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Communication by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly

Communication
President of the Assembly

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1. Past meetings and visits

1.1. World forum on inter-cultural dialogue (Baku, 7 April 2011); Bilateral working meetings with the Azerbaijani authorities (7-8 April 2011)

Following the invitation of the Azerbaijani authorities, I attended on 7 April 2011 the opening session of the "World Forum on Inter-cultural Dialogue – United Through Common Values, Enriched by Cultural Diversity" and addressed the participants. Some 500 participants from 102 countries attended the Forum, together with senior representatives of key international partners (UNESCO, ISESCO, UN Alliance of Civilisations). The President of Azerbaijan, Mr Ilham Alyiev, opened the Forum.

In my address, I underlined that the fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law make up the foundation for intercultural dialogue and create an environment in which dialogue can flourish. Referring to the Council of Europe White Paper on Inter-cultural dialogue as well as to the recent Assembly reports on this subject, I called upon the participants to design and implement comprehensive national policies for promoting intercultural dialogue, stressing in particular the role that Parliaments should play in this process.

In the margins of the Forum, I held a series of working meetings with the President, Mr Ilham Alyiev, the Speaker of the Milli Mejlis, Mr Ogtay Asadov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Elmar Mammadyarov, as well as the members of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Assembly. My meetings focused on the co-operation between Azerbaijan and the Council of Europe in the implementation of key outstanding commitments and obligations as well as the most recent Assembly recommendations.

1.2. Visit to Tunisia by the Presidential Committee (20-22 April 2011)

On 20-22 April 2011, I took part in the visit of the Presidential Committee to Tunisia. This visit aimed at identifying, together with the authorities, concrete areas where the Assembly could provide its political support to Tunisia in the current process of democratic transformation. Together with my colleagues – leaders and representatives of the Assembly's five political groups – I met Mr Fouad Mebazaa, President of the Republic a.i., Mr Beji Caïd Essebsi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tunisia, Mr Mohamed Mouldi Kefi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Taoufik Bouderbala, President of the National Committee for the establishment of facts during the recent developments, Mr Yadh Ben Achour, President of the High Commission for the achievement of the goals of the revolution, for political reform and democratic transition, as well as some NGO representatives and the Ambassadors of Council of Europe member states in Tunisia.

In our meetings we saluted the Tunisian people's determination to build a genuine democratic society based on universal values and commended the government and people of Tunisia for managing the transition well. We also welcomed the creation of a series of commissions to prepare the democratic reforms, in line with the Assembly recommendations.

We stressed that the key priority of the authorities was to organise elections to the Constituent Assembly in compliance with the highest democratic standards, referring to the expertise and support that the Venice Commission could provide in this respect. In this context, we assured our partners of the Assembly's full support as well as readiness and availability to observe the forthcoming elections.

In this context, I orally invited the Prime Minister of Tunisia, Mr Beji Caïd Essebsi, to address the Assembly during its June 2011 part-session, in relation with the debates on the co-operation between the Council of Europe and emerging democracies in the Arab world as well as the situation in Tunisia.

Finally, we once again encouraged the current Tunisian authorities to keep in mind the opportunities offered by the status of "Partnership for democracy" with the Assembly as well as the conditions attached to it, so that the Constituent Assembly and the future authorities to be established could eventually prepare the ground for applying for this status, once a Parliament is elected.

After the visit, further to my official invitation, the Prime Minister designated Mr Mohamed Mouldi Kefi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to participate in the Assembly debate during the June part session.

1.3. Official visit to Croatia (17-19 April 2011)

During the visit, I met the President of the Republic, Mr Ivo Josipovic, the Speaker of Parliament Mr Luka Bebic, the Prime Minister, Ms Jadranka Kosor, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Mr Gordan Jandrokovic. Talks were also held with, in particular, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament and Chairman of the Committee on European Integration, Mr Neven Mimica, with the

Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee and head of the Croatian delegation to PACE, Mr Frano Matušic, as well as with the Chairperson of the National Committee for monitoring the accession negotiations with the EU, Ms Vesna Pusic, and with members of the parliamentary Committee on human and national minority rights.

With my interlocutors I praised the active and constructive role that Croatia has played during its 15 year membership in the Council of Europe, thus demonstrating its potential of playing the same positive role and making full benefit of a membership in the European Union. I stressed that the country has a special responsibility as it would serve as a model of European integration to the other countries of the region.

I paid tribute to the efforts that Croatia has made in dealing with the past, also praising its role in fostering reconciliation and co-operation in the region. Further effort is still needed to pursue war crimes prosecutions at domestic level, in particular in order to ensure unbiased trials, regardless of the national origin of the defendants and to provide reparation for victims. Finding a fair and final solution to the property issues of refugees and IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) would also help to close this chapter.

I urged the Croatian authorities to pursue the reform of the judiciary in order to increase its efficiency and professionalism.

I also commended the “zero tolerance” shown by the Croatian authorities to corruption and efforts to fight organised crime, and urged them to show courage and determination in pursuing this policy, to further strengthen regional co-operation in these areas and to make extensive use of the help of Council of Europe specialised bodies.

I stressed that although much has been achieved in the field of minority rights, further efforts are needed to eradicate hatred inherited from the past and improve the situation of the Roma.

Talks also focused on the current reform of the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights, the situation in neighbouring Balkan countries, as well as on the need for greater co-operation and intercultural and inter-religious dialogue in the Mediterranean, in the light of current events in North Africa.

1.4. High Level Conference on “The Future of the European Court of Human Rights” (Izmir, Turkey, 26 April 2011)

In my address, I stressed that national parliaments must play a key role in stemming the flood of applications submerging the European Court of Human Rights, mostly through rigorously and systematically verifying the compatibility of draft and existing laws with the Convention’s standards. Parliaments should apply pressure on governments to rapidly implement the Court’s judgments when violations were found.

I also underlined the Assembly’s role in electing the judges of the Court, pointing out that the Assembly was doing its best to ensure that the judges were of the highest caliber and did not hesitate to send back lists of candidates which it considered unsatisfactory

On this occasion, I held bilateral meetings with the Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Sven Alkalaj, and Bulgarian Deputy Minister of the Interior, Mr. Veselin Vuchkov.

1.5. General Assembly of the Association of Towns awarded the Europe Prize (Ankara, 6-7 May 2011)

The General Assembly of the Association of Towns awarded the Europe Prize was held on 6 and 7 May 2011 at the invitation of the Mayor of Ankara. Around twenty mayors took part in this Assembly and discussed projects of social cohesion in their towns; they also elected their new president, the Mayor of Ankara, Mr Melih Göcek, for a period of two years.

I participated in the opening session, in the exceptional presence of the Turkish Prime Minister, Mr Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

1.6. 121st session of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers meeting (Istanbul, 10-11 May 2011)

In my address, I said that a Council of Europe summit was needed to ensure the necessary level of political commitment to implement the measures proposed by the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe in their report on “Living together – combining diversity and freedom in 21st century Europe”. Such a Summit would mark the new start for a reformed Council of Europe with the European Union as member to the

European Convention on Human Rights and would also highlight the unique capacity of our Organisation to cover a united, but multi-polar Europe – comprising the European Union, but also non-European Union member states.

I also used this occasion to meet Mr. Rupiah Bwezani Banda, President of Zambia, and Mr. Alpha Conde, President of Guinea, who were in Istanbul to participate in the UN Summit of the least developed countries.

1.7. Meeting of the Bureau of the Congress (Antalya, Turkey, 13 May 2011)

I participated and addressed the meeting of the Bureau of the Congress.

1.8. Standing Committee and official meetings in Ukraine (Kiev, 25-27 May 2011)

On the occasion of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly, I met the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and acting Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, and the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, Volodymyr Lytvyn.

1.9. Meeting of the European Forum Cyprus (Istanbul, 27 May 2011)

This project, jointly supported by the Council of Europe and the European Commission, brings together young leaders from the two communities of Cyprus. I called for a lasting and comprehensive solution for a peaceful and united Cyprus, which would guarantee the legitimate rights of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, in full compliance with the values and principles of the Council of Europe. I have also stressed that the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly could make a useful contribution through promoting people-to-people contacts.

2. Press releases

1. ’Give the Roma more say!’ declares PACE President (7 April 2011)

2. PACE President: the revolutions in the Arab world proof that the values the ’47’ stands for are universal (11 April 2011)

3. PACE Presidential Committee salutes progress in Tunisia, calls on the authorities ’not to fail the expectations of the people’ (21 April 2011)

4. PACE President to make official visit to Croatia (26 April 2011)

5. President points to the Assembly’s potential key role in ’stemming the flood’ of Court cases (26 April 2011)

6. Croatia ’on the right track’, a potential model for other Balkan countries (26 April 2011)

7. Terrorist attack in Marrakech: PACE President extends his condolences (29 April 2011)

8. The Europe Prize: an important medium for improving relations between all citizens of Europe (6 May 2011)

9. PACE President calls for an inquiry into Europe’s role in the deaths of 61 boat people (9 May 2011)

10. PACE President calls for a Council of Europe Summit (11 May 2011)

11. Earthquake in Lorca: PACE President expresses his solidarity (12 May 2011)

12. The action of the Congress and of the Assembly is very much complementary (13 May 2011)

13. Belarus: PACE President calls on the authorities to cease the continuous harassment of political opponents (16 May 2011)

14. PACE President welcomes the release of Azerbaijan opposition journalist Eynulla Fatullayev (26 May 2011)

15. The arrest of former Bosnian Serb military chief Ratko Mladic is great news for the future of Serbia (26 May 2011)

16. PACE President: A lasting and comprehensive solution for a peaceful and united Cyprus (27 May 2011)

17. Mevlüt Cavusoglu: 'The priorities of Ukraine's Chairmanship fully correspond to PACE values' (27 May 2011)

3. Speeches

1. Address at the World Forum on Inter-Cultural Dialogue, Session 1: *"Towards A World Without Dividing Lines"* (Baku, 7 April 2011)

2. Opening Statement at the Second part of the 2011 Ordinary Session (Strasbourg 11 April 2011)

3. Welcome to Mr Steingrímur J. Sigfússon, Minister of Finance of Finland (11 April 2011)

4. Welcome to Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (11 April 2011)

5. Welcome to Religious Personalities (Strasbourg, 12 April 2011)

6. Welcome to Mr Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, President of the Committee of Ministers (12 April 2011)

7. Welcome to Mr Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of Turkey, (13 April 2011)

8. Welcome to Mr Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (13 April 2011)

9. Welcome to Mr Federico Mayor Zaragoza, President of the International Commission Against the Death Penalty (14 April 2011)

10. Address on the occasion of the book launch "Turkish Founding Fathers of United Europe" (Kayhan Karaca) (Strasbourg, 14 April 2011)

11. Address on the occasion of the High Level Conference on The Future of the European Court of Human Rights (Izmir, Turkey, 26 April 2011)

12. Lecture on the topic: „Challenges facing Europe and the Role of the Council of Europe" at the Faculty of Political Science (Dubrovnik, Croatia, 28 April 2011)

13. Speech delivered on the occasion of the General Assembly of the Association of Towns awarded the Europe Prize (Ankara, 6 May 2011)

14. Speech delivered on the occasion of the 121st session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (Istanbul, 11 May 2011)

15. Address to the Bureau of the Congress (Antalya, 13 May 2011)

16. Address to the Standing Committee (Kyiv, 27 May 2011)

17. Address to the European Forum Cyprus (Istanbul, 27 May 2011)