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Addendum 1

2019 ORDINARY SESSION

(First part)

REPORT

Second sitting

Monday 21 January 2019 at 5 p.m.

Free debate

The following texts were submitted for inclusion in the official report by members who were present in the Chamber but were prevented by lack of time from delivering them.

Ms GAFAROVA (*Azerbaijan*) – Since gaining its independence, Azerbaijan has accumulated wide-ranging experience in developing policies in the field of culture. Numerous normative acts and policy frameworks have been adopted that shape the objectives and outline the priorities of the country's cultural policy. One of the main principles of such a policy is to preserve cultural heritage and pass it on to future generations. It is important to understand that the heritage of countries who are members of the Council of Europe plays a significant role in building the future of Europe.

I would like to mention that the President of Azerbaijan, taking into account the 650th anniversary of the great Azerbaijani poet Imadaddin Nasimi, has declared this year as the Year of Nasimi in Azerbaijan. The great poet and thinker Imadaddin Nasimi, who lived six centuries ago, is a significant figure for the Azerbaijani people. The literary legacy of Nasimi represents a special stage in the history of Azerbaijani literature. He is known as an ardent propagandist and herald of humanistic ideas in literature. In his literary works, universal ideas of humanism and peace have been poetically expressed. This outstanding poet has also done an invaluable service in enriching world literature with ideas of humanism. His views as a representative of the East are similar to the views of representatives of the Western cultures and literatures.

Declaring 2019 as the year of Nasimi in Azerbaijan is a call to other countries to save and preserve the universal value and ideas of humanism promoted by the great thinker. I strongly believe that representatives of different cultures and religions will respond to this call and will contribute to the victories of humanism and tolerance around the world.

Mr IELENSKYI (*Ukraine*) – Religious freedom is rightly considered the first internationally recognised freedom and the pillar of common European construction. That is why I strongly believe that the Parliamentary Assembly has to address even minor violations of this freedom. Unfortunately, I am forced to draw your attention not to minor but to brutal ongoing violations of religious liberties in annexed Crimea and the territories of Donbas occupied by the Russian Federation.

In Crimea, annexed by the Russian Federation, the authorities persecute religious leaders, pastors of Protestant communities, Islamic activists, priests and believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kiev Patriarchate. Some pastors, mainly Pentecostal, were deported from Crimea. The entire Protestant congregation from the city of Balaklava was, for instance, forced to emigrate together with a pastor. The main targets of the occupying power are the communities of the Kiev Patriarchate and the Muslim communities. Almost half the parishes of the Kiev Patriarchate, which operated in Crimea until the annexation, have been closed, and most of the priests have been forced to leave. Searches in mosques, the confiscation of literature, the detention and arrest of Muslim activists, the trials against members of Hizb ut-Tahrir have all become daily occurrences in annexed Crimea. Since 2015, at least 26 people allegedly in affiliation with Hizb ut-Tahrir have been arrested and convicted by the Russian authorities in Crimea. In addition, the so-called "Yarovaya package" implemented in the Crimean territory actually banned the missionary activities of all religious organisations, except for the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate. Another crying violation of human rights in general and religious freedom in particular, within Crimea, is the banning of the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses. The ban was accompanied by workplace discrimination against the believers, the denial of their civil rights, and the seizure of Jehovah's Witnesses' property. Just think, in April 2017, the Military Enlistment Office in Bakhchysarai in Crimea warned Jehovah's Witnesses that alternative service would be available only if they changed their religion.

The situation in the occupied territories of Donbass appears even more tragic and threatening. Guerillas conduct pogroms in prayer houses, beating pastors and laymen; four churchmen were killed in the city of Sloviansk just after the Sunday service. The Martyrology list was followed by a long list of confiscated property. At the same time, in the Russian Federation, members of the Jehovah's Witnesses communities, the Scientology Church and others serve their sentences in jail. In fact, dozens, if not hundreds, of people have been punished for their religious convictions.

That is why I urge all members of the Assembly to address this challenge to human dignity by every means at our disposal.

Ms PASHAYEVA (*Azerbaijan*) – First of all, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur on having prepared this high-level report on a very important topic, and I support this document. All member States should further enhance their work in the direction of the education and employment of persons with disabilities. First of all, the support programmes for the education of persons with disabilities should be strengthened to support their professional development at a high level. This is one of the key factors that facilitate their employment. I support the calls made to member States in the rapporteur's report and would like to emphasise that these issues are the focus in my country of Azerbaijan. Education, employment, and improving the social

status of persons with disabilities are among the priorities of the State, and serious work is being carried out at both legislative and governmental levels.

As you know, as a result of Armenia's occupation of 20% of Azerbaijan's territories, thousands of people have fallen into ill health and it has played a major role in the significant increase in the number of people with disabilities. Thousands of people have been injured and become disabled. At the same time, thousands of people among the 1 million IDPs forcibly displaced by Armenia have become disabled having fallen into ill health because of the horrors they lived through and the difficulties they experienced, and their education, employment and social status are one of the most important issues facing the state. Unfortunately, the European organisations, including our Organisation, have not protested strongly against Armenia's occupation policy, which has caused thousands of Azerbaijanis to become disabled, and have not taken the necessary steps to stop this process.

Mr SIRAKAYA (*Turkey*) – I would like to take this opportunity to bring the recent developments regarding the Muslim communities in Europe to your attention. The way Muslim communities, and especially the Turkish communities, are treated in Europe is quite harrowing. Muslim foundations in Austria have been deprived of some of their rights and privileges since 2015, rights and privileges which Jewish and Protestant communities still enjoy. The “European Islam Project”, first voiced by theologian Bessam Tibi in Germany, has already been implemented in Austria. This project is essentially Islamophobic, and is evolving into Turkophobia, dressed as “an Islam in line with European values”. New laws have prohibited the financing of religious communities from abroad and have restricted the activities of ATİB, and the visa procedures for religious officials have been suspended.

Germany is trying to sever the link between DİTİB and Turkey and to restrict its activities according to the German constitution, while denying DİTİB religious community status. Neither the Catholic Church nor the Russian Church asked to sever their ties with the Vatican and the Russian Federation. Germany insists on the imams being trained in Germany, but the theology departments in Germany are far from qualified to train imams. On 15 July, Germany suspended DİTİB's religious community status process. The Alevis and the Ahmediye did not face the same conditions imposed on DİTİB on being recognised as a religious community. We have also seen similar practices in Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Switzerland and Denmark.

Concurrently, the future of Muslims in Europe cannot be separated from the Muslim world. Islam has a universal definition; there cannot be a tamed “European Islam” which defends European arguments. The rule of law is also universal; there cannot be separate laws and security measures when treating Muslims in Europe. The discriminatory practices towards Muslims, the assimilation attempts towards Turks, trying to sever their ties with Turkey, are unacceptable and are incompatible with democracy, diversity and social reality. On this note, I would like to thank the members of the Political Affairs Committee for rejecting the wording “European Islam” in the “Regulating the foreign funding of Islam” report, which is a welcome attitude.