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Activities of the Assembly's Bureau and Standing Committee (21 June – 22 September 2021)

Progress report
Bureau of the Assembly
Rapporteur: Mr Jacques MAIRE, France, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

1. Introduction

At its meeting on 24 June 2021, the Bureau appointed me as rapporteur for this report, which covers its activities over the period from the last Bureau meeting of the third part-session of 2021 (Thursday 24 June) to the first Bureau meeting of the fourth part-session of 2021 (Friday 24 September).

The present report includes the decisions taken at the Bureau meetings of 24 June and 6 September held in Strasbourg in a hybrid format. Chapter 2 presents a list of activities and decisions which do not require ratification. Chapter 3 lists the decisions taken on 6 September that require ratification at the opening of the fourth part-session of the Assembly.

An addendum to this report will be issued after the Bureau meeting of 24 September, which will include decisions to be ratified by the Assembly on 27 September. Another addendum will be issued after the Bureau meeting of 30 September. It will include the decisions to be ratified by the Assembly on the same day, notably the references and transmissions which will have been approved by the Bureau.

The report of the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights presenting the conclusions of the committee on the lists of candidates submitted by the Czech Republic, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine is published as an Addendum 2 to this report.

The Bureau will hold its following meeting on 25 November at 10 am in Rome, in physical presence. The next meeting of the Standing Committee will be held on 25 and 26 November in Rome, also in physical presence.

2. Activities of the Bureau since the last part-session and decisions not requiring ratification by the Assembly

2.1. Follow-up to the third part-session of 2021 (Strasbourg, 21-24 June)

On 24 June, the Bureau approved the follow-up proposals to the third part-session, made by the Secretary General of the Assembly, as follows:

– Current affairs debate on *The situation in Belarus: a threat to the whole of Europe*: the Bureau decided to refer this issue to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy to be taken into account in the preparation of its report on *Call for an inclusive national political process in Belarus*.

– Current affairs debate on *The need for an effective solidarity mechanism between European countries to relieve migratory pressure on front line countries*: the Bureau decided to refer this issue to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons to prepare a report on *European solidarity in the migration and asylum context*.

2.2. Fourth part-session of 2021 (Strasbourg, 27-30 September)

On 24 June, the Bureau drew up the preliminary draft agenda and decided to hold this part-session in a hybrid format.

On 6 September, the Bureau drew up the draft agenda. It also accepted the proposal by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination to invite, to a forthcoming part-session, Ms Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality, to address the Assembly in the context of the plenary debate on *Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe*.

2.2.1. Requests for debates under urgent procedure

On 6 September, the Bureau took note of the following requests to hold debates on:

– *Draft Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime on enhanced co-operation and disclosure of electronic evidence*, tabled by the five political groups, and decided to recommend to the Assembly to hold this debate and to refer the matter to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights;

– *The situation in Afghanistan: consequences for Europe and the region*, tabled by the five political groups;

– *Increased migration pressure on the borders of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland with Belarus*, tabled by Mr Arkadiusz Mularczyk and 23 members of the Assembly.

2.2.2. Request for a current affairs debate

On 6 September, the Bureau took note of the request to hold a debate on *The Western Balkans between democratic challenges and European aspirations: what role for the Council of Europe?*, tabled by the five political groups.

2.3. Communications

On 24 June, the Bureau took note of the communication by the President in which he particularly welcomed the convening of a high-level panel and a debate, on Wednesday 23 June, on *The Istanbul Convention, 10 years on* (Appendix 1).

On 6 September, the Bureau took note of the communication by the President, and by the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

2.4. Election observation

2.4.1. Armenia: early parliamentary elections (20 June 2021)

On 24 June, the Bureau took note of a statement by the observation mission, and on 6 September, it approved the report of the ad hoc committee.

2.4.2. Republic of Moldova: early parliamentary elections (11 July 2021)

On 6 September, the Bureau approved the report of the ad hoc committee.

2.4.3. Bulgaria: early parliamentary elections (11 July 2021)

On 6 September, the Bureau approved the report of the ad hoc committee.

2.4.4. Morocco: parliamentary elections (8 September 2021)

On 6 September, the Bureau confirmed its decision taken via written consultation to observe these elections and to set up an ad hoc committee composed of 11 members (SOC-3; EPP/CD-3; EC/DA-2; ALDE-2; UEL-1). It also confirmed the appointment of Mr Alberto Ribolla (Italy EC/DA) as Chairperson and approved the list of members to observe these elections (Appendix 2).

2.4.5. Russian Federation: parliamentary elections (19 September 2021)

On 24 June, the Bureau approved the list of members of the ad hoc committee and appointed Mr Pierre-Alain Fridez (Switzerland, SOC) as the Chairperson of the ad hoc committee. On 6 September, it considered the assessment of the pre-electoral mission that took place remotely on 2-3 September 2021, and decided, in accordance with Assembly rules, to hold a second in situ meeting of the ad hoc committee in the format of an Election Assessment Mission, composed of one member from each political group, as follows: Mr Pierre-Alain Fridez (Switzerland, SOC) as its Chairperson; Mr Joseph O'Reilly (Ireland, EPP/CD); Mr Alberto Ribolla (Italy, EC/DA); Mr Jacques Maire (France, ALDE); Mr George Katrougalos (Greece, UEL).

In the absence of international election observation partners from ODIHR/OSCE and OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Bureau considered that the Assembly would not be in a position to conduct a fully-fledged election observation mission. At the same time, it considered that a political presence by the Assembly in the format of an Election Assessment Mission, on and around election day, would bring an added value to the ongoing process of political dialogue between the Russian Federation and the Assembly, including within the framework of the Assembly's monitoring procedure.

2.4.6. Schedule of the elections

On 6 September, the Bureau took note of the updated schedule of the elections.

2.5. References and transmissions to committees

On 24 June, the Bureau considered and approved the reference and transmissions to committees as presented in Doc. 15318 Add. 4, ratified by the Assembly the same day.

2.6. Election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights in respect of the Russian Federation

On 24 June, the Bureau took note of the decision of the Committee on the Election of Judges to convene the candidates for interviews for the post of a judge in respect of the Russian Federation at the committee's next meeting on 16-17 September 2021.

2.7. European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) – List of candidates in respect of Austria, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Poland, Serbia, Spain, Turkey and Ukraine

On 24 June, the Bureau approved the lists of candidates in respect of Austria, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Poland, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine, to be forwarded to the Committee of Ministers, and approved the recommendation of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights to invite the delegation of Spain to submit a new list of candidates to the CPT.

2.8. Budgetary matters – Analysis of the use made by the Assembly's political groups of their allocations for 2020

On 24 June, the Bureau approved the communication submitted by the Committee on Rules of Procedures, Immunities and Institutional Affairs; and decided to elaborate, in the course of 2022, in close consultation with the political groups, a concise set of financial guidelines for the budgets of the groups.

2.9. Issues raised by committees

2.9.1. Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

On 24 June, subject to international travel conditions relating to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Bureau authorised:

– Mr Jacques Maire (France, ALDE), rapporteur *on Review of the Partnership for democracy in respect of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic*, to carry out a fact-finding visit to the Kyrgyz Republic, by the end of 2021;

– Mr George Loucaides (Cyprus, UEL), rapporteur on *Evaluation of the partnership for democracy in respect of the Parliament of Jordan*, to carry out a fact-finding visit to Jordan, by the end of 2021.

2.10. 2021 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize

On 6 September, the Bureau observed a minute of silence in memory of Ms Marie-Lousie Bemelmans-Videc, member of the Selection Panel of the Prize and former member of the Parliamentary Assembly. It then took note of the shortlist made by the Selection Panel at its meeting in Prague on 30-31 August 2021, consisting of (in alphabetical order):

– Maria Kalesnikava (Belarus)

– Reporters Sans Frontières (NGO)

– Germain Rukuki (Burundi).

2.11. 2021 World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 8-10 November)

On 24 June, the Bureau approved the composition of the ad hoc committee of the Bureau to participate in the Forum and appointed the President of the Assembly as its Chairperson (Appendix 3).

2.12. Institutional representation of the Parliamentary Assembly in 2021

On 24 June, the Bureau approved the appointment of Ms Ann-Britt Åsebol (Sweden, PPE/CD) as substitute to the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), as proposed by the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media.

2.13. Meetings elsewhere than Strasbourg and Paris

Subject to international travel conditions relating to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Bureau authorised:

– on 24 June, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy to meet in Budapest, on 3-4 November 2021;

– on 6 September, the sub-Committee on Education, Youth and Sport of the committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, to meet in Lisbon on 25 October 2021.

2.14. Meetings of the Standing Committee and the Bureau in 2022

On 6 September, the Bureau approved the proposals contained in the document in Appendix 4.

3. Decisions of the Bureau requiring ratification by the Assembly

3.1. Election observation

3.1.1. Bulgaria: presidential election (November 2021 – tbc)

On 6 September, the Bureau, subject to receiving an invitation, decided to observe this election and to set up an ad hoc committee composed of 20 members (SOC-7; EPP/CD-6; EC/DA-3; ALDE-3; UEL-1) as well as the two co-rapporteurs of the Monitoring Committee. It also decided to maintain, to the extent possible, the same list of members and Chairperson of the ad hoc committee (Mr Alfred Heer, Switzerland, ALDE), as for previous observations of elections in Bulgaria in 2021.

3.2. References and transmissions to committees

On 6 September, the Bureau considered and approved the following reference:

– Doc. 15327, Motion for a resolution, *Towards Council of Europe seas and oceans strategies against the climate crisis*: reference to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for report.*

3.3. Composition of the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights

On 6 September, on the basis of a proposal by the SOC group, the Bureau appointed Frank Schwabe (Germany) as a member.

The Assembly is invited to ratify these Bureau decisions.

Appendix 1 – High-level panel and debate, Wednesday 23 June – The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention): 10 years on

On Wednesday 23 June, from 11am to 1:30pm, the Assembly held, at the initiative of its President Rik Daems, a high-level panel and interactive debate on "The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention): 10 years on". This was the Assembly's contribution to marking the 10 years of entry into force of that Convention, which has been prompted by the Assembly.

The President of the Assembly moderated the panel and debate. High-level speakers were: Ms Nadia Murad, Yezedi human rights activist, 2018 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, recipient of the 2016 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize and the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought; Mr Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of Belgium, author of a book entitled *The Age of Women: Why Feminism Also Liberates Men*; Ms Anca Dana Dragu, President of the Senate of Romania; Ms Elisabeth Moreno, Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister of France for Gender Equality, Diversity and Equal Opportunities; Ms Dubravka Šimonovic, United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, and Ms Marija Pejčinović-Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

Nadia Murad stated that despite setbacks, exacerbated during conflicts and crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the convention had the potential "to make meaningful change for survivors like the Yazidis and women around the world by shifting the international norms around gender-based violence". In order to prevent sexual violence in times of war, a strong foundation of gender equality must be created in times of peace.

For Belgian Prime Minister Alexander de Croo, the Istanbul Convention was a means for women and girls to know their rights and how to enforce them. He stressed that "Belgium is determined to join the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and so many others, including civil society, in order to promote the convention loud and clear, and to lead by example by implementing it in the best possible way."

Ms Anca Dana Dragu, first woman President of the Senate of Romania, explained the process of revision of legislation and public policies after ratification of the Istanbul Convention, including new partnerships with civil society. "If I were asked to sum up in two words, I would say that the Istanbul Convention saves lives", she said. Parliamentarians must initiate a comprehensive cross-sector national response to gender-based violence.

Minister Delegate Ms Elisabeth Moreno underlined that since the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers in 2019, France had prioritised the universalisation of the Istanbul Convention as one of the main goals of its feminist diplomacy, so that any state that wished to do so could raise its protection standards based on the text. Gender stereotypes related to the roles that men should play in society were at the source of inequalities and violence against women.

UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women Ms Dubravka Šimonovic worked with the Istanbul Convention to address measures to combat and prevent violence against women. The provisions addressing the criminalisation and prosecution of rape, for instance, were reflected in her ongoing report on the subject. The latter contained a framework model legislation for rape which, once published, could be used as a tool for implementation of the convention.

Secretary-General Ms Marija Pejčinović-Burić stressed that no single government could recreate the protection provided by this multilateral treaty, with its unique, independent international monitoring mechanism which enabled difficult, but positive, change to come about. The best way to counter preconceptions and misconceptions about the Istanbul Convention was to widen the circle of its Sates parties.

During the ensuing debate, representatives of political groups and Assembly members had the opportunity to take the floor, and panellists were invited by the President to respond.

Ms Zita Gurmai (Hungary, SOC), General Rapporteur on violence against women and coordinator of the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence underlined in her remarks that implication of parliaments, reflected in the Istanbul Convention, was essential in fighting violence against women. She commended President Daems for the initiative of this debate and for his commitment to promoting the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. This event had been a great opportunity to take stock of the ten years since the opening for signature of the Istanbul Convention and to commit to further promoting and supporting it.

In his concluding remarks, the President said that this was a call for action to both men and women – each and every member in the debate – to make the Convention a gold standard also in every day life of every woman and girl.

As part of the follow-up to this high-level panel and debate, the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination will prepare a report on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention to form the basis of a debate in 2022.

Appendix 2 – List of members of the ad hoc committee for the observation of the parliamentary elections in Morocco (8 September 2021)

Chairperson / Président: Mr Alberto RIBOLLA, Italy / Italie, EC/DA / CE/AD

Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group / Groupe des socialistes, démocrates et verts (SOC)

– Ms / Mme Jette CHRISTENSEN, Norway / Norvège

– Mr / M. Christophe LACROIX, Belgium / Belgique

– Mr / M. Antonio GUTIERREZ, Spain / Espagne

Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD) / Groupe du Parti populaire européen (PPE/DC)

– Mr / M. Viorel-Riceard BADEA, Romania / Roumanie

– Mr / M. Raivo TAMM, Estonia / Estonie

– Mr / M. Aleksander POCIEJ, Poland / Pologne

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) / Alliance des démocrates et des libéraux pour l'Europe (ADLE)

– Mr / M. Damien COTTIER, Switzerland / Suisse

– Ms / Mme Nicole DURANTON, France

European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance (EC/DA) / Groupe des conservateurs européens et Alliance démocratique (CE/AD)

– Mr / M. Alberto RIBOLLA, Italy / Italie

Group of the Unified European Left (UEL) / Groupe pour la gauche unitaire européenne (GUE)

– Mr / M. Anton GOMEZ-REINO, Spain / Espagne

Venice Commission / Commission de Venise

Appendix 3 – List of members of the ad hoc committee to participate in the World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 8-10 November 2021)

Chairperson / Président

– Mr Rik Daems – President of the Parliamentary Assembly / Président de l'Assemblée parlementaire

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy / Commission des questions politiques et de la démocratie

– Mr / M. Ahmet Ünal Çeviköz (Turkey, SOC / Turquie, SOC)

– Mr / M. Bogdan Klich (Poland, EPP/CD / Pologne, PPE/DC)

– Ms / Mme Emine Nur Günay (Turkey, NR / Turquie NI)

– Mr / M. George Papandreou (Greece, SOC / Grèce, SOC)

– Mr / M. Ahmet Yıldız (Turkey, NR / Turquie, NI)

Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights / Commission des questions juridiques et des droits de l'homme

– …

Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) / Commission pour le respect des obligations et engagements des Etats membres du Conseil de l'Europe (Commission de suivi)

– …

Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development / Commission des questions sociales, de la santé et du développement durable

– Ms / Mme Danuta Jazłoweicka (Poland, EPP/CD / Pologne, PPE/DC)

– Mr / M. Luís Leite Ramos (Portugal, EPP/CD / PPE/DC)

– Mr / M. Stefan Schennach (Austria, SOC / Autriche, SOC)

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media / Commission de la culture, de la science, de l'éducation et des médias

– Mr / M. Constantinos Efstathiou (Cyprus / Chypre, SOC)

– Lord George Foulkes (United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni, SOC)

– Ms / Mme Yuliia Ovchynnykova (Ukraine, ADLE / ADLE)

– Mr / M. Roberto Rampi (Italy / Italie, SOC)

Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination / Commission sur l'égalité et sur la non-discrimination

– Ms / Mme Edite Estrela (Portugal, SOC)

– Mr / M. Jean Pierre Grin (Switzerland, ALDE / Suisse, ADLE)

– Ms / Mme Selin Sayek Böke (Turkey, SOC / Turquie, SOC)

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons / Commission des migrations, des réfugiés et des personnes déplacées

– Mr / M. Paul Gavan (Ireland, UEL / Irlande, GUE)

– Mr / M. Sokratis Famellos (Greece, UEL / Grèce, GUE)

– Mr / M. Pierre-Alain Fridez (Switzerland / Suisse, SOC)

– Ms / Mme Mariia Mezentseva (Ukraine, EPP/CD / PPE/DC)

– Ms / Mme Kate Osamor (United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni, SOC)

– Mr / M. Theodoros Rousopoulos (Greece, EPP/CD / Grèce, PPE/DC)

– Ms / Mme Diana Stoica (Romania, ADLE / Roumanie, ADLE)

Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs / Commission du Règlement, des immunités et des affaires institutionnelles

– …..

Appendix 4 – Meetings of the Standing Committee and the Bureau in 2022

Monday 24 January, 8.00 am Strasbourg (part-session)	Bureau
Friday 28 January, 8.30 am Strasbourg (part-session)	Bureau
Thursday 10 March, 3.00 pm, Paris	Bureau (tbc)
Friday 11 March, 9.30 am, Paris	Standing Committee (tbc)
Monday 25 April, 8.00 am, Strasbourg (part-session)	Bureau
Friday 29 April, 8.30 am, Strasbourg (part-session)	Bureau
Monday 30 May, 3.00 pm, Dublin	Bureau
Tuesday 31 May, 9.00 am, Dublin	Standing Committee (CM Chairmanship)
Monday 20 June, 8.00 am, Strasbourg (part-session)	Bureau
Friday 24 June, 8.30 am, Strasbourg (part-session)	Bureau
Monday 12 September, 9.00 am, Paris	Bureau
Monday 10 October, 8.00 am, Strasbourg (part-session)	Bureau
Friday 14 October, 8.30 am, Strasbourg (part-session)	Bureau (tbc)
End of November, Reykjavik	Standing Committee (tbc) (CM Chairmanship)
End of November, Reykjavik	Bureau
Friday 9 December, 9.00 am, Paris	Bureau