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Addendum 1

2019 ORDINARY SESSION

(Second part)

REPORT

Tenth sitting

Monday 8 April 2019 at 11.30 a.m.

Debate:

Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee & Observation of the parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova (24 February 2019)

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.

Mr KIRAL (*Ukraine*) - When debating the progress report, we cannot ignore the continued efforts by the President of the Assembly, Secretary General Jagland and the leaders of some political groups, mainly left-wing groups, to give more concessions to the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation is widely seen as having demonstrated no political will in the past months to obey its statutory obligations or deliver on the Parliamentary Assembly resolutions.

It is of great concern that the Assembly's leadership is willing to abuse its power of office by presenting as a fait accompli to some European leaders additional concessions in the form of more amendments to the Parliamentary Assembly sanctions procedure. At the meeting of the presidential committee in Helsinki last week, where I was present to represent the European Conservatives Group, such a scenario was rolled out around the Kox report and the so-called joint sanctions mechanism. Without proper debate in the Assembly and the adoption of a decision, and without going back to political groups and their bureaux to seek support, the President of the Assembly was willing to potentially embarrass the President of Finland by giving commitments which would then not be kept.

We all agree – and as a Ukrainian, I am interested more than anyone else in a solution, so that the Russian Federation and its troops withdraw from Ukraine – but where are those red lines of appeasement, which override the values and principles of this body? The Kox report's only purpose is not to give an overview of the Assembly's activities over 70 years and propose clear-cut ideas about how to improve the resilience of the Organisation, but to give the Committee of Ministers meeting in May a clear signal of the Assembly's consent to castrate itself, and thus trigger changes to rules and procedures to lay the red carpet for the Russian delegation to come back in June.

The President of Finland said we need the Russian Federation back for geopolitical reasons. It is true that the Russian Federation has been part of European continental politics since the Metternich congresses system in the early 19th century, then during Bismarck's myriad alliances after the strengthening of Prussia, and eventually during the entente with France leading to the start of the First World War. The Russian Federation was the only partner in the east because there was no eastern Europe with independent states. If such a colonial approach continues, we risk having a weak and divided Council of Europe of 45 member States or less from Lisbon to Vladivostok, or alternatively, we can focus on building resilience and on the core pillars of democracy, the rule of law and human rights in a much stronger, united Council of Europe of 46 from Lisbon to Baku. It is up to us to decide.

Mr GHILETCHI (*Republic of Moldova*) – I want to thank Mr Kern and the members of the Parliamentary Assembly observation mission for observing the Moldovan parliamentary elections on 24 February 2019. I would like to mention several things about the report's conclusions.

The most important conclusion is the fact that the Moldovan Parliament elections were competitive, free, calm and well organised. It does not mean that everything was perfect. I believe the Republic of Moldova has come a long way on the road to democracy and freedom, but there are still areas where we need to improve our performance, including the way elections are conducted.

The change of the electoral system was heavily criticized. However, the elections did not confirm the fears expressed beforehand. The number of mandates obtained by political parties on the proportional side was basically the same as the number of mandates obtained on the majoritarian side. This proves that, regardless of the change of the electoral system, the elections expressed the will of people.

I understand the criticism concerning Transnistria, but let us not forget that the Republic of Moldova has a frozen conflict in that region. For several years now we have been unable to make progress in our Assembly on the issue of the Russian Federation. How do you expect the Republic of Moldova to deal with this challenge alone? I believe there is a need for a better understanding of this complex situation.

On the media landscape, I would like to stress that despite the fact our media is not totally independent, it enjoys a lot of freedom. All political parties and actors have media channels that favour them, but there is no monopoly. Since 1 January 2019, one person can have up to two licences. No media group owns more than 30% of the media coverage.

The biggest problem after the elections is the incapacity of the political actors who entered into Parliament to form a majority. The excessive polarisation and division of society raised big walls between parties. The rhetoric used, including that by some colleagues, does not help either.

The Republic of Moldova is a European country and needs to continue its journey in spite of these challenges. I hope, with God's help, it will.