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Activities of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly between the third and the fourth part of the 2016 Ordinary session

Communication

President of the Assembly

1. Visits and meetings

1.1. Activities of the President between 16 June and 31 August 2016

1.1.1. Counteracting terrorism

Unfortunately, terrorism is becoming a reality of our daily life and, during this period, we have seen several deadly terrorist attacks striking a number of our member States, in particular, France and Turkey.

The heinous terrorist attacks in Istanbul, Nice, Rouen and, most recently, in Gaziantep are attacks on Europe, the values that unite us, our symbols and our way of life. I strongly condemned these attacks in public statements, on twitter and in letters to the authorities, expressing support and solidarity with our member States and the families of victims and those affected.

I called on the authorities, the political leadership as well as ordinary people to stay strong and united around the values that form the foundations of our societies – democracy, human rights, tolerance and respect, so as to oppose the fear, hate and division that the terrorists want to instil. This idea is at the heart of our new initiative – #NoHateNoFear / #NiHaineNiPeur – and I am grateful to all members of the Assembly who continue to support it.

As our institutions and political systems have to face numerous challenges, including terrorism, inter-ethnic tensions and stigmatisation of certain religious groups, growing populist, intolerant and radical rhetoric, I am convinced that politicians have a special duty to reassure our citizens and to protect our societies. We have to remind our voters of the historical challenges we have faced, our values and the common interests that unite us, as well as our achievements, including the most important one – the creation of a common Pan-European legal space based on the standards of the European Convention of Human Rights.

Our common interests and achievements are stronger than the divisions and hate that terrorists seek to create. We have to continue to spread this message among our voters, with renewed vigour and determination, and the #NoHateNoFear initiative is a powerful tool at our disposal.

1.1.2. The attempted coup d'Etat in Turkey and subsequent developments

My first reaction to the coup d'Etat attempt in Turkey was to condemn the violence and express support to Turkey, its democratic institutions and the authorities. Any attempt to change democratically-elected government by violence is unacceptable and I was greatly encouraged by the unity shown by the people of Turkey and Turkey's democratic political forces across the board in the face of the attempted coup d'Etat.



The failure of the coup was clearly a victory of democracy. The people of Turkey made a resolute choice in favour of democracy. We must now provide them with the necessary support to help Turkey strengthen its democratic institutions even further and immunise them against any temptations to change the political course by violence.

Therefore, it is now very important to identify facts and to bring to justice those responsible, so as to protect the democratic institutions. This has to be done in full compliance with domestic legal procedures and the Council of Europe standards which establish basic guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms that Turkey has committed itself to respect. In this context, in my statements as well as in telephone conversations with Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs and the members of the Turkish Delegation to the Assembly, I offered the Council of Europe's assistance and support. At the same time, referring to the swift dismissal and arrest of thousands of judges, prosecutors, police officers and senior civil servants, I stressed the need to follow strictly domestic legal procedures and Council of Europe standards, in particular, the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and the case-law of the Court. I emphasized the need to put emotions aside and refrain from hasty statements, in particular, regarding the possibility of re-establishing death penalty. This would go against the country's international commitments – as a member State of the Council of Europe, Turkey has signed and ratified Protocol No. 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and its Protocol No. 13 banning the death penalty in all circumstances. I understand that the authorities are fully aware of this.

During the telephone conversation with Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu we agreed on two key elements:

- Firstly, I would come to Turkey before the Assembly's Bureau meeting of 5 September 2016, to study the situation, obtain first-hand information about the coup attempt, its consequences, as well as the authorities' and the political stakeholders' response to it, so as to inform the Presidential Committee and the Bureau of the Assembly accordingly;
- Secondly, we would study together the possibility for Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu to participate in the Assembly's October part-session, so as to inform the Assembly of key political developments and answer questions from members.

In this context, I have accepted the invitation of the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to the solidarity event to be held in Ankara, on 1 September 2016. In the margins of this event, I hope to meet with the President, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, leaders of the main political groups and also have contacts with civil society.

1.1.3. Official visit to Georgia (Tbilisi, 30 June – 2 July 2016)

At the invitation of the Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, I travelled to Tbilisi from 30 June to July 2016. During the visit, I met with the President of the Republic Giorgi Margvelashvili, Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mikheil Janelidze, and the Speaker of Parliament David Usupashvili, as well as members of the delegation of Georgia to the Assembly. I would like to thank the Georgian authorities for the excellent organisation of my visit.

At the end of the visit, I commended Georgia's European aspirations and commitment to Council of Europe values. I stressed that during 17 years of membership in the Council of Europe, Georgia made considerable progress in terms of democratic reforms and strengthening State institutions. The recently launched Action Plan 2016-2019 provides the necessary means to continue this positive dynamic and reach the reform objectives.

The preparations to the forthcoming parliamentary elections were at the heart of my discussions with the authorities and the political stakeholders. I raised with my interlocutors the recent reports of violent attacks against political activists. All acts of violence should be firmly condemned and fully investigated. All parties should refrain from provocative acts which could lead to further tension. I was reassured by the authorities that they would devote even greater energy to adopt and implement measures aimed at preventing further violence in order to deliver to Georgian citizens the fair, democratic and peaceful environment they deserve.

In discussing the forthcoming elections, I also raised the issue of electoral reform. While welcoming some progress achieved in particular with regard to the redrawing of electoral districts, I noted that the majority and the opposition had not been able to agree on a new electoral system in time for the October elections. I stressed that the new Parliament would have an important mission to find a common agreement on the new system before the 2020 elections.

Trials against former officials, as well as the recent judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Merabishvili v. Georgia* were also discussed. I made it clear to my interlocutors that there should be no impunity for offences of corruption and human rights violations. However, investigations and trials should be conducted in a transparent, efficient and independent manner, from the outset to the completion. The recent judgment of the Court highlighted some issues of concern and I encouraged the authorities to address them effectively and to carry out appropriate investigations.

1.1.4. Relations with the Russian Parliament

On 29-30 June 2016, I travelled to Moscow, in particular, to participate in the Plenary Session of the General Assembly of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation and hold bilateral meetings with the leadership of the State Duma and of the Federation Council. During this visit, I met the Speaker of the Russian State Duma, Sergey Naryshkin, the Speaker of Russia's Federation Council, Valentina Matvienko, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the State Duma, Alexey Pushkov, and with the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council, Konstantin Kosachev.

My discussions followed up to the declaration adopted, on 24 June 2016, by the Bureau of the Assembly which stressed that the Assembly "should find ways to keep open the communication channels with the Russian parliament and explore all possibilities for dialogue offered by parliamentary diplomacy" because "the fact that, for two consecutive years, parliamentarians from one of the Organisation's member States, the Russian Federation, have not participated in the Assembly's work limits the capacity of the Assembly to represent the rich plurality of views from across Europe." Therefore, the aim of my discussions was to identify channels of communication with the Russian parliamentarians. My discussions were constructive and fruitful. We have agreed on two concrete initiatives to continue political dialogue:

- Firstly, the Speaker of the State Duma invited me accompanied by the leaders of the Assembly's political groups to come to Moscow for a meeting with the leadership of the State Duma. This visit took place on 6-7 September 2016.
- Secondly, the Speaker of the Federation Council accepted my proposal to meet with the Presidential Committee of the Assembly on 14 September 2016, in the margins of the European Conference of Speakers of Parliament.

1.1.5. Official visit to the Czech Republic and participation in the selection panel for the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize (Prague, 30-31 August 2016)

On the 30 and 31 of August I conducted an official visit to the Czech Republic, where I met with the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Mr Jan Hamáček, the Vice-President of the Senate, Mr Přemysl Sobotka, the Prime Minister, Mr Bohuslav Sobotka and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Petr Gajdušek.

On 30 August, I took part in the selection panel for the award of the 2016 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize.

I was able to provide an oral account of both my official visit and the outcome of the shortlisting of three candidates for the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize, during the Bureau meeting on 5 September 2016.

1.1.6. Other activities

1.1.6.1. Participation in the Plenary Session of the General Assembly of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (Moscow, 29 June 2016)

Addressing the Plenary Session of PABSEC General Assembly, I called on partner parliamentary assemblies to respond jointly to the common challenges we are facing, in particular the refugee crisis and combating international terrorism. I presented the #NoHateNoFear initiative and invited PABSEC colleagues to join in.

1.1.6.2. Participation in the 25th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (Tbilisi, 1 July 2016)

In my address, I stressed that parliamentary diplomacy is a key to solving complex problems such as international terrorism, the refugees and migrants crisis, 'frozen' and 'burning' conflicts and institutional crisis. I emphasised that, thanks to their membership and political leverage, our Assembly and OSCE PA had the duty to prevent new divisions in Europe and that parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy were the right tools to achieve this. Furthermore, I praised the excellent co-operation between our Assembly, OSCE PA and OSCE ODIHR in the field of election observation.

1.1.6.3. Participation in the Award Ceremony of the 2016 Europe Prize to Girona (Girona, Spain, 8 July 2016)

I attended this Ceremony together with the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on the Europe Prize, Mr Jean-Claude Frécon. During the official Ceremony, we presented the Europe Prize to the Mayor of Girona, Ms Marta Madrenas.

1.1.6.4. Participation in the 2016 Council of Europe Youth Camp (Strasbourg, 12 July 2016)

This year, the youth camp focused on the refugee problematic and I presented the Assembly's activities to the participants. Our subsequent exchange of views was rich and lively.

1.2. Activities of the President between 1st September and 7 October 2016

1.2.1. Visit to Turkey and participation in the Meeting of Presidents of International Parliamentary Assemblies (Ankara, 1-2 September 2016)

The aim of my visit was to show solidarity with Turkey, its Parliament, its Government and its people in the aftermath of the unacceptable attempted coup d'Etat.

At the meeting organised by the President of the Grand National Assembly, I made it clear that Turkey could count on the support of the Council of Europe and its Assembly in the aftermath of the coup. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss with Turkish colleagues the attack by the coup plotters on Turkey's democracy and see first-hand the bomb damage to the Grand National Assembly. This attack was shocking and it will take time for the country to come to terms with what happened, clarify the facts, bring to justice those responsible and ensure that such an attempt is not repeated. The follow up investigations and legal procedures will however need to comply with the Constitution, laws and domestic regulations, as underpinned by the European Convention on Human Rights and other Council of Europe standards, and the Council of Europe is ready to help.

During my visit, and in the margins of the meeting at the Grand National Assembly, I was received at the highest levels of State and Government and could also discuss with leaders of the main political groups, NGOs and journalists. From the President, the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the message I received was clear and simple, "please show solidarity with what the people of Turkey have lived through and understand the need to remove the deeply embedded threat posed by those behind the coup attempt." With my counterparts I was able to discuss openly and frankly concerns about some of the steps taken to deal with the aftermath of the coup. These included allegations of ill treatment, the emergency decrees and the number of people detained or dismissed from their work, and in this context, I asked for updated data on steps taken. I received assurances from the authorities that they were sensitive to these issues raised. I invited the Minister of Foreign Affairs to address the October part-Session in Strasbourg, and I was delighted that he agreed immediately to this.

In my meetings with the leaders of two of the political opposition groups, there was a clear message of unity in the immediate response to the coup d'Etat. There were however democratic concerns that all criminal investigations, prosecutions and trials should be carried out with an independent judiciary, respecting the rule of law and international human rights norms.

Turkey has more than its fair share of challenges, and needs more than its fair share of support from Europe. Not only does it have to deal with the aftermath of the coup, but it has to deal with around 3 million refugees and an increasing number of deadly terrorist attacks. Therefore, we have to work more with Turkey to help the country provide a democratic response to all these challenges.

During this visit, I met with Turkey's President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ismail Kahraman, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, as well as Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavusoglu. I also exchanged views with leaders of different political groups, including Kemal Kiliçdaroglu, Chairman of the Republican People's Party (CHP) and Figen Yüksekdag, Co-Chair of the People's Democratic Party (HDP). Furthermore, I held talks with representatives of several NGOs: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Association of Journalists, and the International Human Rights Platform.

1.2.2. Relations with the Russian Parliament: working visit to Russia (Moscow, 6-7 September 2016) and meeting between the Presidential Committee of the Assembly and the Speaker of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (Strasbourg, 14 September 2016)

At the invitation of the Speaker of the State Duma, Mr Sergey Naryshkin, I travelled to Moscow on 6-7 September 2016, together with an Assembly delegation bringing together the leaders or representatives of the Assembly's five political groups. We held meetings with the Speaker of the State Duma and the representatives of all political groups in the Russian Parliament, in particular, Mr Alexey Pushkov, Chairman of the State Duma Foreign Affairs Committee, representing the "United Russia" political group, Mr Ivan Melnikov, First Deputy Speaker of the State Duma, representing the Group of the "Communist Party", Mr Leonid Slutskiy, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on the Affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States, representing the Group of the "Liberal-Democratic Party", Mr Alexander Romanovich, Deputy Speaker of the State Duma, representing the Group of the "Fair Russia" Party, as well as Mr Alexander Alexandrov and Mr Vladimir Dzhabarov, members of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.

On 14 September 2016, the Presidential Committee of the Assembly held a meeting with Ms Valentina Matvienko, Speaker of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, who came to Strasbourg to participate in the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament. Ms Matvienko was accompanied by Mr Konstantin Kosachev, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council, and Mr Ilyas Umakhanov, Deputy Speaker of the Federation Council.

The aim of these contacts was to follow-up on my discussions with the leadership of the State Duma and of the Federation Council, in St Petersburg in Moscow, respectively in May and June 2016.

As far as the relations between the Assembly and the Russian Parliament are concerned, I welcomed the interest of Speakers of both Chambers and of Russian parliamentarians to engage in dialogue with the Assembly and co-operate with the Council of Europe. In my opinion, the non-participation of Russian parliamentarians in the work of the Assembly benefits neither Russia nor the Assembly. This position was confirmed by the Bureau of the Assembly in the Declaration on "Reaffirming the role of the Assembly as a pan-European forum for inter-parliamentary dialogue and co-operation".

From my discussions, I could see that the Russian parliamentarians attach a great importance to ensuring that the Assembly fulfils its role of pan-European political forum for all 47 member States of the Organisation. We have to work together to achieve this, and I look forward to the continuation of our discussions so as to make progress together.

I have also taken note of the ideas and proposals expressed by Russian parliamentarians regarding possible ways to enhance the functioning of the Assembly as regards, in particular the monitoring procedure and the participation of members in the voting on our texts. I believe that these are serious issues which require a serious examination among all 47 delegations; not 46. Therefore, I expressed hope that we would soon be able to discuss these issues together, among the members of the Assembly coming from all 47 member States of the Organisation.

1.2.3. Symposium: "The defence of human rights in Europe, an outdated idea? The Council of Europe, more necessary than ever" (Paris, 12 September 2016)

At the invitation of the Chairman of the French delegation to the Assembly, Mr René Rouquet, I attended, on 12 September 2016, the symposium on "The defence of human rights in Europe, an outdated idea? The Council of Europe, more necessary than ever". It was an honour for me to open this symposium together with the Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Claude Bartolone.

In my address to the Conference, I pointed to the unprecedented crises faced by Europe: terrorist attacks, war at its frontiers, frozen conflicts, the refugee and migrant crisis and the rise of extremism.

In the face of these challenges, the Council of Europe is needed now more than ever to find appropriate responses and play its role in human rights protection. I praised the added value of the Council of Europe's co-operation tools and conventional mechanisms, as well as the Organisation's role as a forum for political dialogue between national, regional and local elected representatives.

Speaking about the political means of giving fresh impetus to the Council of Europe, I called in particular for the strengthening of the bridges between the Organisation, national agencies and citizens and the consolidation of synergies with the other regional and international organisations. In this context, I expressed support for the idea of organising a fourth Summit of Council of Europe Heads of State and Government to defend democratic security in Europe.

1.2.4. European Conference of Presidents of Parliament (Strasbourg, 15-16 September 2016)

This Conference was a major success, in terms of attendance and quality of discussions. It brought together more than 50 Speakers of Parliament – as well as the heads of several international parliamentary assemblies – to discuss how parliaments should respond to the migration and refugee crisis, promote democratic and human rights values, and combat hate speech, racism and intolerance.

Setting out the conclusions at the end of the conference, I acknowledged the magnitude of challenges such as terrorism, the migration and asylum crisis and the economic downturn while warning against insularity and unilateralism, which could jeopardise what has been achieved so far in the area of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

I called on parliamentarians to support the organisation of a fourth summit of Council of Europe Heads of State and Government, to give “fresh impetus” to the Organisation’s work and its co-operation with member States.

The participants in the Conference put forward a number of proposals to boost parliamentary involvement in dealing with flows of migrants and refugees, as well as tackling the growing phenomenon of hate-speech in politics and society. I trust that these proposals will provide a lot of food for thought and for action for the national parliaments of all our member States.

In the margins of the Conference, I held 25 bilateral meetings with the Speakers of the Parliaments of our member States. I greatly appreciated their commitment to the Council of Europe and their support of the Assembly’s work. The details of my meetings can be found in the appendix to this communication.

1.2.5. Official visit to Iceland and participation in the meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy (Reykjavik, 26-27 September 2016)

On 26 September I participated in the meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy in Reykjavik to brief members on my visit to Turkey on 1-2 September and to take part in a hearing on the initiative Terrorism: #NoHateNoFear with an Utøya survivor, Mr Bjorn Ihler, academic, activist, writer and filmmaker.

I extended my visit to the 27 September to be able to have meetings with the President of Iceland Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, the Minister for Finance Bjarni Benediktsson, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Lilja Dögg Alfreðsdóttir, and the Speaker of Parliament Einar K. Guðfinnsson, as well as members of the delegation of Iceland to the Assembly and representatives of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Althingi.

In my meetings I praised the Icelandic authorities for the extent of their fulfilment of Council of Europe standards but noted that there are still some Council of Europe conventions that Iceland could benefit from ratifying, including the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, the Revised European Social Charter and the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter Providing for a System of Collective Complaints. I encouraged the Icelandic authorities to examine the progress of ratification of these and other important instruments.

During my official meetings I was also able to discuss a range of political issues including the migration and refugee crisis, the threat of terrorism and the rise of extremism and populist rhetoric.

To mark the 2nd European Day on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, I visited the *Barnahus*, a ‘best practice’ centre dealing with children who may have been victims of sexual abuse, and was impressed by the integrated work they do in order to help these children, and by the child-friendly environment I found there.

1.2.6. Official visit to Serbia (Belgrade, 3-5 October 2016)

At the invitation of the Speaker of the National Assembly of Serbia, Ms Maja Gojković, I paid an official visit to Belgrade on 3-5 October 2016. During the visit, I met Mr Tomislav Nikolić, President of Serbia, Mr Aleksandar Vučić, Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr Ivica Dačić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Ms Maja Gojković, Speaker of the National Assembly, as well as the members of the Serbian delegation to the Assembly. Moreover, I was honoured to address the National Assembly of Serbia, meeting in a special session.

My discussions focused on the situation in the South-East Europe region, the Council of Europe's response to the Pan-European challenges, in particular, terrorism, the refugee crisis and the raise of populist movement, as well as the co-operation between Serbia and the Council of Europe.

At the end of my visit, I encouraged Serbia – as well as all States of the region – to strengthen regional co-operation and pursue reconciliation efforts. Today, South-East Europe needs stability and co-operation as never before. Peace, good neighbourly relations and reconciliation are pre-conditions for the region's economic development, social stability and the advancement on the path of European integration which is the strategic objective of all States of the region. In this context, I commended the efforts of the Serbian authorities to develop good neighbourly relations with the countries of the region and assured Serbia – as well as the authorities of other countries of the region – of the Assembly's support.

As far as the raise of populist movements is concerned, I stressed that in times of uncertainty, economic downturn, and geopolitical challenges, it is important for all democratic forces to resolutely oppose populist, nationalist and extreme movements which capitalize on citizens' concerns and fears. This is especially important as we are facing such complex challenges as the refugee crisis and migration management as well as the threat of international terrorism.

Turning to the refugee crisis, I commended Serbia's efforts and constructive approach. The authorities are doing their utmost to ensure that the refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants can cross the country in the best possible conditions. Recently, we have seen the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers wishing to stay in Serbia increase. Managing this new situation is a challenge, especially as winter is approaching. In this context, I stressed that we need a comprehensive and pan-European approach to the refugee crisis and the migration phenomenon, based on fair responsibility sharing and solidarity. I believe the Assembly can provide a platform for launching a debate about this issue, so as to propose concrete elements of solution to our member States.

Speaking about the co-operation between the Council of Europe and Serbia, I encouraged the authorities to make full use of the Council of Europe expertise in the field of the judiciary reform, media, constitutional matters, fight against corruption and protection of minority rights, in the implementation of ongoing reforms.

I encouraged the authorities to use fully the opportunities offered by new joint programme "European Union – Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey (HF) 2016-2018". Our co-operation programmes can help Serbia benefit from the best of European expertise to move forward the EU integration agenda.

Finally, I thanked the Serbian authorities for their support, at the highest political level, as well as the members of Serbia's National Assembly, to the Assembly's initiative #NoHateNoFear. I encouraged Serbian MPs to promote this initiative further in Serbia as well as in the region.

1.2.7. Other activities

1.2.7.1. Participation in the meeting of the Legal Affairs and Human Rights Committee (Paris, 6 September 2016).

On 6 September 2016, I participated in the meeting of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights to brief the members of the Committee on my visit to Turkey on 1-2 September and my bilateral meetings with the Turkish authorities.

1.2.7.2. Visit to the Council of Europe of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

It was an honour for me to receive in my office His Holiness the Dalai Lama. During our meeting, I praised the Dalai Lama's commitment to promoting peace and the values of humanity at a global level. Furthermore, I presented to the Dalai Lama the Assembly's initiative #NoHateNoFear.

I am extremely pleased by the fact that His Holiness the Dalai Lama expressed support for the #NoHateNoFear initiative. This is a powerful message of support for the Assembly's and the Council of Europe's action to counteract terrorism and the hate and fear that it seeks to create.

1.2.7.3. Conference “Integración o desintegración?: Europa en la encrucijada” (Madrid, 19 September 2016)

I was invited to participate in a conference organised by the Spanish think-tank “Club Siglo XXI” on “Integration or Disintegration?: Europe at the Crossroads”. It was my first opportunity, since being elected President of the Assembly, to address, in a public setting, the diplomatic community in Spain and representatives of the Parliament.

During the conference, I stressed the necessity to revise the architecture of European integration as the current model has exhausted its potential on many fronts. The role of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe – I pointed out – is more necessary than ever as we are a multilateral platform where European States can debate on the challenges for the years to come.

I also underlined that our common enemy should not be ourselves but the “instigators of fear”, namely the actors of global terrorism and the populists who are trying to manipulate the life of every European citizen. I explained that we cannot respond to all the challenges we are facing by selecting two or three options in one or other referendum, because there are no simple answers in a complex world.

2. Press releases

- President: “Stand up and show support for refugees” (19 June 2016)
- “Greece needs our full support” (20 June 2016)
- PACE must continue to foster pan-European dialogue in response to challenges, says the President (20 June 2016)
- Terrorism: #NoHateNoFear, a PACE initiative (20 June 2016)
- 26 June: International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (24 June 2016)
- Brexit: “something of the European ideal has been lost today” (24 June 2016)
- Pedro Agramunt: PACE and PABSEC share similar objectives and common standards (29 June 2016)
- PACE President condemns Istanbul airport terrorist attack (29 June 2016)
- President calls for parliamentary dialogue and co-operation between all 47 member States (30 June 2016)
- The Portuguese Assembly joins the #NoHateNoFear initiative (1 July 2016)
- Parliamentary diplomacy, a key to solving current conflicts and threats in Europe (1 July 2016)
- President commends Georgia’s true European aspirations (7 July 2016)
- 2016 Europe Prize presented to Girona during ceremony (7 July 2016)
- President after Nice attack: “we stand by France and the French people” (15 July 2016)
- President’s statement on the attempted coup in Turkey (16 July 2016)
- Turkey after the attempted coup: ensuring respect for the rule of law and basic rights is essential (18 July 2016)
- Pedro Agramunt reacts to the shootings in Munich (23 July 2016)
- #NoHateNoFear: parliamentarians speak out to support the initiative (28 July 2016)
- Shock and sadness at Gaziantep wedding blast (21 August 2016)
- Three candidates shortlisted for the 2016 Václav Havel Prize (30 August 2016)
- Spirit of Václav Havel essential in today’s Europe (1 September 2016)
- PACE President: “Failure of the coup in Turkey was a victory for democracy” (2 September 2016)
- Russia’s non-participation “benefits neither Russia nor PACE”, says President in Moscow (7 September 2016)
- Defending human rights: a priority issue in today’s Europe (12 September 2016)
- “The only way to protect ourselves is to privilege dialogue over confrontation” (15 September 2016)

- President praises Iceland's commitment to Council of Europe values and standards (28 September 2016)
- "The world has lost a man of dialogue, our Assembly has lost a friend" (28 September 2016)
- Pedro Agramunt commends Serbia's approach to the refugee crisis (4 October 2016)

3. Speeches

- Opening speech at the Third part of the 2016 Ordinary Session (Strasbourg, 20 June 2016)
- Speech at the Launch of the Initiative #Nohatenofear (Strasbourg, 20 June 2016)
- Statement at the plenary session of the 47th General Assembly of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (Moscow, 29 June 2016)
- Statement at the 25th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (Tbilisi, Georgia, 1 July 2016)
- Ceremony of presentation of the Europe Prize 2016 to Girona (Spain) (Girona, 8 July 2016)
- Opening remarks at the Youth Peace Camp (Strasbourg, 12 July 2016)
- Address at the meeting of Presidents of International Parliamentary Assemblies (Ankara, 1 September 2016)
- Opening of the symposium «The defence of human rights in Europe, an outdated idea? The Council of Europe more necessary than ever» (Paris, 12 September 2016)
- Opening speech of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament (Strasbourg, 15 September 2016)
- Conclusions of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament (Strasbourg, 16 September 2016)
- Speech at the Conference "Integración o desintegración?: Europa en la encrucijada" (Madrid, 19 September 2016)
- Exchange of views with the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy (Reykjavik, 26 September 2016)
- Speech delivered at the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia (Belgrade, 4 October 2016)

4. Personalities met

4.1. 3rd part of the 2016 Ordinary session (Strasbourg, 20-24 June 2016)

- Mr Volodymyr Arieu, Chairperson, delegation of Ukraine, and Ms Nadiya Savchenko, member of the Ukrainian delegation
- Mr David Bakradze, member of the delegation of Georgia
- Mr Zsolt Németh, Chairperson of the delegation of Hungary, and Mr László Brenzovics, Member of the Parliament of Ukraine and Chairman of the Hungarian Cultural Association of Transcarpathia
- Mr Joseph Debono-Grech, Chairperson, delegation of Malta
- Mr Marko Grdosic (European Students Forum), Chairperson, and Ms Anja Olin-Pape (National Youth Council Sweden), Vice-Chairperson of the Advisory Council on Youth
- Mr Dmytro Kuleba, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the Council of Europe
- Ms Marina Kaljurand, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Estonia, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers
- Ms Aleksandra Djurović, Chairperson, delegation of Serbia
- Ms Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Special rapporteur of the United Nations on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
- Ms Ana Catarina Mendes, Chairperson and Mr Adao Silva, Vice-Chairperson, delegation of Portugal

- Mr Albert Frick, President of the Parliament of the Principality of Liechtenstein and members of the parliamentary delegation of Liechtenstein
- Mr Taavi Roivas, Prime Minister of Estonia
- Mr Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of Greece
- Mr Janusz Stanczyk, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Poland to the Council of Europe, and Mr Ferenc Robák, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe
- Ms Aliza Lavie, Chairperson, delegation of Israel
- Delegation of the Parliament of Egypt
- Mr Karl Gardarsson, Chairperson, delegation of Iceland
- Mr Jean-Claude Frécon, President, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe
- Ms Manana Kobakhidze, member, delegation of Georgia
- Mr Jasen Mesić, Chairperson, delegation of Croatia
- Ms Hermine Naghdalyan, Chairperson, delegation of Armenia
- Mr Samad Seyidov, Chairperson, delegation of Azerbaijan
- Mr Predrag Sekulić, Chairperson, delegation of Montenegro
- Mr Nikolai Samoseyko, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament of Belarus
- Ms Gulnara Akhundova, representative of International Media Support, and other representatives of Azeri NGOs
- Delegation from the Parliamentary Committee on human rights and external relations, Parliament of Tunisia
- Ms Dana Váhalová, Chairperson, delegation of the Czech Republic

4.2. 47th Plenary session of the General Assembly of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (PABSEC) General Assembly (Moscow, 28-30 June 2016)

- Mr Alexey Pushkov, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the State Duma
- Mr Sergey Naryshkin, Speaker of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation
- Mr Konstantin Kosachev, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
- Ms Valentina Matvienko, Speaker of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation

4.3. Official visit to Tbilisi, Georgia and 25th Annual session of the OSCE PA (Tbilisi, 30 June to 2 July 2016)

- Mr Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime-Minister of Georgia
- Mr Giorgi Margvelashvili, President of Georgia
- Mr Ilkka Kanerva, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
- Mr David Usupashvili, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia
- Mr Mikheil Janelidze, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
- Mr Konstantin Korkelia, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Georgia to the Council of Europe
- Mr Christian Urse, Head of the Office of the Council of Europe in Georgia

4.4. Official presentation ceremony of the Europe Prize 2016 to the city of Girona (Spain) (Girona, 8 July 2016)

- Ms Marta Madrenas, Mayoress of Girona
- Mr Raül Romeva, Councilor for External affairs, institutional relations and transparency of the Region of Catalonia

4.5. Meetings in Strasbourg (5-6 July and 12 July 2016)

- Exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies
- Ms Nawel Rafik-Elmrin, Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg (on the occasion of the Youth Camp)
- Mr Markus Börlin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Council of Europe

4.6. Participation in the panel of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize and official visit to the Czech Republic (Prague, 30-31 August 2016)

Václav Havel Human Rights Prize selection panel:

- Mr Christos Pourgourides, Former Member of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, Former Member of the Parliamentary Assembly
- Mr Martin Palouš, Former Ambassador of the Czech Republic, President of Vaclav Havel Library Foundation in New York and Board member of Vaclav Havel Library
- Mr Marek (Antoni) Nowicki, Human Rights Lawyer, President of the UN Human Rights Advisory Panel in Kosovo
- Ms Nuala Mole, Senior Lawyer, Founder of the AIRE Centre
- Mr František Janouch, Chairman of the Board of the Charta 77 Foundation

Official visit to the Czech Republic:

- Mr Petr Gajdušek, State secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr Přemysl Sobotka Vice-President of the Senate
- Mr Jan Hamáček, President of the Chamber of Deputies
- Mr Bohuslav Sobotka, Prime Minister
- Czech Delegation to PACE

4.7. Meeting of the Presidents of International Assemblies (Ankara, 1 September 2016)

- Mr Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey
- Mr İsmail Kahraman, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey
- Mr Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey
- Mr Binali Yıldırım, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey
- Mr Kemal Kiliçdaroğlu, Chairman of the Republican People's Party (CHP)
- Ms Figen Yüksekdağ, Co-Chairperson of the People's Democratic Party (HDP)
- Mr Talip Küçükcan, Head of Turkish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and other members of the delegation
- Representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations:
 - Amnesty International: Mr Andrew Gardner, Chief Researcher
 - Human Rights Watch: Ms Emma Sinclair-Webb, Turkey Director
 - Association of Journalists: Mr Taylan Ertem, Ankara representative

- International Human Rights Platform: Mr Feray Salman

4.8. Working visit to the Russian Federation (Moscow, 6-7 September 2016)

- Mr Sergey Naryshkin, Speaker of the State Duma
- Mr Alexey Pushkov, Chairman of the State Duma Foreign Affairs Committee
- Mr Konstantin Kosachev, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
- Mr Ilyas Umakhanov, Vice-President of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
- Ms Valentina Matvienko, President of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
- Mr Alexander Alexandrov, member of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
- Mr Valdimir Dzhubarov, member of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
- Mr Alexander Romanovich, Deputy Speaker of the State Duma
- Mr Leonid Slutskiy, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on the Affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States
- Mr Ivan Melnikov, First Deputy Speaker of the State Duma

4.9. Symposium: “The defence of human rights in Europe, an outdated idea? The Council of Europe, more necessary than ever” (Paris, 12 September, 2016)

- Mr Claude Bartolone, President of the National Assembly, France
- Mr René Rouquet, President of the French delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- Mr Harlem Désir, State Secretary, in charge of European Affairs, France
- Ms Cécile Coudriou, Vice-President of Amnesty international France
- Mr Jean-Claude Mignon, former President of PACE
- Ms Anne Brasseur, former President of PACE
- Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- Mr Alexandre Orlov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation in France
- Mr Jean-Paul Costa, former President of the European Court of Human Rights
- Mr Gianni Buquicchio, President of the Venice Commission
- Mr Robert Badinter, former Minister, France
- Mr François d’Alançon, journalist, *La Croix* newspaper

4.10. Visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Strasbourg (15 September 2016)

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama

4.11. European Conference of Presidents of Parliament (Strasbourg, 14-16 September 2016)

- Ms Valentina Matvienko, Speaker of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
- Mr Konstantin Kosachev, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation

- Mr Ilyas Umakhanov, Vice-Speaker of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
- Dr Angelo Farrugia, President of the Chamber of Representatives, Malta
- Mr Christophe Steiner, President of the National Council, Monaco
- Mr Stanislaw Karczewski, President of the Senate, Poland
- Mr Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, President of the Assembly of the Republic, Portugal
- Mr Darko Pajović, President of the Parliament, Montenegro
- Ms Blanca Alcalá, President of the Parlato and Vice-President of the Senate, Mexico, and Ms Gloria Himelda Felix Niebla, Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies, Mexico
- Mr Ogtay Asadov, President of the National Assembly, Azerbaijan
- Mr Olemic Thommessen, President of the Parliament, Norway
- Mr László Köver, Speaker of the National Assembly, Hungary
- Ms Maja Gojković, President of the National Assembly, Serbia
- Mr Demitris Syllouris, President of the House of Representatives, Cyprus
- Mr Yuli Yoel Edelstein, President of the Knesset, Israel
- Mr Claude Bartolone, President of the National Assembly, France
- Mr Pietro Grasso, President of the Senate, and Ms Laura Boldrini, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Italy
- Mr Pío García-Escudero Márquez, President of the Senate, and Ms Ana María Pastor Julian, President of the Congress of Deputies, Spain
- Mr Roland Ries, Mayor of the City of Strasbourg
- Prof. Dr Norbert Lammert, President of the Bundestag, Germany
- Mr David Usupashvili, Speaker of the Parliament, Georgia
- Mr Andry Parubiy, President of the Parliament, Ukraine
- Ms Tsetska Tsacheva, President of the National Assembly, Bulgaria
- Mr Faisal El-Fayez, President of the Senate, Jordan
- Mr Trajko Veljanovski, President of the Assembly, “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”
- Mr Einard Gudfinnsson, Speaker of the Parliament, Iceland
- Mr Jean-Baptiste Mattei, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe
- Mr Ivars Pundurs, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Latvia to the Council of Europe
- Mr Keith McBean, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Council of Europe

4.12. Conference “Integración o desintegración?: Europa en la encrucijada” (Integration or desintegration? Europe at a crossroad) (Madrid, 19 September 2016)

- Ms Koula Sophianou, Cypriot Ambassador in Spain
- Mr Anatoliy Scherba, Ukrainian Ambassador in Spain
- Mr Timur Rahmanov, First Secretary of the Uzbek Embassy in Spain
- Mr Sergey Melik-Bagdasarov, Minister-Counsellor of the Embassy of Russia in Spain
- Mr Zurab Pololikashvili, Georgian Ambassador in Spain
- Mr Jesus Posada, Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Congress of Deputies

4.13. Meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy and official visit to Iceland (Reykjavik, 26-27 September 2016)

- Mr Bjarni Benediktsson, Minister for Finance
- Mr Einard K. Gudfinnsson, Speaker of Althingi, Parliament of Iceland
- Ms Lilja Dögg Alfreðsdóttir, Foreign Minister of Iceland
- Mr Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, President of Iceland
- Members of the Icelandic delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly
- Representatives of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Althingi

4.14. Official visit to Serbia (Belgrade, 3-5 October 2016)

- Mr Tomislav Nikolić, President of Serbia
- Mr Aleksandar Vučić, Prime Minister of Serbia
- Mr Ivica Dačić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Ms Maja Gojković, Speaker of the National Assembly
- Members of the Serbian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Appendix – European Conference of Presidents of Parliament (Strasbourg, 15-16 September 2016)

Conclusions by Pedro Agramunt, President of the Parliamentary Assembly

Dear Presidents, colleagues,

As host of this year's European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, I have the honour and the responsibility to present you with my conclusions on these two days.

I would like to start by thanking all of you for your active participation and contribution. The quality of the debates in this hemicycle and the high number of bilateral and other meetings confirms the growing importance of inter-parliamentary dialogue and the increasing awareness of the role that parliamentary diplomacy can play in the context of international relations. Our regular meetings make it possible to build bridges and channels of communication which help us exchange experiences and identify common solutions, in the interests of our citizens.

My special thanks and gratitude go to the key-note speakers of each of the three themes of the Conference. Their interventions served as guidance and food for thought for the debates that followed.

In my opening speech, I recalled some defining dates that have marked our troubled times and changed our perception of the world in which we live.

In my conclusions, I would like to mention some 'defining quotes' that we heard during our debates, which have set the tone of the Conference. YOUR statements have captured, in a few words and with powerful images, the fundamental questions that we MUST address.

To start with Theme 1 – Migration and refugee crisis in Europe – role and responsibilities of parliaments, a question that particularly struck me was: "Do we really walk our walk?"

Indeed, as regards migration and asylum, our legal obligations are clearly defined and we know our moral responsibilities. We also agree that solidarity and responsibility-sharing are necessary and that a unilateral response to migration and asylum – which is a global, unstoppable phenomenon – is bound to be inadequate and short-lived.

However, we must be self-critical and recognise that the political will to walk our walk has been lacking. In fact, the current crisis is not the arrival of 1 million migrants and refugees to EU member States last year – a tiny percentage of the continent's population – but Europe's failure to provide an adequate, commonly-agreed response to a flow that had been predicted. This also has to be taken in the context of 3 million refugees, mainly from Syria, in Turkey today.

The debate clearly highlighted the existence of different approaches on how to tackle the present crisis, and a different understanding of its depth and impact on the European project. The debate also confirmed, however, that national parliaments should redouble their efforts to develop a constructive dialogue on this matter, with a view to achieving a common position.

Dear colleagues, on the basis of our discussions I have identified a few recommendations that could inspire our future activities.

National parliaments should ensure that migration and asylum measures are not geared towards the short term but are embedded in a long term overall revision of policy and legislation. In this context, it is of the greatest importance to develop better integration policies to allow the full inclusion in our societies of those who will certainly stay. Undoubtedly, integration has a cost but this cost is amply compensated by its benefits for the whole society, as confirmed by our discussions under the third theme. We should keep in mind that failure to integrate implies greater costs in the long-term.

In addition, national parliaments should be more involved in the decision-making process in the area of migration and asylum. Thanks to their pluralist and representative composition, they can provide greater legitimacy to decisions, and guarantee that responses are better tuned to citizens' wishes. The potential of national parliaments to bridge the gap between European decision-making and citizens should also be further explored.

At the same time, as politicians, we have the responsibility not to stir or capitalise on public fear and fall into the trap of populism. We must resist the temptation to present our citizens with a false choice between security on the one hand and dignity and liberty on the other. Security must be taken seriously, and so must human rights.

National parliaments should make greater use of their oversight role, questioning their governments on the poor or delayed implementation of decisions taken at European level to tackle the crisis, as well as supervising the implementation of agreements and other undertakings.

A comprehensive and effective migration and asylum policy requires a strong external dimension. This includes close co-operation with non-European countries of origin and transit and a targeted development aid policy. It also requires a stronger stance on conflict resolution and the restoration of peace in war-afflicted areas because, as it was said, *“there is a deficit of peace”*. These measures would all help in reducing migrant and refugee movements.

Theme 2 – National parliaments and the Council of Europe: together promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law gave participants the opportunity to illustrate the efforts that have been carried out by national parliaments to comply with binding and non-binding Council of Europe texts and decisions, and to co-operate with many of its bodies, including the Parliamentary Assembly.

Several Presidents praised the Council of Europe as a reference in the area of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, having given a major contribution to the consolidation of democratic standards in its member States. To underline the central importance of the European Convention on Human Rights, one President called it *‘an achievement of human civilisation’*, a definition which I absolutely support.

Several speakers mentioned the challenging context in which European democracies operate: the threat of terrorism, economic hardship, increasing inequalities, youth unemployment, growing populism to the left and rights of the political spectrum; others focused on the broader geopolitical environment, in which Europe’s relevance is shrinking.

Two quotes come to my mind in this regard. The first: “It is in these difficult times that we need leadership and vision. Insularity could jeopardise what has been achieved so far in the area of democracy, human rights and the rule of law”, and the second: “We should not choose between our values and our prosperity. On the contrary, our prosperity depends on our values”.

Some speakers also referred to the need to bring democratic institutions closer to citizens, for instance by ensuring greater transparency and inclusiveness in the deliberative process, including through online consultations. This is another area in which the Council of Europe could be of assistance, thanks to its work on e-democracy, and this could be further explored by the Assembly.

A recurrent issue was how to ensure that national parliaments are more receptive to early warnings launched by the Parliamentary Assembly and take greater heed of its resolutions. In my opinion there is room for improving the interaction and coordination between national parliaments and the Parliamentary Assembly and I attach great importance to the pro-active liaison role to be played by the members of national delegations.

At the same time, the Assembly can further improve its knowledge of the interests and needs of national parliaments, for instance by reinforcing tailor-made and demand-driven activities for national parliaments and promoting direct exchanges between Assembly committees and their national counterparts.

On several occasions, during this Conference, we have been reminded of the reasons why we should work together and the values that are our common heritage. You may be aware, dear colleagues, that the Parliamentary Assembly has launched a proposal for the Council of Europe to hold a Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of Council of Europe member States. I invite you to support this initiative, which could give a fresh impetus to our co-operation in the years to come.

Dear colleagues, this morning our Conference discussed the theme Mobilisation of parliaments against hate, for inclusive and non-racist societies.

There was a clear consensus that hatred threatens our democratic systems by undermining social cohesion. Societies are more cohesive when diversity is respected and valued as a richness. They are also, as a result, more resilient to threats, including radicalisation leading to terrorism.

Concerns were expressed about the risk of stigmatisation of some groups, especially in the current context of the fight against terrorism. This risk is amplified by a populist rhetoric, on the right and the left, as well as by the impact of the Internet, which has led to the coarsening of public discourse. As it was said, *‘racism and incitement to violence are not an opinion. They cannot benefit from the right to freedom of expression’*.

The speakers suggested several ways in which national parliaments could mobilise against hate:

The first and foremost manner is by passing legislation to criminalise hate speech and by convicting the perpetrators of hate crimes. Punishment is not by itself the solution but a step forward.

It was clear from our discussions that great emphasis should be placed on PREVENTION. In this context, many speakers highlighted the centrality of education, the importance of education for democratic citizenship – a major activity of the Council of Europe –, and the role played by sports and cultural associations.

All those who took the floor mentioned the PERSONAL MOBILISATION of parliamentarians as a key component of the fight against hatred, racism and intolerance. As prominent public figures, members of parliament should set an example, be aware of the language they use in political debate and take a clear public stand against hate. They should also support alternative human rights narratives to hate speech. In this regard, I thank those of you who took an interest in the hashtag initiative NoHateNoFear, the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance and the No Hate Speech Movement. I invite you to follow up on these once you go back to your countries.

Mr Thommessen, I found your speech about “role models” particularly inspiring. As political figures, WE can influence other individuals, especially the youth, to have trust in democracy and to become tomorrow’s leaders. Whom we choose to meet, what areas of our cities we choose to visit and whom we choose to publicly support, will be the visible sign of how much we believe in equality and inclusion. We should bear this in mind in our work.

Colleagues, this Conference has given us many ideas for our future homework. The main difficulty lies with the fact that the matters we discussed in these two days need to be addressed simultaneously and without any further delay.

You can count on the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to stand by your side in this endeavour.

Thank you very much.