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28 September 2009

## **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 part and the fourth part of the 2009  
Ordinary Session**

**Communication**  
President of the Assembly



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## **1. PAST MEETINGS AND VISITS**

### **1.1. 4<sup>th</sup> Council of Europe Summer University for Democracy (Strasbourg, 6-10 July 2009)**

The 4th Summer University for Democracy, devoted to “Global Challenges to Democracy”, gathered over six hundred young participants from schools of political studies, launched and supported by the Council of Europe in central and eastern Europe. I took part in the opening ceremony together with Terry Davis, Secretary General, Catherine Lalumière, former Secretary General of the Organisation, Roland Ries, Senator and Mayor of Strasbourg, Luisella Pavan-Woolfe, Permanent Representative of the European Commission to the Council of Europe, and Danilo Türk, President of Slovenia and representative of the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Michel Rocard, former Prime Minister of France, delivered the inaugural lecture.

In my speech, I presented an overview of our Organisation’s history, recalled its values and underlined its contribution to the construction of modern Europe. I insisted on the current challenges and the prospects for the opening of the Council of Europe beyond its frontiers, in particular through the interparliamentary co-operation with the new “partner for democracy” status aimed at widening the scope of human rights that are recognised and protected by our Organisation. The “right to a healthy environment” that will be debated by our Assembly at the next part-session represents the most eloquent example of this endeavour. I concluded my speech by reiterating the importance that our Organisation attaches to the young people by encouraging them to become more actively involved in the European political life.

### **1.2. Colloquium on Europe (San Sebastián, Spain, 9-10 July 2009)**

In the framework of the Summer Courses of the University of the Basque Country, I organised a colloquy on “Europe at the crossroads of its future”. Various political personalities responded to my invitation, namely Mr Juan Fernando López Aguilar and Mr Enrique Barón, members of the European Parliament, Mr Luc van den Brande, President of the Group of the European People’s Party of the Assembly, Mr Piero Fassino, member of the Assembly and former Minister. The colloquy dealt with several issues:

- the outcome of elections to the European Parliament,
- the future of the European social model and of the European values,
- Europe as a strategic actor at world level,
- the consequences of the economic crisis,
- Europe’s regions and the future of evolving Europe.

### **1.3. Official visit to Italy and the Vatican (16-17 July 2009)**

At the invitation of the Italian authorities, I travelled to Rome where I met the President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Gianfranco Fini, Minister for Relations with the Regions, Raffaele Fitto and the Vice-President of the Senate, Vannino Chiti. I also took the opportunity to visit the Vatican in order to meet the Secretary of the Holy See for Relations with States, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti.

During the talks, I conveyed to the Italian authorities my wish for Italy to involve itself more in Council of Europe activities at every level, while expressing our satisfaction about Italy’s rejoining the Nord-South Centre of the Council of Europe. I also wished to explain clearly that the monitoring activities conducted by the Commissioner for Human Rights and other Council of Europe bodies were consistent with the logic of the Organisation and not dictated by prejudice or hostility towards Italy. It was perfectly in order to recall that certain aspects of the recent Italian legislation, particularly on security and migration, and the cases of migrants being turned back while at sea, had aroused concerns at the European level.

I told my contacts of the latest developments in inter-parliamentary co-operation between the Council of Europe and the adjacent countries, such as the adoption in June of the new “Partner for democracy” status. This initiative prompted the keen interest and the support of the President of the Republic and the President of the Chamber of Deputies. It should be emphasised that Italy maintains close relations with the Maghreb countries, directly concerned by this process.

I informed the Italian authorities of the major debate on the environment scheduled for the Autumn session, especially the proposal for an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights concerning the “right to a healthy environment”, an initiative which was also perceived as innovative and positive.

In the Vatican, discussions revolved around the report on “Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity”, being drawn up by the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. I recalled that on numerous occasions it had been possible find a basis for understanding between the Holy See and the Assembly, including matters which were sensitive for the Vatican such as State secularity. That might also be so in the present instance, particularly considering that the force of the texts adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly is founded on their adoption by a substantial majority, and that the topic is of some immediacy in many parliamentary forums. The Holy See was open-minded regarding the question of decriminalising homosexual relations “between adults” and espoused a principle of “due discrimination” postulating that not all situations should be equated and that it is not possible to speak of a right to marriage or to adoption for homosexuals.

#### **1.4. Participation in the Iberic Forum 2009 (European Youth Parliament) in Girona, Spain (12 August 2009)**

At the invitation of the Spanish section of the European Youth Parliament, I participated in the Iberic Forum 09 which took place from 12 to 20 August 2009 in Girona, Catalonia. About 170 young people from 25 European countries gathered to debate on European and international politics, focusing especially on themes concerning young people and students. Given the importance of the Organisation and the interest for this initiative, I accepted to grant my patronage to the event. In my address at the opening of the session I spoke to a motivated audience, interested in the democratic parliamentarism of the Parliamentary Assembly, its role in the Council of Europe and its activities, namely concerning young people. Indeed, throughout its history the Assembly has dealt with matters concerning young people and students and recently proposed in [Resolution 1630](#) and [Recommendation 1844 \(2008\)](#) a great number of measures with the aim to “Refreshing the youth agenda of the Council of Europe”.

#### **1.5. Ad hoc meetings between the Presidential Committee of the Assembly and the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers, Paris (13 July 2009) and Bled, Slovenia, (31 August 2009)**

The issue of the election of the new Secretary General of the Council of Europe has been the focus of the Assembly’s attention in recent months. Thanks to the excellent working relations with the Chair of the Committee of Ministers, Slovenian Minister for Foreign Affairs Samuel Žbogar, the dialogue between the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers and the Presidential Committee on the matter and more generally regarding dialogue between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers has been very intense.

Four ad hoc meetings between the Presidential Committee and the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers have been held to date: in Brussels on 18 June, in Strasbourg on 22 June, in Paris on 13 July and in Bled (Slovenia) on 31 August 2009. At the Assembly Bureau meeting in Strasbourg on 26 June, I informed members about the discussions under way with the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers and promised to keep them abreast of further developments. On 28 July, I accordingly wrote to all members of the Bureau to update them on the meeting held in Paris on 13 July.

The fourth ad hoc meeting took place in Bled on the sidelines of the Bled Strategic Forum, at which policymakers and experts focused on the theme of the politics of economic crisis. The ad hoc meeting participants discussed a working document presented by the Slovenian Chairmanship, which combined the proposals made by the Presidential Committee and the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers with a view to strengthening the dialogue and co-operation between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers.

The meeting identified a good number of practical measures which can be implemented straightaway. The participants also drew up a list of other measures which require further consideration by the two statutory bodies. To this end, a “troika” consisting of the President of the Assembly, the Chair of the Committee of Ministers with the assistance of the Council of Europe Secretary General will draw up a report for submission to the Joint Committee.

With regard to the specific issue of the election of the next Secretary General, the disagreement between the two bodies persists.

#### **1.6. Meetings of the Presidential Committee and the Bureau (Paris, 6-7 September 2009)**

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#### **1.7. Attendance of AS/EGA meeting (Paris, 8 September 2009)**

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**1.8. Attendance of the Conference on «Role and responsibilities of media in the fight against violence towards women» (Venice, 9 September 2009)**

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**1.9. Conference on “What future for human rights and the democratic ideal in Europe? The Role of the Council of Europe” (Paris, 11 September 2009)**

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**1.10. Ad hoc meeting of the Presidential Committee and the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers (Brussels, 14 September 2009)**

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**1.11. Meeting of the European Network of Local and Regional Authorities for the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention (RECEP-ENELC) (Strasbourg, 15 September 2009)**

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**1.12. 12. Forum on early warning in conflict prevention (Strasbourg, 25 September 2009).**

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## **2. PRESS RELEASES**

1. PACE President: a hand stretched out to Belarus (22 June 2009)
2. ‘The passing of another death sentence in Belarus shows the urgent need for a moratorium on executions’ (2 July 2009)
3. Council of Europe must project its values beyond the continent’s borders (6 July 2009)
4. PACE President concludes official visit to Italy (17 July 2009)
5. PACE has clocked up 60 years now, but its work is far from over (7 August 2009)
6. Murder of Zarema Sadulayeva and her husband: the situation in Chechnya is becoming untenable (11 August 2009)
7. PACE President condemns terrorist attack in Nazran (18 August 2009)
8. PACE President welcomes agreement between Armenia and Turkey to normalise relations (2 September 2009)
9. Human rights present in all spheres of society (11 September 2009)
10. To enhance cooperation between the two statutory organs of the council of Europe. Joint statement by Mr Samuel Žbogar, Slovenian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, and Mr Lluís Maria de Puig, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. (Brussels, 14 September 2009)
11. A reminder from the President that there is a PACE recommendation on the conservation and use of landscape (15 September 2009)

## **3. SPEECHES**

1. Opening Statement of the 3rd part-session (Strasbourg, 22 June 2009)
2. Welcome to Mr Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU) (Strasbourg, 22 June 2009)
3. Welcome to Mr Samuel Žbogar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 22 June 2009)
4. Welcome to Mr Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 22 June 2009)

5. Welcome to Ms Mary McAleese, President of Ireland (Strasbourg, 23 June 2009)
6. Inauguration of the Austrian-German-Hungarian Exhibition "Roads to Freedom" (Strasbourg, 23 June 2009)
7. Welcome to Mr Thomas Mirow, President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) (Strasbourg, 23 June 2009)
8. Opening statement in the debate on the state of democracy and human rights (Strasbourg, 24 June 2009)
9. Welcome to Ms Helen Shaw and Ms Elizabeth Folarin, respectively, the Chairperson and the Director of the British Irish Rights Watch, receiving the Human Rights Prize of PACE 2009 (Strasbourg, 24 June 2009)
10. Speech on the occasion of the award ceremony of the European diplomas (Strasbourg, 24 June 2009)
11. Welcome to Mr Walter Kälin, Representative of the General Secretary of the United Nations on the human rights of internally displaced persons (Strasbourg, 24 June 2009)
12. Welcome to Mr Hovik Abrahamian, President of the Armenian Parliament (Strasbourg, 24 June 2009)
13. Opening statement on the occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup> Council of Europe Summer University for Democracy (Strasbourg, 6 July 2009)
14. Speech delivered at the Conference on «Role and responsibilities of media in the fight against violence towards women» (Venice, 09 September 2009)
15. Speech delivered at the Conference on "What future for human rights and democracy in Europe: the role of the Council of Europe" (Paris, 11 September 2009)
16. Intervention at the General Assembly of RECEP-ENELC, European network of local and regional authorities for the implementation of the European landscape convention (Strasbourg, 15 September 2009)