Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 14634
06 October 2018

Activities of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly between the third and the fourth part of the 2018 Ordinary Session

Communication

1. Main activities

1.1. President's activities between 23 June and 29 August 2018

1.1.1. Third part of the 2018 Ordinary Session (Strasbourg, 25-29 June 2018)

Upon my election as President of the Parliamentary Assembly, I highlighted the issues on which I intend to concentrate my activities. As President of the Assembly, I shall seek to ensure the good functioning of the Assembly and contribute to restoring its credibility. Therefore, I shall concentrate my activities mainly on three issues: defending the values that unite the Council of Europe member States, as well as contributing to ensuring the viability of the European Convention on Human Rights System; continuing the Assembly's activities aiming at restoring its credibility and promoting full transparency of our work; promoting further gender equality within the Assembly and the Council of Europe in general. I am looking forward to working in close co-operation with the Assembly bodies and members, as well as all Council of Europe institutions and officials during my mandate.

During the June 2018 part-session of the Assembly, I met a number of Assembly guests, including the Prime Minister of Croatia, the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Croatia and Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, as well as the Minister of Migration Policy of Greece. We discussed the challenges that the Organisation was facing, including in particular the relations with the Russian Federation. Furthermore, with the Prime Ministers of Croatia and the Slovak Republic, I discussed the issue of ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). Moreover, my meeting with the Minister of Migration Policy of Greece was an opportunity to hear an update on the current situation regarding the arrival of refugees and migrants via the Eastern Mediterranean route, as well as the situation on the Greek islands.

I also met the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe as well as a number of chairpersons of national delegations. We discussed co-operation in addressing the challenges that the Organisation is currently facing.

The meeting of the Joint Committee was an opportunity to share with the Ministers' Deputies the conclusions of the work of the Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee of the Bureau on the Role and Mission of the Parliamentary Assembly. These will be further looked at by the Assembly's competent committees, i.e. the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, on Political Affairs and Democracy, as well as by the Monitoring Committee.

1.1.2. Working visit to Strasbourg and exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies (Strasbourg, 3-4 July 2018)

On 4 July 2018, I held an exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies informing them of the priority issues on which I intend to concentrate my activities. We also discussed the conclusions of the June part-session and the future co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers in this context.

In the margins of the exchange of views, I held a number of bilateral meetings including with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the various Secretariat teams within the Parliamentary Assembly.

1.1.3. Official visit to Prague and participation in the Selection Panel for the 2018 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize (Prague, Czech Republic, 27-28 August 2018)

On 27-28 August 2018, I travelled to Prague for an official visit, as well as to participate in the first meeting of the Selection Panel of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize. During the visit, I met the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, as well as the Speakers of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate of the Czech Parliament.

I welcomed good co-operation between the Council of Europe and the Czech Republic, praising in particular the successful Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers and the active contribution of the Czech delegation to the work of the Parliamentary Assembly. We discussed the ways to address the challenges the Council of Europe is currently facing, in particular the implications of the Russian Federation's decision to withhold its financial contribution. Furthermore, we discussed the co-operation between the Council of Europe monitoring bodies and the Czech authorities in a number of fields and I am grateful to my interlocutors for updating me on the state of implementation of current reforms, regarding in particular education and the situation of Roma. Finally, we touched upon the issue of the current refugee crisis and the need to address it on the basis of principles of solidarity, fair responsibility-sharing and respect for international obligations and commitments.

I am grateful to the Czech authorities, as well as to our partners from Charter 77 and the Václav Havel Library, for the excellent organisation of my meetings.

On 28 August 2018, the Selection Panel of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize shortlisted the following three nominees for the 2018 Prize:

– Rosa María Payá (Cuba)

– Nabeel Rajab (Bahrain)

– Oyub Titiev (Russian Federation)

The Selection Panel will meet once again, on 7 October 2018, to designate the laureate of the 2018 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize.

1.1.4. Working visit in Strasbourg (29-30 August 2018)

On 29-30 August 2018, I travelled to Strasbourg to hold bilateral meetings with Council of Europe officials, including the Chairman of the Ministers' Deputies, the Director General of DGI (Human Rights and Rule of Law), the Secretary of the Venice Commission, as well as some Secretariat teams within the Parliamentary Assembly.

1.2. President's activities between 30 August and 5 October 2018

1.2.1. Assembly meetings in Paris (2-4 September 2018)

On 2 September 2018, I attended the meeting of the Presidential Committee.

On 3 September 2018, I attended the meeting of the Bureau followed by the meeting of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs which held an exchange of views on the proposals of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Role and Mission of the Parliamentary Assembly relating to the challenge or reconsideration of credentials and/or to representation and participation rights of national delegations, as well as regarding the voting rights of members and the voting procedures of the Assembly.

In the margins of the meetings, I gave an interview to the French language TV Channel TV5 Monde.

1.2.2. Working visits in Strasbourg (13-14 September and 3-4 October 2018)

During the visits, I met a number of Permanent Representatives of the Council of Europe member States, as well as the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

Moreover, on 13 September 2018, I met Ms Annemie Turtleboom, member of the European Court of Auditors, responsible for Opinion 1/2018 concerning the proposal of 2 May 2018 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of the Union´s budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in member States.

I shared with Ms Turtleboom the Assembly's recent Resolutions on the situation of the rule of law in Council of Europe member States and informed her of the Assembly's monitoring procedure and our co-operation with the Venice Commission. I welcomed the fact that the European Union bodies were increasingly using reports by Council of Europe monitoring and expert bodies, in particular the Venice Commission, in their assessments of the rule of law situation in member States. I encouraged further co-operation with the Assembly and the Council of Europe in this respect.

1.2.3. Second Eurasian Women's Forum and official meetings (St Petersburg, 19-21 September 2018)

At the invitation of Ms Valentina Matvienko, Chairperson of the Inter-parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States, I participated in the Second Eurasian Women's Forum held in St Petersburg, on 19-21 September 2018. In particular, I addressed the Opening session of the Forum highlighting the Assembly's contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals relating to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

In my address, I welcomed the Forum's strategic vision for the future. Furthermore, I presented the Assembly's activities in two key areas: promoting representation of women in politics and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Regarding political representation of women, I shared the Assembly's experience of striving to ensure a balanced representation of women and men parliamentarians and encouraged parliaments to move in this direction.

Turning to combating violence against women, I presented the Istanbul Convention and encouraged participants to study it as a concrete tool to combat violence against women. I highlighted in particular the fact that the Istanbul Convention is open for accession by non-member States of the Council of Europe and that it can be seen as a model and a means of evaluation of State practices in view of achieving the UN 2030 Agenda. Moreover, I informed the participants of the work of the Assembly's Parliamentary Network "Women Free from Violence", which allows parliamentarians to work together to jointly seek solutions. I encouraged the participants to replicate this initiative at the national level or within international parliamentary assemblies.

During the Forum, I held a number of bilateral meetings, including with the President of the IPU, the Executive Director of UN Women and the Chairperson of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, Chairperson of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS member States.

With the President of the IPU, I discussed the presentation of the joint Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe-IPU study on sexism, harassment and sexual violence against women in parliaments in Europe, to be held on 16 October 2018 in Geneva. I also shared with the IPU President information about the Parliamentary Network "Women Free from Violence". I expressed the Assembly's readiness to work with the IPU to help launch a similar initiative at their level.

With the Executive Director of UN Women, I discussed co-operation in combating violence against women and domestic violence as well as possible events that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe could hold regarding this subject during the next session of the United Nations Commission for the Status of Women.

With the Chairperson of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, I discussed the relations between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Russian Parliament, stressing the need to overcome the existing situation by means of dialogue.

1.2.4. Address to the Parliament of Switzerland (Bern, 25 September 2018)

I was honoured to be invited to address the Swiss Parliament on 25 September 2018 and deliver a speech on the Council of Europe, its Parliamentary Assembly and our contribution to upholding the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law on the European continent.

I highlighted the challenges that lay ahead of us, in particular, as regards our Human Rights Convention System. I called on member States to uphold the authority of the Convention and of the Court and to refrain from actions that would undermine it.

2. Speeches

– Inaugural speech at the opening of the 3rd part of the 2018 Ordinary Session (Strasbourg, 25 June 2018)
– Laudatio at the ceremony of award of the title and medal of Honorary President of the Assembly to Ms Anne Brasseur (Strasbourg, 25 June 2018)
– Address to the Second Eurasian Women Forum (St Petersburg, 20-21 September 2018)
– Address to the Swiss Parliament: Switzerland and the Council of Europe: Common values, common challenges (Berne, 25 September 2018)

3. Press releases

– President condemns attack against a Roma community in Ukraine (24 June 2018)
– Liliane Maury-Pasquier elected the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (25 June 2018)
– First ever World Parliament Day: statement by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (29 June 2018)
– President urges political leaders to show zero tolerance for hate speech (20 July 2018)
– Call for greater determination in tackling human trafficking (30 July 2018)
– The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe welcomes the end of the Turkish derogation in time of emergency under Article 15 of the ECHR (10 August 2018)
– President relieved at the release of Mr Mammadov, calls to free all other persons detained because of their critical views (14 August 2018)
– Turkey: ‘the place of parliamentarians is not in prison’ (12 September 2018)
– President celebrates the 40th anniversary of the Alma Ata declaration (12 September 2018)
– Democracy Day: new challenges in an increasingly digital world (14 September 2018)
– President welcomes the strategic vision of the Second Eurasian Women’s Forum (20 September 2018)
– The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe welcomes the release of Turkish MP Enis Berberoglu due to parliamentary immunity (22 September 2018)

4. Personalities met

4.1. Third part of the 2018 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly (Strasbourg, 25-29 June 2018)

– Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Croatia, President of the Committee of Ministers
– Ms Sanja Putica, Chairperson, Croatian Delegation
– Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General, and Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

– Members of the Swiss Delegation

– Ms Anne Brasseur, former President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Honorary President of the Assembly

– Mr Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia

– Ms Aleksandra Tomic, Chairperson of the Serbian Delegation

– Ms Stella Kyriakides, former President of the Assembly, and Ms Rita Oomen – Ruijten (Netherlands), Mr Emanuelis Zingeris (Lithuania), Ms Elisabeth Schneider – Schneiter (Switzerland), Ms Ingjerd Schou (Norway), Mr Filippo Lombardi (Switzerland), members of the Assembly

– Ms Etilda Gjonaj, Minister of Justice of Albania

– Mr Leonid Slutsky, Chairperson of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the State Duma of the Russian Federation

– Mr Peter Pellegrini, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

– Mr Marek Eštok, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the Council of Europe

– Mr Stéphane Lopez, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF) to the European Union

– Mr Yury Osipov, Secretary General, Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States

– Mr Dimitrios Vitsas, Minister of Migration policy of the Hellenic Republic

– Mr Emin Huseynov, Executive Director, Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety

– Mr Jean Asselborn, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg

– Ms Anja Olin Pape, Chairperson of the Consultative Council for Youth

– Mr Paruyr Hovhannisyan, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the Council of Europe

4.2. Working visit to Strasbourg and exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies (Strasbourg, 3-4 July 2018)

– Mr Mohamed Trabelsi, Consul of Tunisia

– Mr Ivan Soltanovsky, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe

– Secretariat teams of Assembly Committees

4.3. Official visit to the Czech Republic and participation in the Selection Panel for the 2018 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize (Prague, 27-28 August 2018)

– Mr Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

– Mr Radek Vondraček, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic

– Mr Milan Štěch, President of the Senate of the Czech Republic

– Mr Ivo Šrámek, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Security and Multilateral Issues

Members of the Selection Panel of the 2018 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize:

– Ms Marie-Louise Bemelmans-Videc, former member of the Dutch Senate and of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

– Professor Martin Bojar, Physician, University teacher

– Ms Nuala Mole, Senior Lawyer, Founder of the AIRE Centre

– Mr Marek Novicki, Human Rights Lawyer

– Mr Martin Palouš, President of the Václav Havel Library Foundation in New York

– Mr Christos Pourgourides, Barrister-at-Law

Representatives of the Charta 77 Foundation and of the Václav Havel Library:

– Ms Jiřina Šiklova, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Charta 77 Foundation

– Mr Michael Žantovský, Executive Director of the Václav Havel Library

4.4. Working visit to Strasbourg (29-30 August 2018)

– Mr Christos Giakoumopoulos, Director General, DG I

– Mr Thomas Markert, Executive Secretary of the Enlarged Agreement on Democracy through law (Venice Commission)

– Mr Takamasa Sato, Ambassador, Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe, Consul General of Japan

– Mr Miroslav Papa, Chairman of the Ministers' Deputies, Permanent Representative of Croatia to the Council of Europe

– Mr Stanislas Frossard, Executive Secretary of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)

– Secretariat teams of Assembly's Committees and Division

4.5. Working visits to Strasbourg (13-14 September and 3-4 October 2018)

– Mr Markus Börlin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Council of Europe

– Ms Annemie Turtelboom, Member of the European Court of Auditors

– Ms Sylvie Bollini, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of San Marino to the Council of Europe

– Ms Hélène Rozet, representative of ATD Quart Monde, Strasbourg (member the INGO Conference)

– Mr Irakli Giviashvili, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Georgia to the Council of Europe

– Mr Stelios Perrakis, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Greece to the Council of Europe

– Ms Meglena Kuneva, Head of the European Union Delegation to the Council of Europe

– Mr Manuel Montobbio, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Spain to the Council of Europe

– Mr Rolf Mafael, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Germany to the Council of Europe

– Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

– Ms Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner

– Ms Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy of the Council of Europe

4.6. Second Eurasian Women's Forum and official meetings (St Petersburg, 19-21 September 2018)

– Ms Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Senator, Mexico

– Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women

– Mr Konstantin Kosachev, Vice-President of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation

– Mr Ilyas Umakhanov, Vice-President of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation

– Mr Sergey Antufiev, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States

– Ms Valentina Matvienko, President of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation