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## Parliamentary question to the Chairperson-in-Office of the Committee of Ministers

### Parliamentary questions

#### 1. Question from Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV, Azerbaijan, ALDE

The Council of Europe has stepped into its 70<sup>th</sup> year. During the first years of this new century, the cases of hostility, aggression and confrontation between member States have increased. In 2001, Azerbaijan was the only country in the Council of Europe whose territory was partly occupied by another member State. Today, the Council of Europe is facing several similar problems. While the number of refugees and internally displaced persons in member States was estimated to the hundreds of thousands in 2001, it is now measured in millions, and the number is growing steadily.

The Council of Europe is also experiencing serious moral crises, where corruption cases are commonplace, objectivity is diminished, cases of malevolence and implementation of political orders have increased, double standards have become a leading method of working, and financial troubles are steadily increasing.

Mr Huseynov, to ask the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers,

What does the Committee of Ministers plan to do to help this 70-year-old Organisation to get rid of this harsh situation and to function more efficiently?

#### *Reply by the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers*

First of all, I do not necessarily share your assessment as regards the current situation and the challenges that the Council of Europe is presently facing.

Secondly, I believe it is important to acknowledge the significance of the fundamental reforms that our Organisation has gone through over the last nine years, the aim of which has been to make the Council of Europe a more relevant and reliable partner for member States as they themselves go through a period of change and adjustment and seek to fully align themselves with our common standards on human rights, democracy and rule of law. Again, I want to reiterate the unique contribution of the Council of Europe as a platform for dialogue and cooperation between States at the pan-European level.

However, having stated this, I fully agree that there is a need to continue the efforts to further protect and promote the human rights and freedoms enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and other relevant legal instruments, so as to ensure effective human rights protection and monitoring throughout the Council of Europe area, including in unresolved conflict zones. We also need to respond effectively to some of the other major challenges that Europe is facing today, such as illegal migration, widespread corruption, violent extremism and terrorism.

We also need to ensure that member States fully co-operate with and participate in the statutory organs of our organisation, and we need to discuss further how to strengthen the synergies and co-operation between our statutory bodies. There is also a need to address a number of other issues, such as how to further strengthen intergovernmental co-operation, including the network of steering committees and advisory bodies, as well as how to further modernise the Secretariat, including its overall management structure and governance.



So all in all, there is undoubtedly a need to continue the process of reforms, as was set out at the Ministerial session in Elsinore last month, addressing the many issues to which I have already referred, as well as others – not least the urgent need to secure the sustainable financing of the Council of Europe.

Over the next few months – leading up to the next Ministerial Session in Helsinki – we therefore expect the Secretary General to present concrete proposals, in close co-operation with member States. The overall aim of the reforms should be to enable the Organisation to fulfil its statutory role under rapidly shifting and very demanding circumstances.

Finally, I also want to underline the importance of the on-going work and discussions on additional reforms in the Ad hoc Committee on the role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly.