

Doc. 14912
22 June 2019

Activities of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly between the second and the third part of the 2019 Ordinary Session

Communication
President of the Assembly

1. Main activities

1.1. President's activities between 5 April and 17 May 2019

1.1.1. 2nd part of the 2019 Ordinary Session (Strasbourg, 8-12 April 2019)

The 2nd part of the 2019 Ordinary Session of the Assembly was an opportunity to meet Mr Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia, and Mr Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of Armenia, as well as Mr Timo Soini, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland.

In my meetings with the Prime Ministers of Armenia and Georgia, I welcomed the progress achieved by their respective countries in pursuing democratic reforms, consolidating the rule of law and enhancing the protection of human rights. It was particularly encouraging to hear their words of appreciation of the instrumental role the Council of Europe played in this process, by providing the necessary expertise and political support. I encouraged the Prime Ministers to continue good co-operation with the Venice Commission and to foster a pluralist political debate about the reform priorities, paying particular attention to the rights of the opposition. Turning to the broader challenges the Organisation has to face, we emphasised the need to preserve the unity and the Pan-European character of the Council of Europe, as well as the duty of all member States to honour their statutory and financial obligations.

With the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, we discussed the implementation of the priorities of the Finnish Presidency, the dialogue between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, as well as the preparations for the Helsinki Ministerial Session.

During the part-session, I also met a number of members of national delegations to the Assembly, as well as a delegation of representatives of the Algerian Parliament. In particular, I was encouraged by the latter's open approach to co-operation with the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly; in this context, I invited them to study the possibilities offered by the Partnership for Democracy Status encouraging them to apply.

Finally, I had the opportunity to meet Mr Alain Lamassoure, former minister, member of the European Parliament, to discuss the issue of the possible establishment of an Observatory for History Teaching, a project that will be supported within the framework of the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. I encouraged Mr Lamassoure to work closely with the Assembly's Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media which has developed a solid expertise in the field of education.



1.1.2. Conference on the fight against international terrorism (St Petersburg, Russian Federation, 18 April 2019)

On 18 April 2019, I participated in the international conference on combating terrorism co-organised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Inter-parliamentary Union, the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS member States, as well as the United Nations.

In my opening statement at the conference, I highlighted the obligation of member States to ensure respect of our human rights and rule of law standards in any activities to combat terrorism and presented the Council of Europe legal tools to promote international co-operation in this field.

Furthermore, I referred to the Assembly's work on prevention of terrorism and the development of counter-narratives against terrorism. In particular, I emphasised the role of politicians in promoting positive and flexible alternative discourses adapted to terrorist propaganda. In addition, I underlined the importance of working with communities, as well as with civil society, religious and community leaders, while using different types of media.

Combating hate speech and condemning those who propagate it is equally important in the context of fighting terrorism, and politicians bear a special responsibility in this respect. Moreover, we should promote inclusive education and ensure that schools play their full role in the development of active, critically thinking citizens, ready to live in a plural society.

The Parliamentary Assembly's recent report on Counter-narratives against terrorism provides a range of examples of measures that could be implemented at national level and I encouraged the participants to use these examples in their work.

In the margins of the Conference, I met representatives of several international inter-parliamentary organisations, as well as Ms Valentina Matvienko, Chairperson of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS member States and Chairperson of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. With Ms Matvienko, we discussed the relations between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS which are developed within the framework of a co-operation agreement signed in 1997, as well as the relations between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Russian Parliament. I informed Ms Matvienko of the recent Assembly discussions and of the Assembly's report on its role and mission. I was encouraged to hear from Ms Matvienko assurances of Russia's commitment to the Council of Europe and of the readiness of the Russian Parliament to continue dialogue with the Parliamentary Assembly notwithstanding the current impasse.

1.1.3. Exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies (Strasbourg, 24 April 2019)

On 24 April 2019, I held an exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies, presenting the outcomes of the April 2019 part-session of the Assembly, focusing in particular on the Assembly's recommendations in the light of the proposals in the report on its role and mission.

1.1.4. Official visit to Georgia (Tbilisi, 29-30 April 2019)

On 29-30 April 2019, I visited Georgia, to participate in the celebrations devoted to the 20th anniversary of the country's accession to the Council of Europe.

In my statement at the Georgian Parliament, I pointed out that the country's accession to the Council of Europe was a major step in the consolidation of its democratic institutions and a huge boost for reforms in several important areas.

I welcomed, in particular, the significant progress made in a number of key areas, including the fight against corruption, reform of the judiciary and the smooth functioning of Parliament. I emphasised that this progress was achieved thanks to the political will and constant efforts of all institutions and political players, along with input from Council of Europe bodies and experts. In this context, I encouraged the authorities to continue fruitful co-operation with Council of Europe expert and monitoring bodies, in particular the Venice Commission.

My official meetings were also an opportunity to discuss the political challenges the Council of Europe was facing, as well as the forthcoming Georgian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

I would like to thank the Georgian authorities for the excellent organisation of my visit.

1.1.5. Ceremony commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe (Helsinki, 16 May 2019) and 129th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Helsinki, 17 May 2019)

It was an honour to participate, on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in the Ceremony devoted to the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, hosted by the President of Finland, Mr Sauli Niinistö, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Timo Soini, in Helsinki, on 16 May 2019. In my statement, I put the Council of Europe's achievements into a historical perspective and emphasised the relevance of the Organisation's political mission, which is to promote trust between peoples and nations, support dialogue and co-operation and protect the fundamental rights of 830 million Europeans according to a common uniform standard enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Speaking at the 129th Session of the Committee of Ministers, I welcomed increased dialogue and co-operation between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly. Referring to the Assembly's resolution and recommendation on its role and mission and to the Committee of Ministers' decision on ensuring respect for rights and obligations, principles, standards and values, I highlighted the importance of the two Statutory bodies of the Organisation moving forward hand in hand. In particular, I welcomed the fact that the Committee of Ministers gave due consideration to Assembly Recommendation 2153 and took on board the Assembly's proposals regarding the setting up of a common reaction procedure for situations where a member State violates its statutory obligations or does not respect the standards, fundamental principles and values upheld by the Council of Europe. I assured the Committee of Ministers of the willingness of the Assembly to work together on the implementation of these proposals.

1.2. President's activities between 18 May and 20 June 2019

1.2.1. Meetings of the Parliamentary Assembly (Presidential Committee, joint meeting of the Presidential Committee with the Bureau of the Ministers' Deputies, Bureau, Standing Committee) (Paris, 22-24 May 2019)

At the meeting of the Bureau of the Assembly, I reported to Bureau members about the discussions held and decisions taken at the 129th session of the Committee of Ministers in Helsinki. In particular, we exchanged views about the implications of the decision entitled "A shared responsibility for democratic security in Europe – Ensuring respect for rights and obligations, principles, standards and values" and asked the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs to take this decision into account when preparing the report entitled "Strengthening the decision-making process of the Parliamentary Assembly concerning credentials and voting". We also appointed Ms Anne Brasseur and Mr Nils Muižnieks as new members of the Selection Panel of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize for a two-year term beginning on 1st of June 2019.

On the sidelines of the Bureau meeting, we held a joint meeting of the Presidential Committee with the Bureau of the Ministers' Deputies to discuss the consequences of the decisions taken by the Committee of Ministers in Helsinki. I should like to thank Ms Amélie de Montchalin, Secretary of State attached to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, in charge of European Affairs, representing the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, for attending the meeting,

The Standing Committee meeting provided an opportunity to hold an initial exchange of views on the priorities of the French Presidency with Ms Amélie de Montchalin representing the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. We underlined the importance of resolving the crisis currently affecting the Council of Europe by strengthening the organisation's institutions and mechanisms. In this context, the determination of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers to work together on a new joint procedure for responding more effectively when a member State fails to meet its statutory obligations is particularly important. I also announced my intention to convene a meeting of the Joint Committee during the June 2019 part-session in order to continue the discussions on this subject.

1.2.2. High-level seminar on public debate as a tool for the governance of new technologies, organised by the Committee on Bioethics of the Council of Europe within the framework of the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 4 June 2019)

In my address at the seminar on public debate as a tool for the governance of new technologies, I presented the Parliamentary Assembly's work concerning public debate on the use of new technologies and major societal issues in general. In particular, I underlined the principle of the Oviedo Convention – requiring States Parties to ensure appropriate public debate regarding the fundamental issues raised by developments in biology and medicine – which the Assembly has reiterated in several of its reports in terms of applying it to the

use of new technologies and artificial intelligence in general. I also set out the main principles which should govern public debate. In the Assembly's view, it should be open and inclusive, genuinely adversarial and guided by respect for the fundamental standards championed by the Council of Europe, in particular the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights and the case law of the Strasbourg Court.

On the sidelines of the seminar, I met Ms Brigitte Bourguignon, Chair of the Social Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly. In particular, we discussed the issues relating to the organisation of public debate about the key issues facing society and France's experience in this area. I also informed Ms Bourguignon about the priorities of the work of the Assembly's Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, calling for synergies between the National Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe when we are dealing with issues of common interest. Lastly, I urged her to support the Assembly's initiative, #NotInMyParliament.

During my visit to Strasbourg, I also met Ambassador Jean-Baptiste Mattei, Chair of the Ministers' Deputies, to discuss the implementation of the recent decisions of the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers and the preparation of the Assembly's June 2019 part-session.

1.2.3. Working visit to Austria (Vienna, 12-13 June 2019)

I was honoured to represent the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe at the Plenary Session of the Austrian National Council dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe. In my address, I paid tribute to Austria's commitment to the Council of Europe's work and highlighted the major fruits of that successful co-operation.

In praising Austria's key contribution to the work of the Council of Europe, I underlined that because of its geographical location and cultural identity, Austria was a stabilising factor for Europe which had contributed, over the years, to building bridges and strengthening co-operation among our member States.

I also paid tribute to the Austrians who helped to shape the Organisation and put their efforts into seeing it firmly established as Europe's moral compass. In particular, I highlighted the contribution of the former Parliamentary Assembly Presidents, Mr Karl Czernetz (1975-1978) and Mr Peter Schieder (2002-2005).

During my visit, I met Mr Wolfgang Sobotka, Speaker of the Austrian National Council and Mr Clemens Jabloner, Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Constitutional Affairs, Reforms Deregulation and Justice, as well as the Austrian national delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

I should like to thank the National Council and the national delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for organising my visit to Vienna so well.

1.2.4. High-level conference marking the 20th anniversary of GRECO (Strasbourg, 17 June 2019)

In my address to the Conference marking the 20th anniversary of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), I stressed that GRECO's work helps to preserve the integrity and legitimacy of our democratic institutions and our political system. I drew the attention of the participants to the normative acquis developed by GRECO based on the practices of its 49 member States in the field of prevention and fight against corruption. Moreover, I focused on GRECO's unique methodology of assessing all member States on an equal footing and on the basis of mutual peer review process.

Furthermore, I suggested ways of increasing collaboration between the Council of Europe bodies and GRECO, in particular by making the most of the tools already available, including ad hoc evaluation procedures, by organising parliamentary debates on GRECO's recommendations to ensure the best follow-up, as well as by encouraging closer co-operation with the European Union to avoid the emergence of two separate legal frameworks for prevention and fight against corruption.

1.2.5. Other activities

On 10 June 2019, following on from previous contacts, I met representatives of both chambers of the Russian Parliament to continue the dialogue about relations between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Russian Parliament, in particular in the light of the adoption by the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Institutional Affairs of the report on the decision-making process of the Parliamentary Assembly concerning credentials and voting.

On the same day, I spoke by telephone with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr Sergey Lavrov. The conversation focused on the issue of co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Russian Federation in the light of the adoption by the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs of the said report.

2. Speeches

- Opening speech of the 2nd part of the 2019 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly (Strasbourg, 8 April 2019)
- Speech delivered at the award ceremony of the 2019 Museum Prize to the Communication Museum of Bern (Strasbourg, 9 April 2019)
- Speech delivered at the Conference on fight against international terrorism (St Petersburg, 18 April 2019)
- Address to the Parliament of Georgia (Tbilisi, 30 April 2019)
- Conference at the University of Neuchâtel at the inauguration of the European Week (Neuchâtel, 3 May 2019)
- Speech on the occasion of being awarded the «Prix de l'Europe» by the New European Movement Switzerland (*Nouveau mouvement européen Suisse*) (Bern, 6 May 2019)
- Speech at the ceremony to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe (Helsinki, 16 May 2019)
- Address at the 129th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Helsinki, 17 May 2019)
- Introductory words to the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly (Paris, 24 May 2019)
- Speech delivered at the High-level seminar on public debate as a tool for the governance of new technologies (Strasbourg, 4 June 2019)
- Speech at the National Council of the Republic of Austria (Vienna, 13 June 2019)
- Speech delivered at the High-level conference marking the 20th anniversary of GRECO (Strasbourg, 17 June 2019)

3. Press releases

- Europe's 'common home' must be maintained and continue to wield influence, says PACE President (8 April 2019)
- International co-operation and preventive measures to counter terrorism and radicalisation (18 April 2019)
- After Christchurch and Sri Lanka, a religious community is again attacked in San Diego (28 April 2019)
- President deeply concerned by Russia's decision to offer Russian citizenship to Donbass residents (30 April 2019)
- PACE President congratulates Georgia on 20 years of solid progress (30 April 2019)
- 70th Anniversary of the Council of Europe: Joint statement by Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland, President of the Parliamentary Assembly Liliane Maury Pasquier and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers Timo Soini (3 May 2019)
- PACE President recalls principles forming the foundations of the 'Common European Home' (16 May 2019)
- Speaking to the Committee of Ministers in Helsinki, the President calls for a spirit of fraternity and co-operation (17 May 2019)
- The French Presidency is 'politically symbolic' as the Council of Europe marks its 70th anniversary (24 May 2019)
- President reacts to the explosion in Lyon (24 May 2019)

- Hunger strikes in Turkey come to an end: time to take meaningful steps to normalise political life (28 May 2019)
- President expresses condolences to victims of boat accident in Budapest (30 May 2019)
- Bioethics: PACE members must act as guardians of the Oviedo Convention (4 June 2019)
- President to meet representatives of the Russian Parliament (6 June 2019)
- PACE President speaks by telephone with Russian Foreign Minister (10 June 2019)
- President pays tribute to the Austria's contribution to the work of the Council of Europe (13 June 2019)
- President proposes new ways that parliamentarians can work with GRECO to fight corruption (17 June 2019)

4. Personalities met

4.1. Second part of the 2019 Ordinary Session (Strasbourg, 8-12 April 2019)

- Ms Petra De Sutter, Chairperson of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs of the Assembly
- Ms Tamar Chugoshvili, Chairperson of the Georgian delegation to the Assembly
- Mr Timo Soini, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland
- Mr Adão Silva, Vice-President of the Portuguese delegation to the Assembly
- Ms Nina Kassimati, member of the Greek delegation to the Assembly
- Mr Werner Amon, Chairperson of the Austrian delegation to the Assembly
- Mr Sergei Tereshenkov, Senior Coordinator for Public Relations, EU-Russia Civil Society Forum e.v. (Berlin), Mr Konstantin Baranov, International Youth Human Rights Movement (Rostov-on-Don/ Vilnius), Mr Yuri Dzhibladze, Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights/ Coordinator of the Advocacy Group at the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum (Moscow), Mr Harry Hummel, Netherlands Helsinki Committee, Forum Board member (The Hague), Ms Karinna Moskalenko, International Protection Centre (Moscow/ Strasbourg) and Ms Natalia Taubina, Public Verdict Foundation (Moscow)
- Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Croatia
- Group of Swiss students
- Ms Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe
- Mr Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister, Georgia
- Ms Isabelle Chassot, Director, Federal Department of the Interior, Federal Office for Culture, Switzerland
- Mr Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister, Republic of Armenia
- Mr Alain Lamassoure, former minister, member of the European Parliament
- Mr Abdenacer Hamoud, Ms Rafika Kasri and Mr Allel Talbi, Members of the Council of the Nation, Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria
- Mr Hisyar Özsoy and Ms Feleknaş Uca, members of the Turkish delegation to the Assembly, and Mr Fayik Yagizay, representative of the HDP, Turkey
- Representatives of local media
- Ms Caroline Schär, Clerk to the Federal Court of Lausanne, Deputy Judge to the Cantonal Court of Argovia, Switzerland

4.2. Conference on the fight against international terrorism co-organised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and IPA-CIS (St Petersburg, Russian Federation, 18 April 2019)

- Mr Makis Voridis, Chair of the Committee on Countering Terrorism of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
- Mr Leonid Slutskiy, Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the State Duma of the Russian Federation
- Mr Konstantin Kosachev, Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, First Vice-President of the Interparliamentary Union
- Ms Valentina Matvienko, Chairperson of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Chairperson of the Federation Council, Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
- Mr Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Director-General of the United Nations Office in Vienna

4.3. Working visit to Strasbourg and exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies (Strasbourg, 23-24 April 2019)

- Members of the Ministers' Deputies
- Mr Oubi Bachir, Representative of the Polisario Front in France, and members of the Polisario Front

4.4. Official visit to Georgia (Tbilisi, 29-30 April 2019)

- Mr Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia
- Ms Tamar Chugoshvili, First Deputy Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia, Head of the Georgian Delegation to the Assembly
- Ms Salome Zourabichvili, President of Georgia
- Mr Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia
- Mr David Zalkaliani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
- Members of the Georgian delegation to the Assembly

4.5. Ceremony commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe (Helsinki, 16 May 2019) and 129th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Helsinki, 17 May 2019)

- Mr Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland
- Mr Timo Soini, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland
- Ms Paula Risikko, Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Finland
- Mr Ignazio Cassis, Head of the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, Switzerland
- Ms Amélie de Montchalin, State Secretary to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, in charge of European Affairs, France
- Mr Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Turkey
- Ms Sirkka-Liisa Anttila, Vice-Chairperson of the Parliamentary Assembly Finnish Delegation

4.6. Meetings of the Parliamentary Assembly (Paris, 22-24 May 2019)

- Ms Nicole Trisse, President of the French delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly, France
- Ms Carole Bureau-Bonnard, First Vice-President of the National Assembly, France

- Ms Amélie de Montchalin, Secretary of State attached to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, in charge of European Affairs, representing the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers

4.7. High-level seminar on public debate as a tool for the governance of new technologies (Strasbourg, 3-4 June 2019)

- Ms Brigitte Bourguignon, President, Committee of Social Affairs, National Assembly, France
- Mr Jean-Baptiste Mattei, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe, Chairperson of the Ministers' Deputies

4.8. Working visit to Austria (Vienna, 12-13 June 2019)

- Mr. Rudolf Lennkh, Ambassador, Head of the Office of the Council of Europe in Vienna
- Members of the Austrian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly
- Mr Wolfgang Sobotka, President of the National Council of the Republic of Austria
- Mr Clemens Jabloner, Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Constitutional Affairs, Reforms, Deregulation and Justice of the Republic of Austria

4.9. High-level conference marking the 20th anniversary of GRECO (Strasbourg, 17 June 2019)

- Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- Ms Nicole Belloubet, Minister of Justice of France
- Ms Thea Tsulukiani, Minister of Justice of Georgia
- Ms Etilda Gjonaj, Minister of Justice of Albania
- Mr Laurent Anselmi, Director of Judicial Services, Principality of Monaco
- Mr Marin Mrčela, President of the GRECO
- Mr Jorge Lomónaco, Ambassador, Permanent Observer of Mexico to the Council of Europe
- Ms Maria Noemi Hernández Téllez, Deputy Permanent Observer of Mexico to the Council of Europe