (20 June 2011)
3. PACE President to visit Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan (24 June 2011)
4. PACE President welcomes ‘encouraging democratic changes’ in Kyrgyzstan, offers partnership (28 June 2011)
5. PACE President proposes that Kazakhstan apply for ‘Partner for Democracy’ status (29 June 2011)

6. OIC and the Council of Europe have 'huge potential' for working together, says PACE President (30 June 2011)
7. Boat accident on the Volga river: PACE President conveys condolences (11 July 2011)
8. Gagauzia model could be 'an inspiration' for other European countries, says PACE President (15 July 2011)
9. Winds of change in the Arab world offer 'huge opportunities' for a more peaceful neighbourhood (18 July 2011)
10. A good day for justice and for Serbia', says PACE President following Hadzic's arrest (20 July 2011)
11. PACE President shocked after Norway attacks (23 July 2011)
12. PACE President to speak at Danish Ramadan reception (19 August 2011)
13. PACE President defends multiculturalism at Danish Parliament Ramadan reception (23 August 2011)
14. PACE President says 'Partner for Democracy' status for Palestinian National Council a logical development (6 September 2011)
15. PACE President: 'Discrimination is a real threat to our societies' (9 September 2011)
16. PACE President, at Kyiv round table, outlines vision for democratic progress (19 September 2011)
17. PACE President: 'Wider Europe' goes beyond the strictly geographical frontiers of our continent (19 September 2011)
18. PACE President's reaction to bombing in Ankara (20 September 2011)
19. Increased co-operation between PACE and the European Parliament (22 September 2011)

### **3. Speeches**

1. Opening speech delivered at the Third part of the ordinary session of 2011 (Strasbourg, 20 June 2011)
2. Welcome notes to the attention of Mr Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine (Strasbourg, 20 June 2011)
3. Address on the occasion of the inauguration of the Ukrainian exhibition (Strasbourg, 20 June 2011)
4. Address on the occasion of the opening of the "Living Library" (Strasbourg, 20 June 2011)
5. Welcome to Mr AbdelWahed Radi, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Morocco and to Mr Mohamed Cheikh Biadillah, Speaker of the House of Counselors of Morocco (Strasbourg, 21 June 2011)
6. Welcome to Mr Viktor Yanukovych, President of Ukraine (Strasbourg, 21 June 2011)
7. Welcome to Mr Serzh Sargsyan, President of Armenia (Strasbourg, 22 June 2011)
8. Welcome to Mr Nikolay Mladenov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria (Strasbourg, 22 June 2011)
9. Welcome speech to the attention of Mr Igor Kalyapin, Chair of the Committee against Torture (Strasbourg, 23 June 2011)
10. Welcome to Mrs Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, Federal Minister of Justice of Germany, and Mr Dominic Grieve, Attorney General for England and Wales (Strasbourg, 23 June 2011)
11. Speech at the Conference of the Council of Ministers of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 29 June 2011)
12. Speech at the "Round-Table" with teachers and students of the Odessa National Academy of Law "The Council of Europe neighbourhood policy in the light of the upheavals in the Arab world" (Odessa 18 July 2011)
13. Speech at the 2011 Ramadan reception and discussion evening organised by the Danish Parliament (Copenhagen, 22 August 2011)

14. Address on the occasion of the 8th Yalta annual meeting - Ukraine and the world: common challenges, common future at the round table on "Human rights and democracy in wider Europe" (Yalta, Ukraine, 17 September 2011)
15. Address on the occasion of the round table on "Public-private partnership in the sphere of risk reduction – a basis for the country's competitiveness"; round table organised by the Risk Reduction Foundation, with the participation of the Sub-committee on sustainable development (Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs) (Kyiv, Ukraine, 19 September 2011)
16. Introduction at the joint meeting of the Assembly's Presidential Committee and the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament (Brussels, 22 September 2011)