



Resolution 1680 (2009)¹

Establishment of a “partner for democracy” status with the Parliamentary Assembly

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly reaffirms its strong commitment to developing co-operation with neighbouring regions as a means of consolidating democratic transformations and promoting stability, good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, as expressed, inter alia, in its [Recommendation 1724 \(2005\)](#) on the Council of Europe and the European Neighbourhood Policy of the European Union, its [Resolution 1506 \(2006\)](#) on external relations of the Council of Europe, its [Resolution 1598 \(2008\)](#) on strengthening co-operation with the Maghreb countries, and its [Resolution 1599 \(2008\)](#) on the situation in the republics of central Asia.
2. It also recalls that the heads of state and government of the Council of Europe, meeting at their Warsaw Summit in May 2005, expressed their commitment to new intercultural and inter-religious dialogue with neighbouring regions – the southern Mediterranean, the Middle East and central Asia – based on respect for universal human rights.
3. In this context, the Assembly takes positive note of the progress made recently by the various bodies, institutions and mechanisms in developing Council of Europe co-operation with non-member states in neighbouring regions. It particularly welcomes the accession of a number of non-member states to several Council of Europe conventions and partial agreements.
4. The Assembly further notes that both the European Union, in the framework of its European Neighbourhood Policy, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), under its relations with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, are contributing to the promotion of democratic principles in Europe's neighbourhood.
5. The Assembly also refers to its own efforts to establish working contacts with parliaments of neighbouring countries, and welcomes ongoing co-operation with the parliaments of Algeria, Kazakhstan, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as with the Palestinian Legislative Council.
6. It notes that several of these parliaments have expressed interest in upgrading the status of existing co-operation, and in establishing a relationship on a permanent basis.
7. The Assembly recalls that political dialogue and co-operation at parliamentary level was of key importance in the process of rapprochement between central and eastern European states and the Council of Europe in the early 1990s.
8. It is convinced that strengthening the existing working relations with parliaments of neighbouring countries would be similarly decisive for establishing a new partnership, as well as for promoting parliamentary democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the principles of the rule of law in these countries. It stands ready to play fully its role as the political engine of the Council of Europe, and to take the lead in building institutionalised relations with the neighbourhood.

1. Assembly debate on 26 June 2009 (26th Sitting) (see [Doc. 11913](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Van den Brande). Text adopted by the Assembly on 26 June 2009 (26th Sitting).



9. The Assembly believes that its on-going co-operation with parliaments of neighbouring countries would gain in coherence, efficiency and visibility if it were to be put on an institutional basis. However, it is aware that its existing Rules of Procedure do not provide an appropriate framework for such co-operation.

10. Special guest status with the Assembly (Rule 59 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly) was established as a provisional status for parliaments of European non-member states that applied for membership of the Council of Europe. Observer status with the Assembly (Rule 60), for its part, was designed for parliaments of non-European democracies willing to contribute to democratic transitions in Europe.

11. Therefore, the Assembly resolves to establish a new status for institutional co-operation with parliaments of non-member states in neighbouring regions wishing to benefit from the Assembly's experience in democracy building and to participate in the political debate on common challenges which transcend European boundaries.

12. The Assembly decides that the new status shall be called "partner for democracy". It shall be defined in terms similar to those of special guest status (Rule 59 of the Rules of Procedure), with the necessary modifications, and in particular:

12.1. the decision on granting, on suspending and/or withdrawing "partner for democracy" status shall be taken by the Assembly following a debate in plenary on a report by the Political Affairs Committee with an opinion by the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and an opinion by the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men;

12.2. the formal request for "partner for democracy" status, to be addressed to the President of the Assembly by the president of the parliament concerned, shall contain the following elements:

12.2.1. an explicit reference to the aspiration of the said parliament to embrace the values of the Council of Europe, which are pluralist and gender parity-based democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

12.2.2. a commitment to act and encourage the competent authorities to introduce a moratorium on executions and abolish the death penalty;

12.2.3. a statement on the intention of the parliament to make use of the Assembly's experience, as well as the expertise of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), in its institutional and legislative work;

12.2.4. a commitment to organise free and fair elections conforming to international standards in the matter;

12.2.5. a commitment to encourage balanced participation of women and men in public and political life;

12.2.6. a commitment to encourage the competent authorities of the country to become party to the relevant Council of Europe conventions and partial agreements which are open for signature and ratification by non-member states, in particular those dealing with issues of human rights, the rule of law and democracy issues;

12.2.7. an obligation regularly to inform the Assembly on the state of progress in implementing Council of Europe principles;

12.3. the number of members of a "partner for democracy" delegation shall be fixed by the Assembly; its composition shall respect, as far as possible, the principles set forth in Rule 6.2.a of the Rules of Procedure;

12.4. the Assembly shall periodically review the progress made by the parliaments concerned in the framework of the "partner for democracy" status.

13. Furthermore, when examining a request for "partner for democracy" status, particular consideration shall be given to the existence of a multi-party composition of the parliament and to the respect of the rights of the opposition.

14. Having regard to the particular situation of each country whose parliament wishes to obtain "partner for democracy" status, the Assembly could, on the proposal of the committees concerned, set out specific conditions to be met before or after the status has been granted.

15. The national parliaments of all southern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries participating in the Union for the Mediterranean-Barcelona Process (including the Palestinian Legislative Council), and of central Asian countries participating in the OSCE (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), should be eligible to request “partner for democracy” status with the Assembly. However, requests from parliaments of other states may also be considered if the Bureau of the Assembly so decides.

16. The Assembly asks its relevant committee to prepare amendments to its Rules of Procedure in accordance with the present resolution.