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Follow-up to the reform of the Council of Europe

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 1951 (2011)

Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined [Recommendation 1951 \(2011\)](#) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on “Follow-up to the reform of the Council of Europe”. It shares the Parliamentary Assembly’s attachment to a politically relevant and effective Council of Europe and its support for the reform initiated by the Secretary General. It appreciates the Parliamentary Assembly’s proposals to this end. It also welcomes the Parliamentary Assembly’s initiative of launching its own reform process in order to strengthen its political relevance and effectiveness.

2. The Committee of Ministers has taken note of the Parliamentary Assembly’s wish to launch a debate on the need for a Council of Europe Summit in order to give the Organisation fresh political impetus (paragraph 2.1 of the recommendation). On this subject, the Committee of Ministers recalls that the reform of the Organisation is above all a political reform, which has focused on strategic changes and has put in place the appropriate governance tools for these changes to be feasible; all these actions are contributing to improve the place of the Council of Europe in the European architecture. The 121st Session of the Committee of Ministers (Istanbul, 10-11 May 2011) firmly backed the reform of the Organisation and the efforts to optimise its political potential in the interests of European citizens. On this occasion, the Committee of Ministers agreed to take stock of the progress in the Organisation’s reform process at its next Session. It would therefore seem appropriate to await the first results of the reform process before considering convening a Council of Europe Summit.

3. The other proposals set out in paragraphs 2.2 to 2.6 of the recommendation have been taken into account in the framework of the Secretary General’s proposed reforms. We should mention in this context the new structure of the intergovernmental committees² approved by the Committee of Ministers in April 2011, that of the Secretariat approved in June 2011, the June 2011 Resolution on Council of Europe conferences of specialised ministers³, and the action taken to set up a Strasbourg Democracy Forum. Furthermore, as regards synergy among policy makers, citizens and civil society, the Secretary General has provided a number of pointers⁴ to revitalise Council of Europe co-operation with civil society. He will be making proposals for follow-up, which will be considered by the Committee of Ministers at one of its forthcoming meetings. All these measures, together with other reform actions such as the ongoing reform of the European Court of Human Rights or the reform of the external presence, are intended to reinforce the Organisation’s coherency and impact.

4. In connection with allowing the specialised ministries to contribute to the financing of certain Council of Europe activities (paragraph 2.7 of the recommendation), the Committee of Ministers recalls that the member States are responsible for the financing of the Organisation’s activities. Each government is therefore free to decide whether or not its specialised ministries contribute to the financing of any of the Organisation’s

1. Adopted at the 1131st meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (18 January 2012).

2. See document SG/Inf(2011)9 final.

3. See resolution CM/Res(2011)7.

4. See document SG/Inf(2011)12 rev.



activities, notably by means of voluntary contributions or under partial agreements. As for the choice of priorities for Council of Europe intergovernmental action, the Committee of Ministers recognises the high level input of specialised ministries, even though this remains a prerogative of the Committee of Ministers.

5. In line with the proposal set out in paragraph 2.8 of the recommendation and in the framework of the discussions on the Programme and Budget 2012-2013 of the Organisation, which was adopted on 24 November 2011, the Secretary General made additional proposals reallocating new savings made to priority programme lines.

6. Lastly, the exchange of views on 12 January 2012 between the Committee of Ministers' Working Party on Institutional Reforms (GT-REF.INST) and Mr Jean-Claude Mignon (Rapporteur on the follow-up to the reform of the Council of Europe), Mr Egidijus Vareikis (Chair of the Assembly's Committee on Rules of Procedure) and Mr Serhiy Holovaty (Rapporteur on the follow-up by the Committee of Ministers to the work of the Parliamentary Assembly) represents a further positive development in strengthening working relations between the two bodies.