Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
http://assembly.coe.int

1949.2019

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 14970
28 September 2019

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

Communication
President of the Assembly

1. Main activities

1.1. President's activities between 21 June and 29 August 2019

1.1.1. Joint meeting of two Sub-Committees of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media of the Assembly: the Sub-Committee on Culture, diversity and heritage, and the Sub-Committee on Media and Information Society (Bern, 21 June 2019)

On 21 June 2019, I attended the joint meeting of the Sub-Committees on Culture, Diversity and Heritage, and on Media and Information Society, held in Bern. At the opening of the meeting, I paid tribute to the work of the members of the Sub-Committees and welcomed, in particular, the promotion of culture, mutual understanding and education as a means of building a world of greater dignity, justice and solidarity. During the meeting, we exchanged views with experts in the field of education and with journalists who spoke about the training being offered to children and young people in Switzerland on how to handle the new media environment.

The participants also had the opportunity to visit the Museum of Communication in Bern, winner of the 2019 Museum Prize.

1.1.2. 3rd part of the 2019 Ordinary Session of the Assembly (Strasbourg, 24-28 June 2019)

The third part of the 2019 Ordinary Session of the Assembly was an opportunity to continue discussions with the Bureau of the Ministers' Deputies about the implementation of the Assembly's and the Committee of Ministers' decisions regarding the development of a new complementary joint mechanism to react to serious violations by the member States of the Statute of the Council of Europe and of their membership obligations. The personal involvement of 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, in these discussions was particularly valued and I would like to thank her for her commitment.

Furthermore, it was an honour to receive Mr Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic, on the occasion of his visit to the Council of Europe. During our meeting, we discussed the challenges that the Council of Europe has to face, the dangerous rise of populist and anti-institutional political forces in Europe, as well as Europe's response to the migratory challenges.

Finally, during this part-session, I held meetings with Chairpersons and members of a number of national delegations to the Assembly. In particular, we discussed the issue of the dialogue between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers, as well as the Council of Europe's capacity to react to situations of violations by member States of their statutory obligations and commitments.

1.1.3. Working visit to Strasbourg, including an exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies (Strasbourg, 3-4 July 2019)

On 3 July 2019, I participated in an exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies to present the results of the 2019 June part-session of the Assembly. In my speech, I put particular emphasis on the report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs on credentials and voting; on the situation of the Russian delegation in our Assembly; as well as on the launching of the dialogue between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly regarding the setting-up of a new joint procedure of reaction to situations when a member State violates its statutory obligations or does not respect the fundamental principles and values upheld by the Council of Europe.

1.1.4. 28th Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and working visit to Luxembourg (Luxembourg, 6-8 July 2019)

On 6-7 July 2019, I participated in the 28th Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE devoted to the theme "*Advancing Sustainable Development to Promote Security: the Role of Parliaments*". Addressing the OSCE PA members in plenary sitting, I emphasised that national parliaments were important relays for ensuring the inclusiveness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals; they should therefore actively participate in the Agenda 2030 coordinating bodies, both at national and international levels. I thus encouraged parliamentarians to contribute actively to the preparation of the voluntary national reviews, as well as to be part of national delegations of their respective countries to the United Nations General Assembly, so as to engage in international discussions. Finally, I highlighted the need to focus on transversal issues of the 2030 Agenda, such as the equality between women and men, and I invited OSCE PA members to support the #NotInMyParliament initiative.

In the margins of the plenary session, I held bilateral talks with the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, Mr George Tsereteli, and with the Secretary General of the OSCE, Mr Thomas Greminger. These meetings allowed me to discuss the excellent co-operation existing between our organisations, as well as to emphasise the need to further strengthen it, in a spirit of complementarity, concentrating on such topics as the fight against trafficking in human beings and the promotion of gender equality.

In the margins of the Annual Session of the OSCE PA, I met with the authorities of Luxembourg. During these meetings, I welcomed the important contribution of Luxembourg – recognised as a great defender of multilateralism – to the work of the Council of Europe. The future of our Organisation, as well as the role of parliaments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, were also at the centre of my discussions. I would like to warmly thank the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg for the excellent organisation of my visit.

1.1.5. Side event on "Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians" organised in the margins of the 41st Session of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations (Geneva, 10 July 2019)

On 10 July 2019, I participated in the side event on "Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians", which took place in the margins of the 41st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. This event, which was co-organised by the Parliamentary Assembly, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, UN Women, the Permanent Missions of Canada and Costa Rica to the United Nations in Geneva, and the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, aimed at taking stock of ongoing legal and political initiatives to end violence against women in politics, sharing experiences and strengthening partnerships at global, regional and national levels.

In my speech, I highlighted the results of the joint Inter-Parliamentary Union/Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Study conducted in 2018, which showed that almost all women interviewed (parliamentarians and female parliamentary staff) had been affected in one way or another by sexism, harassment and violence. I emphasised that parliamentarians have a twofold role in dealing with the phenomena of sexism and harassment: on the one hand, we must adopt a clear legal framework to punish abuses and promote equality education; on the other, we must accompany legislative activities by awareness-raising work in order to change attitudes. Finally, I pointed out that the #NotInMyParliament initiative was fully in line with this strategy and I invited all those present to take ownership of it, while adapting the hashtag to their own environment.

1.1.6. Meeting of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize Selection Panel (Prague, 26-27 August 2019)

On 26-27 August 2019, I took part in the meeting of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize Selection Panel. The Selection panel shortlisted the following candidates for the 2019 Prize, in alphabetical order:

– Mr Ilham Tohti (China)

– Mr Buzurgmehr Yorov (Tajikistan)

– Youth Initiative for Human Rights.

The award ceremony will take place in Strasbourg, on 30 September 2019.

1.2. President's activities between 30 August and 25 September 2019

1.2.1. Meeting of the Assembly's Bureau (Bern, 3 September 2019)

At the invitation of the Swiss Parliament, the Bureau of the Assembly held a meeting in Bern, on 3 September 2019. We were particularly honoured by the address of Mr Jean-René Fournier, President of the Council of States, at the opening of the meeting, which was an opportunity to highlight Switzerland's contribution to the Council of Europe's work. Moreover, the Bureau meeting provided an opportunity to consider a wide range of issues relating to the preparation of the Assembly's 2019 fourth part-session.

In the margins of the Bureau meeting, I attended the meeting of the Presidential Committee, as well as the joint meeting between the Presidential Committee and the Bureau of the Ministers' Deputies, with the participation of 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. The main topic of our agenda was the setting up of the joint procedure of reaction to serious violations by member States of the Council of Europe Statute and the European Convention on Human Rights. As a result of our discussions, we agreed to organise wider consultations, respectively at the level of the Ministers' Deputies and of the Parliamentary Assembly. In this context, I intend to convene during the 2019 fourth part-session a meeting of the Presidential Committee with the Chairpersons of national delegations.

I should like to thank the Swiss Parliament, in particular Mr Jean-René Fournier, President of the Council of States, and Ms Marina Carobbio Guscetti, President of the National Council, for their hospitality and the excellent organisation of our meetings.

1.2.2. Working visit to Latvia (Riga, 9-10 September 2019)

On 9-10 September 2019, I paid a working visit to Riga, Latvia, to participate in the 5th parliamentary conference entitled "Implementing the standards of the European Convention on Human Rights: key role of national parliaments", as well as to hold some bilateral meetings with the Latvian authorities.

At the opening of the conference, I highlighted the steps that parliamentarians could take to help implement the European Convention on Human Rights, by scrutinising draft legislation with respect to its compliance with the Convention, by overseeing the execution of Court judgments, by taking an active part in the negotiations on and ratification of international conventions referring to the Istanbul Convention as an example, as well as by promoting a wider human rights culture within our societies.

While in Riga, I met with Latvian high officials, including the President of the Republic, the Foreign Affairs Minister, the Deputy Speakers of the Saeima and the Chairperson of the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs. During these meetings, I praised Latvia – a member State of the Council of Europe since 1995 – as a strong partner and a staunch defender of the core values of the Organisation.

These meetings were also an opportunity to discuss major political issues on the Parliamentary Assembly's agenda. In this context, I underlined the significant role played by the Parliamentary Assembly as a forum for dialogue and co-operation, as well as its role in firmly protecting and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law in all member States of the Council of Europe. Furthermore, I discussed the issue of setting up a joint procedure of reaction to serious violations by member States of the Council of Europe Statute and the European Convention on Human Rights. Moreover, I discussed the prospects for ratification by Latvia of the Istanbul Convention.

Finally, I would like to thank the Latvian authorities, in particular the Saeima, for the excellent organisation of my visit.

1.2.3. Official visit to Azerbaijan (Baku, 11-12 September 2019)

At the invitation of the Speaker of the Parliament of Azerbaijan, I paid an official visit to Baku on 11-12 September 2019. During my visit, I met the President of the Republic, the Speaker of Parliament and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, I held exchanges of views with the Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs, the Committee on Ethics, as well as the Azerbaijani delegation to the Assembly. Furthermore, during my visit, I participated in the Conference devoted to the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, organised by the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, the Council of Europe Co-operation Office in Baku and the French-Azerbaijani University.

During my visit, I had the opportunity to discuss a whole series of issues openly and frankly, in particular the situation of civil society and means of facilitating the work of NGOs and strengthening dialogue between NGOs and the authorities, the execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, independence of justice and facilitating access to the justice system. I was also able to discuss the integrity and ethics of members of parliament, the accession of Azerbaijan to the Istanbul Convention and the establishment of a new joint procedure of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly to respond to serious violations by member States of the Council of Europe Statute and the European Convention on Human Rights. I appreciated the openness to dialogue of the authorities at the highest level, even on difficult and sensitive issues.

Speaking about the implementation of the judgments of the Court, I encouraged increased co-operation with the Council of Europe, which could provide the necessary expertise to identify appropriate solutions. It was particularly important to hear from my interlocutors a clear statement confirming that when Azerbaijan joined the Council of Europe, the European Convention on Human Rights became an integral part of the country's constitutional system. As a consequence, all judgments of the European Court of Human Rights must be implemented.

Turning to the issue of the situation of civil society, I highlighted the contribution of NGOs to the country's democratic development in a number of areas, including the promotion of fundamental freedoms such as those of expression and association, as well as freedom to demonstrate. I also highlighted the importance of fighting against human trafficking, promoting democratic elections, providing legal aid for the victims of human rights violations and campaigning for gender equality. I called on the authorities to consider setting up mechanisms for ongoing dialogue between the authorities and civil society so that the whole range of views in society can be expressed freely. More flexible legislation and administrative regulations governing the activity of civil society would contribute greatly to this process. Moreover, I highlighted the need to improve the situation of lawyers, who are clearly lacking in numbers; improved access to justice would also facilitate the work of human rights defenders and enhance respect for the rule of law in the interest of all individuals and all economic players. I learned that new reforms in the justice sector were launched and called for increased co-operation in this respect with the Council of Europe, which could help to survey existing good practices in our 47 member States and provide the necessary expertise.

Speaking at the Conference dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, I reaffirmed the Council of Europe's key political goal, which is to preserve peace and build a closer union between the peoples of Europe and called on member States to show political commitment to promoting the values which the Council of Europe champions.

Finally, I would like to thank the Azerbaijani authorities, in particular the Parliament, for the excellent organisation of my visit.

1.2.4. Participation in the panel "Take a stand: say no to sexism and harassment", organised in the framework of "Peace One Day" (London, 21 September 2019)

On 21 September, on the occasion of the International Day of Peace, I took part in a round table on the theme "Take a stand: say no to sexism and harassment". The event was held by the Parliamentary Assembly and the organisation Peace One Day, which since 1999, has done outstanding work to institutionalise 21 September as an international day of peace and to encourage people everywhere in the world to adopt more peaceful attitudes and take targeted steps to reduce all forms of violence.

On this important day, I therefore chose to take a stand against harassment and violence against women in the workplace, particularly in parliaments. Taking part in this event provided me with an opportunity to point out that it is everyone's responsibility to work every day to try to change things. Denouncing abuse, raising awareness of it around you and choosing to speak out about it is already a contribution to this cause. This approach was behind my decision to launch the #NotInMyParliament campaign. It may be a mere drop in the

ocean, but if we want to trigger change, every little drop helps. I am glad that the other participants in the meeting, who were from a whole range of different backgrounds including the Secretary General of the Commonwealth and representatives of the private sector and civil society, decided to support it.

2. Speeches

- Speech at the meeting of the Sub-Committees on Culture, Diversity and Heritage, and on Media and Information Society, of the Committee of Culture, Science, Education and Media (Bern, 21 June 2019)
- Opening speech of the 3rd part of the 2019 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (24 June 2019)
- Address to the 28th Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE (Luxembourg, 7 July 2019)
- Exchange of views with the Members of the Bureau and of the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs, Co-operation, Immigration and Asylum of the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg (Luxembourg, 8 July 2019)
- Statement at the side event on "Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians", organised in the margins of the 41st Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (Geneva,10 July 2019)
- Introduction to the Bureau meeting in the Swiss Parliament (Bern, 3 September 2019)
- Opening address of the 5th Parliamentary Conference on implementing standards of the European Convention on Human Rights: key role of national parliaments (Riga, Latvia, 9 September 2019)
- Key-note speech at the high-level Conference devoted to the 70th Anniversary of the Council of Europe "Our Rights, Our Freedoms, Our Europe" (Baku, Azerbaijan, 11 September 2019)
- Statement at the panel discussion "Take a Stand: Say no to Sexism and Harassment", organised at the PeaceOneDay event: (London, 21 September 2019)

3. Press releases

- Liliane Maury Pasquier: "Promoting culture to build a more just and inclusive world" (21 June 2019)
- We must shoulder our responsibilities to defend the common interests of all Europeans (24 June 2019)
- President regrets Ukrainian Parliament's decision to withdraw election observation invitation (3 July 2019)
- Parliaments can act as relays for ensuring the inclusiveness of UN development goals (8 July 2019)
- Stepping up legislative and awareness-raising work to combat sexism against women parliamentarians (10 July 2019)
- Harassment and bullying at Westminster: time to declare #NotInMyParliament (11 July 2019)
- Liliane Maury Pasquier: "Hate speech and hate crimes are a gangrene on our societies" (22 July 2019)
- Arrests in Moscow: PACE President expresses deep concern (28 July 2019)
- After 70 years of the Geneva Conventions, civilians and the wounded in warfare 'more at risk than ever' (12 August 2019)
- PACE President welcomes exchange of prisoners between Russia and Ukraine (7 September 2019)
- In Riga, PACE President calls for the 'anchoring' of human rights in parliamentary work (10 September 2019)
- Azerbaijan: the President calls for open and frank dialogue and increased co-operation (13 September 2019)
- Sexism and harassment: current situation and solutions, at the heart of a 'Peace One Day' event in London (18 September 2019)
- PACE President, marking Peace Day, invites us to take a personal stand against violence and inequality (21 September 2019)

4. Personalities met

4.1. Bern, 20 June 2019

– Mr Artem Rybchenko, Ambassador of Ukraine in Switzerland (Bern, 20 June 2019)

4.2. Joint meeting of the Sub-Committees on Culture, Diversity and Heritage, and on Media and Information Society, of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Bern, 21 June 2019)

– Mr Christian Georges, Scientific collaborator, General Secretariat of the Intercantonal Conference of Public Education of French-speaking Switzerland (CIIP), Switzerland

– Mr Philippe Froidevaux, Director of the Fritic Competence Centre, Directorate of Public Education, Culture and Sport in Fribourg, Switzerland

– Mr Beat Döbeli, Head of the Institute for Media and Schools, Pädagogische Hochschule Schwyz, Switzerland

– Ms Tania Chytil, Journalist, producer of RTS Découverte, Educational website of Radio Télévision Suisse (RTS), Switzerland

– Ms Magali Philip, Journalist in charge of social networks, RTSinfo, Switzerland

– Mr Filippo Lombardi, Chairperson of the Swiss delegation to the Assembly

– Lord George Foulkes, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, and General Rapporteur on Media Freedom and Safety of Journalists of the Assembly

4.3. 3rd part of the 2019 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 24-28 June 2019)

– 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

– Mr Volodymyr Ariev, Chairperson, and other members of the Ukrainian Delegation to the Assembly

– Mr Adrian Nastase, Chairperson, and other members of the Moldovan Delegation to the Assembly

– Mr Akif Kiliç, Chairperson of the Turkish Delegation to the Assembly

– Mr Andreas Nick, Chairperson of the German Delegation to the Assembly

– Ms Marija Golubeva, Member of the Latvian Delegation to the Assembly

– Mr Armagan Candan, Representative of the Turkish Cypriot Community

– Mr Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of Portugal

– Mr Gusty Grass, Chairperson of the Luxemburgish Delegation to the Assembly

– Representatives of the Association «Mothers of Srebrenica»

– Ms Nicole Trisse, Chairperson of the French Delegation to the Assembly

– Mr Piotr Tolstoy, Chairperson, and other members of the Russian Delegation to the Assembly

– Mr Matthew Caruana Galizia, son of Ms Daphne Caruana Galizia, Maltese journalist assassinated on 16 October 2017

– Mr Raphaël Comte, Member of the Swiss Delegation to the Assembly

– Ms Yulia Lovochkina, First Vice-Chairperson of the Ukrainian Delegation to the Assembly

4.4. Working visit to Strasbourg, including an exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies (Strasbourg, 3-4 July 2019)

– Mr Jean-Baptiste Mattei, Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe, Chairperson of the Ministers' Deputies

4.5. 28th Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and working visit to Luxembourg (Luxembourg, 6-8 July 2019)

– Mr George Tsereteli, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE
– Mr Thomas Greminger, Secretary General of the OSCE
– Mr Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Immigration and Asylum of Luxembourg
– Mr Fernand Etgen, President of the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg
– Members of the Luxemburgish Delegation to the Assembly
– Mr Marc Angels, President, and members of the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs, Cooperation, Immigration and Asylum of the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg
– Members of the Bureau of the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg

4.6. Side event "Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians" organised in the margins of the 41st Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (Geneva,10 July 2019)

– Ms Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights
– Mr Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
– Ms Thorhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir, Member of the Assembly, rapporteur on 'Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment'
– Ms Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo, General rapporteur on violence against women in the Parliamentary Assembly
– Ms Elayne Whyte Gómez, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Costa Rica to the United Nations in Geneva
– Ms Julie Ballington, Policy Advisor on Political Participation, Leadership and Governance Section, UN Women
– Ms Clarisse Gérardin, Human Rights adviser, Permanent Representation of France to the United Nations in Geneva

4.7. Václav Havel Human Rights Prize Selection Panel (Prague, 26-27 August 2019)

– Members of the 2019 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize Selection Panel

4.8. Meeting of the Assembly's Bureau (Bern, 3 September 2019)

– Mr Jean-René Fournier, President of the Council of States of Switzerland
– Ms Marina Carobbio Guscetti, President of the National Council of Switzerland
– 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
– Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
– Members of the Bureau of the Ministers' Deputies

4.9. Working visit to Latvia (Riga, 9-10 September 2019)

– Ms Inese Lībina-Egnere, Deputy Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia
– Ms Thorhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir, Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, member of the Parliament of Iceland
– Ms Dagmāra Beitnere, Deputy Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia
– Mr Jānis Sārts, Director of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga
– Mr Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia
– Mr Rihards Kols, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia
– Mr Nils Muižnieks, Political Scientist and Expert on Human Rights
– Mr Egils Levits, President of the Republic of Latvia
– Members of the parliamentary delegation of Latvia to the Parliamentary Assembly

4.10. Working visit to Azerbaijan (Baku, 10-13 September 2019)

– Mr Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
– Mr Ogtay Asadov, Chairman of the Milli Mejlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Azerbaijan
– Mr Mustafa Babanli, Rector of French-Azerbaijani University (UFAZ)
– Mr Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan
– Ms Hijran Huseynova, Chairperson of the Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Milli Mejlis, and members of the Committee of the Milli Mejlis
– Members of the Ethics Committee of the Milli Mejlis
– Members of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly
– Representatives of the civil society
– Representatives of the diplomatic community in Baku

4.11. Participation in the panel "Take a stand: say no to sexism and harassment", organised in the framework of "Peace One Day" (London, 21 September 2019)

– Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Commonwealth Secretary-General
– Will Gardner, CEO, Childnet and Director, UK Safer Internet Centre
– Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu, Lawyer and Political and Women's Rights Activist
– Jan Zijderveld, CEO, Avon Foundation for Women