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Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and of the Standing Committee (26 June-28 September 2009)

Progress report

Bureau of the Assembly

Rapporteur: Mr Mátyás EÖRSI, Hungary, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

1. Introduction

1. The Bureau met on 28 September in Strasbourg.

2. Functioning of the Assembly

2.1. Progress Report of the Bureau of the Assembly and of the Standing Committee (26 June-28 September 2009)

2. On 28 September, the Bureau approved the Progress report.

2.2. Fourth Part of the 2009 Assembly Ordinary Session (Strasbourg, 28 September-2 October 2009)

3. On 28 September, the Bureau:

2.2.1. Request for a current affairs debate

- a. "The situation of human rights defenders in the North Caucasus region" (submitted by 20 parliamentarians):
 - decided to recommend to the Assembly to change the title of the debate to "The situation of human rights defenders and the increasing violence in the North Caucasus region" and to hold a current affairs debate on this matter
 - appointed Mr Marty (Switzerland, ALDE) to open the debate.

2.2.2. Draft agenda

- a. decided to propose to the Assembly to refer the motion for resolution on the reconsideration on substantive grounds of previously ratified credentials of the Russian delegation (Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly) (submitted by 72 parliamentarians) to the Monitoring Committee for report and to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs for opinion;
- b. took note of the intention of Mr Kox (Netherlands, UEL) to challenge the credentials of the Moldovan delegation on procedural grounds and decided, if this request were to be formalised, to propose to the Assembly to refer this matter to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs for report;



- c. updated the draft agenda and decided to limit the speaking time to 4 minutes on 29, 30 and 1st October.

2.3. Composition of the Monitoring Committee

- 4. On 28 September, the Bureau approved the list of members as proposed by political groups for ratification by the Assembly.

2.4. Appointment of Assembly representatives for official activities

- 5. On 28 September, in reply to formal invitations, the Bureau took the following decisions:
 - a. Mr Meale (United Kingdom, SOC): 17th plenary session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg (France), 13-15 October 2009;
 - b. Mr Austin (United Kingdom, SOC): 121st Interparliamentary Union Assembly, Geneva (Switzerland), 19-21 October 2009 (no cost for the Assembly);
 - c. Mr MacShane (United Kingdom, SOC): 55^{ème} Annual Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Edinburgh (United Kingdom), 13-17 November 2009 (no cost for the Assembly).

3. Relations with other bodies of the Council of Europe

3.1. Committee of Ministers

3.1.1. Enhancing dialogue and cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers

- 6. On 28 September, the Bureau:
 - a. was informed by the President of the outcome of the meeting between the Presidential Committee of the Assembly and the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers held in Brussels on 14 September 2009;
 - b. approved the proposals for enhanced Dialogue and Co-operation between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers (see Appendix).

Appendix – Proposals for Enhanced Dialogue and Co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers on the basis of the previous ad hoc meetings in Brussels, Paris and Bled

16 September 2009

Recent discussions on the election of the Secretary General have resulted in a disagreement between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly regarding Article 36 of the Statute of the organisation and the regulations governing the election. The role of each of the organs in the election process is at its centre.

Furthermore, the debate has brought to the forefront a more general need to enhance dialogue and co-operation between the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly in a broader context.

It is therefore essential to take urgent steps to ensure a constructive, forward-looking and open relationship, with due regard to the role and prerogatives of both organs.

The Bureau of the Committee of Ministers and the Presidential Committee of the Assembly have met informally on several occasions over the past few months. They have taken stock together of a number of proposals identified either by the Committee of Ministers or by the Parliamentary Assembly or by both. It was agreed that a joint consolidated list of possible measures be drawn up.

A three step approach is jointly proposed. The first step **(A)** concerns those measures which have been identified and supported by the Committee of Minister and by the Presidential Committee of the Assembly and can be implemented immediately. This includes the review of the future election procedure and action to enhance dialogue and co-operation in general. The second step **(B)** concerns those ideas for improving dialogue and co-operation which will require more thorough discussion and consultation as part of a longer term process. The third step **(C)** concerns the question of how to handle this longer term process.

A. Measures which have been agreed by the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers and the Presidential Committee of the Assembly and can be implemented immediately. This does not imply a commitment to additional funding.

on the specific question of the election procedure:

1. the rules and procedures for future elections of the Secretary General will be re-examined in order to clarify the consultation processes between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers and to strengthen the gender aspects.
2. the Ministers' Deputies will complete the preparation of a first draft paper not later than June 2010 on their approach to future elections of the Secretary General. On the Assembly side, the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs has already been tasked by the Assembly to start its reflections on this matter.

to enhance dialogue and co-operation in general:

3. **The impact and effectiveness of the Council of Europe will be strengthened** by working jointly to enhance the focus on the core issues for the Organisation.
4. Preparation of the agendas and discussions of the **Joint Committee** will be enhanced in order to make it more effective as a forum for constructive dialogue and consultation.
5. Meetings between the **Chair of the Deputies and the President** of the Parliamentary Assembly will take place regularly to inform about each other's work.
6. **Informal meetings** on questions of common interest between the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers and the Presidential Committee of the Assembly will take place on a regular basis.
7. Timetables for consultation on new draft Council of Europe **treaties** will be established allowing the Parliamentary Assembly to give its opinion without undue haste and within a reasonable timeframe.
8. The Committee of Ministers will seek to give an early and substantial **reply to the Parliamentary Assembly texts**.

9. **Communication within the Council of Europe** will be enhanced through reinforcement of contacts between the two organs.

B. The suggested measures or topics listed below require a thorough discussion both within the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, with due regard to the role and prerogatives of both organs. The items are listed without prejudice to the outcome of their consideration. The list is not given in any priority order.

1. Possible measures/topics identified by the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers:
 - Review **existing arrangements for co-operation and informal dialogue** with the aim of achieving a closer understanding of each other's views and thus enhancing the effectiveness of the Council of Europe.
 - Drawing-up of an inventory of best practices with a view to seeing jointly with the Parliamentary Assembly how they can be improved or extended.
2. Possible measures/topics identified by the Presidential Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly:
 - **enhancing the working relationship** between the two organs as regards the process of consultation of the Parliamentary Assembly.
 - **updating and improving certain texts**, in particular as regards formal recognition of the use of the name "Parliamentary Assembly".
 - **enhancing the role of the Assembly** when establishing Council of Europe policies and priorities, including budgetary issues.

C. Examination and follow-up of the above mentioned measures must clearly be a process jointly led by the Chair of the Committee of Ministers and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, with the assistance of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

1. A report on the measures identified by the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers and/or the Presidential Committee should be drawn up by the Chair of the Committee of Ministers and the President of the Assembly with the assistance of the Secretary General. To this end:
 - **the Secretary General** should be tasked at their next Joint committee with drawing up a report under the authority of the Chair of the Committee of Ministers and the President of the Assembly, in the light of thorough discussions, on the items listed in part B above.
 - the report should be presented at the earliest opportunity and not later than October 2010, to a special meeting of the Joint Committee.