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AS (2019) CR 02  
Addendum 2

## 2019 ORDINARY SESSION

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(First part)

### **REPORT**

Second sitting

Monday 21 January 2019 at 5 p.m.

### **Debate:**

**Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee**

**Observation of the presidential election in Georgia  
(28 October and 28 November 2018)**

**Observation of the early parliamentary elections in Armenia  
(9 December 2018)**

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 Elvira KOVÁCS (*Serbia*) - Since 2012, following a Bureau decision, statistics on the gender breakdown of Assembly positions are prepared every year and included in the progress report on the activities of the Assembly's Bureau and Standing Committee. These figures provide a picture of the situation for the previous year. The publication of this information aims to enhance transparency and raise awareness. The newest document shows the gender breakdown in Assembly positions in 2018. Unfortunately, in 2018, the total number of women members of the Assembly continued to fall: they represented 34% of members, compared to 37% in 2017. It should be noted, however, that the total share of women members of parliament in Council of Europe member States as of 1 June 2018 was lower, at 25.92%.

The percentage of women as Vice-Presidents of the Assembly decreased from 42% to 33%, while the percentage of women as Bureau members increased from 43% to 47%. This reflects the increase in the number of women as chairpersons of committees (six out of nine in 2018). In five out of nine committees, women's representation as full members is below the average of 35%. On average, the representation of women as rapporteurs for reports improved from 22% in 2017 to 37% in 2018. It remains, however, rather low in some committees.

I do not believe that I need to go into the other details of this document, but I would like to draw your attention to those I have mentioned, so that you may reflect on these figures and possibly discuss them within your national delegations and political groups. There is a lot to be done to achieve gender balance in the work of the Assembly and we should mobilise our efforts to achieve this objective.

I am convinced that the right of each and every citizen to be represented in the political decision-making process is one of the basic principles of democracy. Unfortunately, our societies remain characterised by attitudes, customs and behaviour which disempower women in public life. Our political systems mostly exclude women and discriminate against them. This situation must be changed.

I hope that, in the near future, the whole population will be convinced that women make as effective legislators as men. Our own political parties also need to change their perception of women and become more open to them.

Mr RUBINYAN (*Armenia*) – I believe everybody here is strongly convinced that the will of the people is the keystone of democracy. The people may exercise this right directly or via free and fair elections. For more than 20 years, people in Armenia tried to build a democratic society via elections which were, however, systematically rigged, allowing the will of the people to be disrespected and ignored.

In April 2018, everything changed. Armenia made headlines around the globe. International media covered the popular movement against the former authorities, who attempted to cling to power by nominating the then incumbent President to serve as Prime Minister in violation of his public promise not to stand for election. Through these impressive democratic processes, resulting in a peaceful transition of power in full conformity with the constitution, the people of Armenia gave a mandate to the new government to instigate real democratic reforms and to fully implement them. We named it the Velvet Revolution of Love and Solidarity. At long last, the people were able to freely choose their leaders, something that was endorsed in early parliamentary elections in December.

I am very proud that international observation missions highlighted that these elections were held in full conformity with the standards set by the Council of Europe and the OSCE/ODIHR. We thank all members of the Parliamentary Assembly who took part in the election observation mission. This time, it was not just a step forward; it was a giant leap of democracy, something so needed in times of authoritarian backlash in Europe and the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, I strongly believe that in the Council of Europe we should adopt a policy of zero tolerance towards all instances where the will of the people is ignored or perverted. The recent elections in Armenia demonstrated that holding fully free and fair elections is not just a matter of institutional maturity, but rather of political will. I believe we should, from now on, send a strong message to people across Europe and the whole world that they are the ultimate power and that no one can violate their right to choose. As a reborn democracy, Armenia is determined to become the torchbearer of these values and defender of the people's will, wherever they may be.