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The need for independent and credible expert assessments

Preliminary draft resolution

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1. Recent events have highlighted the vital need for independent, impartial expert assessments in fields such as the environment, health, energy, finance or civil protection.
2. Too many expert assessments are based on causal hypotheses, some of whose repercussions are unknown. Experts therefore lack the requisite distance to gauge the medium- and long-term impacts on the environment and human health.
3. In this connection, the Assembly notes that the findings vary in accordance with the source of funding, and that this approach can be different when assessments are made after incidents, when the implications are economic, financial and possibly political.
4. The Assembly regrets that economic interests and the lack of full, transparent information has led to many healthcare scandals, (contaminated blood, growth hormones, asbestos, etc), which have had serious repercussions on human health.
5. The Assembly considers that a legal framework could help reinforce the credibility of expert assessments and thereby prevent external pressure.
6. The Assembly considers that if expert assessments are to be transparent and independent, they must be the subject of a debate in which all the different points of view can be expressed, and it would strongly advise involving representatives of universities, scientific and technological research circles and non-governmental organisations, either as experts or as observers.
7. It also stresses the need to ensure traceability of expert assessments as a means of ensuring their independence.

8. The Assembly consequently invites the governments of member and non-member States to:
 - 8.1. call on the services of specialised experts, particularly in fields requiring in-depth scientific and technical expertise;
 - 8.2. set up a public fund to finance so-called “sensitive” expert assessments;
 - 8.3. draw up a handbook of good practice and set up a high-level multidisciplinary committee responsible for ensuring compliance with ethical rules;
 - 8.4. establish a system of consultation with representatives of civil society;
 - 8.5. prevent conflicts of interests, particularly vis-à-vis so-called “sensitive” expert assessments;
 - 8.6. introduce an assessment traceability system in order to enhance transparency and independence;
 - 8.7. ensure proper follow-up of the consequences of expert assessment conclusions;
 - 8.8. systematically disseminate expert assessment conclusions;
 - 8.9. set up joint committees for transfrontier expert assessments;
 - 8.10. adopt procedures for ensuring transparency and public information.