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19 June 2010

President's activities between the Second and the Third Part of the 2010 Ordinary Session

Communication
President of the Assembly

1. PAST MEETINGS AND VISITS

1.1. Transfer of the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers between Switzerland and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (11 May 2010)

In my address to the Committee of Ministers on the occasion of their 120th session, I congratulated the Swiss Chairmanship for its efforts to improve the effectiveness of the European Court of Human Rights and the Swiss Foreign Minister, Mrs. Calmy-Rey, for having strengthened dialogue with the Assembly. I expressed my conviction that this kind of relations would be continued during the Chairmanship of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and its Foreign Minister, Mr. Miloshoski.

Topics raised during my speech included constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the situation in Albania, Moldova, the frozen conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh as well as in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. With regard to Belarus, I recalled that the Assembly had decided to put on hold its activities involving high-level contacts with Belarus. However, I expressed the opinion that we have a moral obligation towards the people of Belarus to be more present and engaged in the country.

1.2. Visit to Armenia (12-14 May 2010)

During this visit I met the President of the Republic Serzh Sargsyan, the President of the National Assembly Hovik Abrahamyan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Edward Nalbandyan, members of different political factions represented in the National Assembly, and the extra-parliamentary opposition. I also met Davit Harutyunyan, Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the Assembly on State and Legal Affairs, responsible for the monitoring of implementation of the recommendations proposed by the ad hoc Committee of the Assembly to inquire into the events of 1-2 March 2008. Meetings also took place with the Ombudsman, with members of the diplomatic community and civil society as well as with families of victims of the events of 1-2 March 2008.

I called on the authorities of Armenia to draw on the recommendations of its ad hoc parliamentary committee and of the Assembly in relation to the 1-2 March 2008 events and to adopt and implement in due time a roadmap of reforms. Such clear determination is needed in order to restore public confidence, move towards reconciliation and consolidate the democratic process in the country.

I encouraged the National Assembly to play to the full its role of parliamentary control, in particular when discussing the reports that will be submitted by its Committee on State and Legal Affairs, which is responsible for the monitoring of the implementation of the reforms needed in relation to the March 2008 events. I praised the excellent co-operation that has been existing with the Armenian delegation to the Assembly in that respect.

Amongst the most important reforms needed, I stressed: the adoption of a new electoral code, up to the highest European standards, well ahead of the 2012 parliamentary elections; the reform of the police, including better education and a change in the mentality; the reforms needed to ensure the independence in



the justice sector; the unrestricted implementation of the law on freedom of assembly; and the independence and pluralism of the media, in particular with regard to the tender on broadcasting licences that would be organised in July 2010.

At the same time, I considered it unacceptable that nobody had been held responsible in relation to the 10 deaths that occurred during the March 2008 events. I also stressed that the issue of persons detained in relation to the events of March 2008 was not fully resolved either.

With regard to the Nagorno Karabakh issue, I stressed that both Armenia and Azerbaijan had to abide by Parliamentary Assembly resolutions, in particular [Resolution 1416](#) of 2005. The Assembly, for its part, has the duty to monitor how its recommendations are implemented by member states. I said that I would continue consultations with the chairmen of the Armenian and Azeri delegations to the Assembly, separately and jointly, including also a representative of the opposition on each side, until a solution and a format are found which are satisfactory for both sides.

1.3. Working visit to Crimea, Ukraine (15 May 2010)

During my working visit, I welcomed the signing on 13 May 2010 by the President of Ukraine of the Decree No. 615/2010 concerning additional measures to integrate the Tatars of Crimea.

I expressed the hope that this decree, aiming at improving the social-economic situation of the Crimean Tatars and enhancing their participation in the social, cultural and political life, will mark the beginning of a new and positive chapter in the situation of the Crimean Tatars in Ukraine.

I held a meeting with the representatives of the Crimean Tatars and regional authorities of Crimea, with the participation of Mr Sergei Levochkin, Head of the Administration of the President of Ukraine, to discuss the potential of this decree and the process of its implementation. On this occasion, I called on all parties to intensify their dialogue and co-operation in good faith and mutual respect to solve the existing problems, in particular as regards education, language and land issues.

My visit took place on the eve of the commemoration, on 18 May, of the 66th anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatar population by the Stalinist regime. In April 2000, the Assembly adopted [Recommendation 1455 \(2000\)](#) on repatriation and integration of the Tatars of Crimea. The commitment of Ukraine to develop its policy towards ethnic minorities on the basis of the Council of Europe standards and principles is being followed by the Parliamentary Assembly in the framework of its monitoring procedure with respect to Ukraine.

1.4. Official visit to Montenegro (17-19 May 2010)

During this visit I met the President of the Republic, Filip Vujanovic; the Prime Minister, Milo Đukanovic; the President of the Parliament, Ranko Krivokapic, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Milan Rocen. Talks also took place with the leaders of the political groups and with the delegation of Montenegro to the Assembly.

During my speech in the Parliament of Montenegro I welcomed the clear progress made by the country, including through the adoption of numerous Council of Europe standards and conventions, which will assist Montenegro on its road to European Union membership. I underlined that I expected the European Union to make full use of the reports of the Assembly when preparing its opinion on the membership application, as was the case on many previous occasions.

I encouraged the Montenegrin authorities to continue their close collaboration with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, especially with regard to the search and arrests of indictees who were still at large.

Referring to the debate held three weeks ago during the last Assembly session in Strasbourg on the first report on 'Honouring of obligations and commitments by Montenegro', I invited the members of Parliament to complete the process of ratification of several important Council of Europe conventions and complete the adoption of some important laws, such as a new one governing the elections of the members of Parliament. I stressed that the mechanisms of parliamentary oversight over the activities of the Government, particularly with respect to the implementation of laws adopted by the Parliament, should also be strengthened.

I expressed the overall positive evaluation by the Assembly and the hope that Montenegro will maintain the current reform dynamic and complete the implementation of its commitments. Having visited this region often in recent times, I felt that there is a readiness among many of the new countries of the former Yugoslavia to re-establish links with each other: a new openness to dialogue. I would welcome such a development.

1.5. Assembly's meetings in Skopje (20-21 May 2010)

During the Assembly's meetings in Skopje, I congratulated the authorities or "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" on their programme for the Chairmanship of the Council of Europe and pointed out that it largely coincides with my own priorities as President of the Parliamentary Assembly.

I also held bilateral meetings with the President of the Republic, the President of Parliament and the Prime Minister. On this occasion, I congratulated the authorities on the democratic achievements of their country and expressed support for their efforts to join the European Union as soon as possible. I recalled that the Assembly closed its monitoring procedure in recognition of these achievements, but stressed that the adopted legislation must be reinforced through greater dialogue and confidence building measures in society. I also encouraged the authorities to finalise their work on the latest judiciary and administrative reforms as soon as possible.

At the meeting with Foreign Affairs Minister Antonio Miloshoski, I expressed my confidence that the very positive co-operation between the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly, developed during previous Chairmanships, would be further strengthened.

1.6. Third Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (Rio de Janeiro, 27-29 May 2010)

I took part in the Third Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, which was held in Rio de Janeiro (27-28 May 2010), alongside Brazilian President Lula da Silva and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, as well as the co-sponsor of the initiative Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The theme of the forum was "Bridging cultures, building peace".

At the invitation of the Speakers of the Brazilian Senate José Sarney and Chamber of Deputies Michel Temer, I took part in two parliamentary events, co-organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Actually, it was the first time that the Alliance of Civilizations was bringing in a strong parliamentary component into the Forum. The Parliamentary meeting on 27 May focused on the Follow-up to the IPU Resolution on Ensuring respect for and peaceful coexistence between all religious communities and beliefs in a globalized world. On the next day, one of the thematic sessions of the Forum was devoted to "Democracy, good governance and cultural diversity".

On the eve of the forum, I also participated in an open round table on "Addressing Islamophobia: Building on unused opportunities for mutual respect and inclusion", co-organised by the Alliance of Civilizations, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the Council of Europe and the British Council.

Despite some internal organisational problems, the Forum was a success as far as the Council of Europe is concerned. The Council of Europe as a whole had a very strong input into the different working sessions, which was a good proof of the relevance of the work of our organisation in the field of cultural diversity and inter-cultural dialogue. It was also the first time that an Assembly President was involved in so many parts of the forum.

In all my speeches, I stressed that democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which are at the heart of our activity, are the keys to overcoming political, cultural and religious divides. International assemblies such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe are the perfect ground for dialogue between cultures and religions, bringing together parliamentarians from many cultures, and offering a tribune for prominent religious leaders from around the world.

I also called on parliaments from regions neighbouring Europe to participate in the work of the Assembly through its "Partner for democracy" status.

Bearing in mind that intercultural dialogue has gradually become one of the main challenges to our increasingly diverse societies, I outlined different ways in which national parliaments and international assemblies can better address the challenges linked to it.

At the round table on fighting Islamophobia, I pointed out that Islamophobia was mostly the result of ignorance, misperception and a lack of communication and dialogue. I listed the ways governments could combat it by addressing the root causes of poverty, ending discrimination, encouraging immigrant communities to participate in public life, eliminating stereotypes and fighting terrorism in line with human rights. I specified that extremists who abuse Islam should not be invoked to justify a negative approach to Islam and Muslims. Yet Muslims should also be the first to condemn political extremism under the cover of Islam and work to transmit core European values within their communities, by highlighting their compatibility with Islam as a religion.

I drew the attention of participants to the major debate on Islamophobia that the Assembly will hold during its June part-session and in which the UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations Jorge Sampaio will take part.

1.7. Ceremony to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) (5 June 2010)

On 5 June 2010 I participated in the ceremony to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the European Commission for Democracy through Law, in Venice. To mark the importance of the event, the Presidential Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly chose to meet on the same occasion.

Besides the Secretary General Torbjorn Jagland and Minister Miloshoski for the current Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, the personalities who took part in the commemoration hosted by President Buquicchio included President Saakashvili of Georgia and Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Mammadyarov.

In my speech I underlined firstly the importance of the co-operation between the Venice Commission and the Parliamentary Assembly, particularly on the occasion of electoral observation missions. Secondly, I emphasised the different character of the two bodies, eminently political the Assembly, strictly legal the Commission, the impartiality and non-political role of the latter being the reason of its prestige and strong impact.

Finally, I welcomed the fact that the Commission is open to exchanges with countries beyond the border of the Council of Europe, which goes in line with the policies of the Parliamentary Assembly and its recently established status of "Partnership for Democracy".

1.8. 8th Conference of Speakers of Parliament from the countries of the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP) (Antalya, 6-7 June 2010)

I attended the 8th Conference of Speakers of Parliament from the countries of the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP) held in Antalya on 6-7 June 2010. The Conference was hosted by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and one of the main points on the agenda was the perspective of creating a parliamentary assembly for the region and co-operation with existing parliamentary bodies such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

In my speech, I stressed that the parliamentary dimension of the SEECP makes it more democratic and closer to the people of the member countries and expressed our readiness to co-operate with a future parliamentary assembly for the region, should such an institution be established. I put emphasis on the necessity to ensure the freedom of movement of people in Europe as the absolute pre-condition for any further integration.

I underlined that South-Eastern Europe was an important priority for the Assembly and that membership in the Council of Europe is an important step towards the European Union accession.

1.9. Third Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) (Istanbul, 8 June 2010)

I was invited to address participants at the Third Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) held on 8 June in Istanbul.

This Conference was attended by many Heads of State and Government, including the President and the Prime Minister of Turkey as well as the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan and Iran.

In my speech, I made a plea for soft security as a means of strengthening security and stability in a globalised world stressing that peaceful co-existence of different cultures and religions, based on mutual respect, is one of the most important elements of this soft security. I also declared that, even though it was possible to draw a formal dividing line between the European and Asian continents, in reality such a dividing line did not exist. Therefore, eradicating racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and all other manifestations of discrimination and intolerance should be our common objective.

I drew attention of participants to the potential of the Council of Europe's legal instruments open to non-member states, in particular the conventions on the prevention of terrorism and against trafficking in human beings and recalled the recent creation of the "Partner for democracy" status at Assembly level.

1.10. European Conference of Presidents of Parliament (Limassol, 11-12 June 2010)

Together with members of the Presidential Committee, I attended this conference organised jointly by the Parliament of Cyprus and the Parliamentary Assembly. The Conference brought together some 300 participants and focused on the rights and responsibilities of the opposition in a parliament and the role of national parliaments in implementing the principle of non-discrimination with a view to strengthening European democracies at a time of economic crisis and increasing discrimination.

At the end of the Conference, the Speaker of the Parliament, Mr Marios Garoyian, and myself presented the conclusions in which we stressed the need for a renewed commitment to implement international human rights law. In this connection, we called on national parliaments, in particular, to urgently promote the signature and/or ratification of Protocol No. 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights enshrining the principle of non-discrimination.

With regard to the rights of the opposition, we concluded that there was no unique model of electoral system that could be recommended as the best one. However, excluding large sections of the population from the right to be represented was detrimental to the democratic system.

Finally, in conformity with Assembly [Resolution 1628](#) of 2008, we expressed the firm hope that a lasting and comprehensive solution for a peaceful and united Cyprus would be found which would guarantee the legitimate rights of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, in full compliance with the values and principles of the Council of Europe.

I wish to thank very sincerely President Garoyian and the Parliament for hosting this Conference which, according to many participants, was one of the most successful ever held in this framework.

On this occasion, I held a series of official meetings, among others with the Presidents of Parliament of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Montenegro, Moldova and Ukraine, and many other bilateral talks.

I also received an official invitation to pay an official visit to Cyprus and hope that I will be able to carry out this visit in November 2010.

1.11. Prize-giving ceremony of the Turkey's Association of European Journalists (Istanbul, 12 June 2010)

On 12 June, I attended the prize-giving ceremony of the Turkey's Association of European Journalists and received the award "Politician of the Year" from the Chairman of the Association, Mr. Adnan Fisenk.

1.12. Official visit to Georgia (13 to 15 June 2010)

I carried out an official visit to Georgia from 13 to 15 June 2010. During my visit, I met the President of the Republic Mikhail Saakashvili, the Chairman of the Parliament David Bakradze, the Vice-Prime Minister and State Minister for Reintegration Temur Yakobashvili, the Foreign Minister Gregory Vashadze and the State Minister of Refugees and Accommodation Koba Subeliani. I also held talks with, in particular, the Chairman of the Constitutional Court George Papuashvili, representatives of the parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition, the Governor of the Shida Kartli Region Lado Vardzelashvili and the Chairman of the Government of Adjara Levan Varshalomidze.

I stressed that by coming to Georgia early in my Presidency I wanted to show the importance I attached to the country, its ongoing democratic reforms as well as its plight after the August 2008 war.

My talks focused on the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia and the role that the Council of Europe, and especially the Assembly, could and should play in this respect as well as the ongoing democratic reforms and outstanding commitments of Georgia to the Council of Europe.

With regard to the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia, I re-iterated the Assembly's firm support for the territorial integrity of Georgia and called on all sides to fully implement the demands the Assembly had made, in particular in its [Resolution 1683](#), which addresses crucial humanitarian issues affecting the daily life of the inhabitants in this region: the freedom of movement of civilians over the administrative borders with the two regions; access, and more important, the presence of monitors as well as international and humanitarian organisations; the right to return of IDPs; a full and credible investigation into alleged violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed by any side, including Georgia, in relation to the war.

With regard to ongoing democratic reforms, I welcomed that the last local elections were considered a big improvement by international monitors, whilst stressing the need to address remaining important shortcomings. A new election code should be drafted with the help of the Venice Commission and in dialogue and consultation with both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition, well before the next parliamentary elections.

I also called on the authorities to strengthen dialogue with all opposition forces on issues deemed important for the development of the country and welcomed reforms aimed at consolidating democracy and strengthening the role of the parliament.

Finally, I expressed my concern about complaints brought to my attention with regard to decreasing media pluralism and lack of transparency with regard to media ownership, the independence of the judiciary, especially in cases that have political implications, as well as allegations that political motives had affected the prosecution and sentencing of persons. These are worrying issues that could directly affect the further European integration of Georgia. I therefore said that I would ask the Assembly co-rapporteurs for Georgia to organise a visit in the very near future, giving priority to these important human rights issues.

The state of affairs with respect to the repatriation of the Meskhetian population was also discussed.

2. PRESS RELEASES

1. PACE President calls for frank dialogue with Russia, support for reforms in Ukraine and an increased presence in Belarus (26 April 2010)
2. PACE President calls on parliamentarians to mobilize for the preservation of biodiversity (28 April 2010)
3. PACE President expresses appreciation for efforts of the Swiss Presidency (7 May 2010)
4. PACE President to visit Armenia (10 May 2010)
5. 'Culture is not a luxury, it's a compelling need', says PACE President (10 May 2010)
6. PACE President congratulates Swiss Chairmanship (11 May 2010)
7. Armenia needs a clear roadmap of reforms in order to consolidate democracy (14 May 2010)
8. Ukraine: PACE President welcomes signing of Presidential Decree on Crimean Tatars (15 May 2010)
9. PACE President to visit Montenegro (17 May 2010)
10. PACE President says he hopes that Montenegro maintains current reform dynamic (17 May 2010)
11. Belarus: Council of Europe calls to commute two new death sentences (17 May 2010)
12. PACE President expresses support for Montenegro's EU bid (19 May 2010)
13. PACE President congratulates authorities in Skopje on their Chairmanship programme (20 May 2010)
14. PACE President expresses support for the priorities of the CM Chairmanship (21 May 2010)
15. Mevlüt Çavusoglu meets with Jean-Claude Mignon in Ankara (25 May 2010)
16. PACE President attends Alliance of Civilizations Forum (25 May 2010)
17. PACE President calls for a political culture which 'values diversity' (28 May 2010)
18. PACE President in Rio outlines ideas for combating Islamophobia (28 May 2010)
19. PACE President condemns Israel for 'disproportionate use of force' over Gaza convoy (31 May 2010)
20. Council of Europe leaders condemn terrorist attack in Turkey (31 May 2010)
21. PACE President underlines long-standing and effective co-operation between the Assembly and the Venice Commission (5 June 2010)
22. Freedom of movement of people a pre-condition for any further integration (7 June 2010)
23. In reality there is no dividing line between Europe and Asia, says PACE President (8 June 2010)
24. PACE President to visit Georgia (10 June 2010)
25. PACE President calls for enhanced intercultural dialogue to fight increasing intolerance (11 June 2010)
26. Mevlüt Çavusoglu named "Politician of the Year" in Turkey (14 June 2010)

27. PACE President calls for full implementation of [Resolution 1683](#) (16 June 2010)
28. PACE President at European Forum Cyprus (17 June 2010)

3. SPEECHES

1. Speech at the meeting of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education (Istanbul, 10 May 2010)
2. Statement expressed during the visit to Armenia (Yerevan, 10 May 2010)
3. Speech at the 120th session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 11 May 2010)
4. Speech before the Parliament of Montenegro (17 May 2010)
5. Speech at the third Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilisations (Rio de Janeiro, 27 May 2010)
6. Speech at the open Roundtable on “Addressing Islamophobia: Building on unused opportunities for mutual respect and inclusion” (Rio de Janeiro, 27 May 2010)
7. Speech on the occasion of the Ceremony to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the European Commission for democracy through law (Venice, 5 June 2010)
8. Speech at the 8th Conference of the SEECF Speakers of Parliament (Antalya, 5-8 June 2010)
9. Speech at the “Third Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia” (Istanbul, 8 June 2010)
10. Speech at the opening of the European Conference of Presidents in Cyprus (Limassol, 11 June 2010)