

**REPORT ON ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY MR. JEAN-CLAUDE MIGNON,
PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF
EUROPE
23 JANUARY, 2012 – 27 JANUARY, 2014**



January, 2014

Immediately after my election I announced that my action would centre on three main issues:

- Providing our Assembly with its full role in European and international structures. This, in particular, means that PACE and the European Union should entertain a real relationship based on the desire to carry out common aims. It also implies the strengthening of the links with regional parliamentary bodies.
- Contributing to the establishment of a climate of trust in Europe which can help in the resolution of crisis situations and of frozen conflicts, as well as more generally aiding the development of constructive relations between the member states of the Council of Europe. Parliamentary diplomacy is the best tool of our Assembly to reach such goals.
- Making our Assembly more “collective”, more participatory and more visible.

This report on the actions I have carried out is thus to be considered in the framework of these three main issues.

I – PROVIDING PACE WITH ITS PROPER ROLE ON THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT AND IN INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURES

In order to provide PACE with its proper role in European and international structures, it is, above all, necessary to promote our own instruments with our international partners, for example in the framework of the Venice Commission, so as to enable synergies and to launch agreed initiatives which meet the challenges the Europe of 47 members must face.

My first priority was, naturally, to concentrate on the development of true partnership relations with the European Union, based on the complementarity and on the harmonization of our political positions concerning the key issues. At the same time, I have pushed to strengthen the cooperation links between our Assembly and international organizations, particularly those with a regional thrust.

In parallel, it has been my desire to set down strong and solid contacts with international non-governmental bodies in general and in particular with *Human Rights Watch* and *Amnesty International*.

A – Setting up true relations with the European Union

Right from the beginning of my term, both in Strasbourg and in Brussels, I have created closer ties with the European Parliament. I have held talks on several occasions with the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Martin Schulz, as well as with the chairs of the main political groups and the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Elmar Brok. I have also met with the chairs of certain “delegations” of the European Parliament which have a specific interest for us and in particular with those who could help with the preparation of my visits to the member states. My aim was to understand the views of our colleagues from the European Parliament so as to better integrate them into the pan-European cooperation approach adopted by the Council of Europe. I have developed a true

partnership relationship with the European Commission and in particular I have very frequent contacts with Mr. Stefan Füle, the Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy. Mr. Füle and I have regular meetings in both Strasbourg and in Brussels on current European issues and on the situation in the territories of our southern and eastern neighbours, so as to coordinate our action.

I also made it my business to meet the leaders of European political groupings, such as Mr. Wilfried Martens, Chairman of the European People's Party as well as his successor, Mr. Joseph Daul.

B – Developing cooperation links with international organizations

1) With the UN

I have met Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, the Secretary General of the UN on three occasions both in New York and Strasbourg. At these meetings we have expressed our commitment to a strong partnership between the Council of Europe and the bodies of the UN regarding the protection and the promotion of universal human rights both in the management of crises and in the search for peace, in particular in the framework of frozen conflicts. We have also both underlined our support for the defense of women's rights. I have also discussed this subject, both in New York and Strasbourg, with Ms Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.



Secretary General Ban Ki-moon meets with Mr. Jean-Claude Mignozzi, Deputy Seine-et-Marne and President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

With Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, January 2012

During every single one of my meetings with the Secretary General of the United Nations, I have promoted the campaigns of the Council of Europe in various fields. These have included the “One in Five” Campaign of the Council of Europe to stop sexual violence against children and the parliamentary dimension of the campaign to fight violence against women.

Every single one of my counterparts with whom I spoke at the UN welcomed the contribution of our Parliamentary Assembly as an important input in the collective promotion of our common values. In particular, at the United Nations Offices in Geneva, where I met with Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Director General of the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG), Mr. Antonio Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Ms Navanethem Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, I have sought to encourage strengthened cooperation in the field of shared interests and in the search for synergies in the goal of reinforcing the

impact of our organizations on the ground. I have, in particular, welcomed the universal periodic review mechanism concerning human rights in all the member states of the United Nations, carried out by the Human Rights Council. I have also underlined the need for greater complementarity between the various monitoring procedures of the Council of Europe and the United Nations. I believe that we can draw useful lessons from the existing United Nations procedures in the reform of our own monitoring process.

I have also supported the proposal of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to set up a shared database in order to pool jurisprudence in the field of human rights as regards the institutions of the United Nations and the Council of Europe. This seems to me to be a very useful means to strengthen our cooperation so as to ensure a more coherent approach between the thematic monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

In addition, I have also tackled, along with my counterparts in the UN, the issue of the resolution of frozen conflicts. This was done with the aim of better targeting the ways in which the Council of Europe and, in particular, PACE, could contribute to the on-going discussions on the means to finding solutions to such frozen conflicts. At the same time, I have also brought up the humanitarian aspects of the consequences of such conflicts with my counterparts in the International Committee of the Red Cross.

2) *With the OSCE*

I participated in the 21st annual session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE (OSCE PA) from July 5-6, 2012 in Monaco. Our two assemblies have a clear complementary role to play in election monitoring and in the resolution of frozen conflicts. I thus, naturally, created close links with the Ukrainian presidency of the OSCE in order to continue my actions to facilitate the resolution of the conflict in Transnistria.

In addition, I spoke, on two occasions, in July 2012 and October 2013, at the “Mediterranean Forum” of the OSCE PA, in order to seek joint solutions, along with our partners, to the challenges raised in the region concerning our southern neighbours. These challenges include the situation concerning the many refugees who are arriving in very precarious conditions upon the shoreline of the Mediterranean, the humanitarian consequences of the war in Syria as well as the democratic changes in the south of the Mediterranean and the Near East.

3) *The Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)* *(Saint-Petersburg – 10/12 April 2013).*

For the first time ever a President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe met with the presiding Board of this Assembly, made up of the Speakers/Presidents of the member Parliaments. This meeting took place at the plenary sitting of the said Assembly at Saint Petersburg on 10-12 April, 2013. At the same time I participated in the Conference co-organized by PACE and the CIS IPA on the following theme: “*The role of parliamentary organizations in the construction of a Europe without dividing lines*”.

During this conference, I held a bilateral meeting with Ms Valentina Matvienko, President of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation who is also President of the CIS IPA. In particular, we discussed the various aspects of cooperation between PACE and the Federation Council.

In a joint statement with Ms Matvienko at the end of the conference, we welcomed the cooperation between our two parliamentary assemblies which provides an excellent example of parliamentary diplomacy. Amongst other things, we also welcomed the fact that regular consultations have been set up between the heads of electoral observation missions of both the CIS IPA and PACE in order to enable exchanges of opinion on electoral campaigns and on the operation of the electoral process.

In parallel with the Conference, I held bilateral talks with the Presidents of the Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan Parliaments on the subject of cooperation with these two assemblies.

I also had an informal meeting with the delegation of the Parliament of Belarus which participated in the joint conference. I underlined the importance of dialogue whilst, at the same time, highlighting that any progress in this direction would only be possible if the Belarus authorities committed to respecting our values and our standards. In more concrete terms, I asked the Belarus Parliament to cooperate in good faith with our *rapporteur*, Mr. Herkel and to allow him to visit their country.

The first fruits of this meeting were seen with the visit of Mr. Thierry Mariani, Member of the French Parliament and Member of PACE, who represented me at a meeting in Minsk on June 21-22, 2013, on the subject of "*Religion and the Death Penalty*".

4) The Nordic Council

In Oslo, on April 4, 2013, I had my first contact with the President and the Vice President of the Nordic Council. This meeting provided me with the opportunity of discussing with our partners on concrete action which we could take in order to boost our cooperation with this Regional Parliamentary Assembly. Such cooperation is important, particularly as it displays through the work of our pan-European organization, the regional perspectives as regards the implementation of our standards and so best provides answers to questions concerning the interests and concerns of all our member states.

Subsequently, the President of the Nordic Council made a speech before PACE's Standing Committee on November 22, 2013, in Vienna. During this speech, the President shared with us her view on the extreme importance of climate change as regards the environment and the world economy. Consequently, the opening-up of the North-East passage to navigation will considerably reduce transport time and may thus substantially change the global economy. In a similar vein, it is clear that the Arctic region is an area potentially rich in natural resources and that their use will have a fundamental impact upon the environment. The Nordic Council possesses, on all these issues, first hand expertise which is of enormous value to our Assembly on the question of climate change and of sustainable development.

5) *The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Cooperation*

In Sofia, at the 41st General Assembly of this organization, I was given the opportunity of making a speech in which I stressed the interest of cooperation between our two assemblies both in the cultural fields and in the area of the resolution of frozen conflicts.

II –ACTIVE PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

At its beginning in 1949, the Council of Europe was set up to ensure peace on our continent so that the horrors of the Second World War would never occur again. It thus seems to me that the notion of providing our contribution to the resolution of frozen conflicts, in support of, and in close cooperation with, inter-governmental diplomacy, is at the very basis of our mission.

At the same time, one of the main objectives of the Council of Europe and of our Assembly is to provide member states with the precious support and expertise necessary in the implementation process of our specific standards, particularly at a moment when our member states are facing complicated political and institutional times. Consequently, it is up to us to attempt, through dialogue, to find, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, as well as with the various political groupings, the solutions which best suit the local context. This is what I have tried to do during my numerous trips to various regions and this has often been with the invaluable support of my colleagues from PACE, be they Chairs of political groups or *rapporteurs*.

In addition, I have made it my task to continue and to highlight the work of PACE in our neighbouring regions in order to promote political engagement with the states in question and to provide support to all those who share our values and aspire to the standards which have been developed within the Council of Europe.

On top of all this, in a general way, notwithstanding the most critical situations, I have striven to maintain regular dialogue with all our member states and to follow the dynamic neighbourhood policy of our Assembly.

Here are some of the results of my action in this field.

A – Frozen Conflicts

Despite the fact that the Council of Europe was set up to guarantee peace and human rights in Europe and despite the fact that the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, there are certain situations which continue and whose existence are accepted with relative indifference. I consider this to be unbearable.

1) *Transnistria*

I have been to Chisinau and to Tiraspol three times. I was there in April and December 2012, and more recently in September 2013. During each of these visits, I made it my business to meet the *de facto* authorities in this region of Transnistria. Each time my main desire was, without interfering in any way with the work of the “5 + 2” group, to facilitate, through parliamentary diplomacy, the

development of relations between the two parties. This is why my trips to Transnistria were set up within the framework of my working visits to the Republic of Moldova during which I met in Chisinau, the authorities of the country, the representatives of all political factions, the OSCE mission as well as the representatives of the international community.

My aim was to contribute to the re-launching of dialogue between the elected representatives of the two banks of the Dniester river with the help of PACE. The discussions I had convinced me of the opportunity to be seized, in particular on account of the efforts put into action by the Ukrainian presidency of the OSCE.

I will, of course, as a Member of PACE, continue to follow up on this particular issue and pay it the utmost attention.

2) The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

I felt naturally very strongly about bringing my contribution to the resolution of this conflict. To do this, I, first of all, set up regular meetings, under my auspices, between the Presidents of the Azerbaijani and Armenian delegations. During the June 2013 session, I was able to bring together the two parliamentary delegations. This was their first meeting since their membership of the Council of Europe.

I would like to take this opportunity to particularly congratulate the two Presidents of the said delegations, as well as all the members of their respective delegations, for their constructive attitude and their openness to dialogue. Of course, there are still many areas of disagreement between the delegations and certain sensitive issues still raise enormous emotion. However, the very fact that the members of the two delegations accepted to discuss these questions, in an open and courteous manner, proves their desire to make progress despite differences of opinion. The main conclusion of this meeting was an agreement on the part of both delegations to meet again in parallel with the next sessions of the PACE. I hope that within this framework, meetings with a similar format will continue to be held. Thus our Assembly will bring its contribution to the reestablishment of a climate of confidence and of dialogue between the elected representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Such a climate is necessary in order for progress to be made in the search for a solution to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

In addition, I travelled to both Armenia and Azerbaijan in May 2013. During this trip I pointed out to all those with whom I came into contact, that the Armenian presidency of the Committee of Ministers, followed in May 2014, by the Azerbaijani presidency, should represent a real chance for peace between these two member states, especially as 2013 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Elysée Treaty which brought about reconciliation between Germany and France. I made it very clear that it was no intention of mine to compete in any manner whatsoever with the OSCE Minsk Group with whom I maintain regular contact. It was simply my desire to accompany this group's action at a parliamentary level.

3) *Georgia*

I travelled to Georgia in May 2013. On this occasion, I once more called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. I stressed its humanitarian consequences and in particular the issue of displaced persons which is a priority of PACE.



Speech by Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, April 2013

B – A reactive PACE

Even though PACE only meets in plenary sitting four times a year, current events require immediate answers. It is thus essential for the bodies of the Assembly, i.e. the President, the Presidential Committee, the Bureau, to be able to react to difficult institutional and political situations in our member states, so as to provide the necessary political support and to ensure that the standards upheld by our Organization be respected. The following are some examples of the speedy reaction of our Assembly regarding political developments in our member states which have taken place during the two years I have presided over our Assembly.

1) The political crisis in Romania in 2012

In the wake of the political crisis in Romania, whose origin was primarily due to the attempted removal from office of the President of the Republic, I travelled to Bucharest with the Committee of Presidents on July 18-19. The purpose of this trip was to encourage all the parties to respect the commitments they had undertaken at the time of their original membership of the Council of Europe, to facilitate the search for solutions to the political crisis through dialogue between the ruling majority and the opposition and to ensure the rule of law.

We were able to hold talks with all the relevant authorities. When the results of the referendum were in favour of the President of the Republic remaining in office, I called, on August 21, 2012, all Romanian political actors and institutions to respect this decision.

I returned to Bucharest on 25-26 February 2013, so as to fathom the development of the situation. During this trip I was able to observe that the crisis had been resolved in a satisfactory manner and that cohabitation had been accepted. Even though certain problems remain, the contacts I had at the highest level imply that the country is moving in the right direction. I was able to speak before the two Chambers of Parliament and I was pleased that, at the end of my visit, the Prime Minister, Mr. Victor Ponta, should accept to make a speech before the Parliamentary Assembly. He did in fact do just this the April 2013 session. I am delighted that, more than one year on from the crisis of summer 2012, democratic institutions are operating correctly in Romania.



Speech by Victor PONTA, Prime Minister of Romania, April 2013

2) Greece – The difficult and painful question of migrants and refugees

I carried out an official visit to Greece on January 15-16, 2013. In addition to the highest level contacts which I had during this trip, I was able to visit detention centres along with the PACE *ad hoc* sub-committee on illegal migrants. I was able to understand the extent of the problem facing Greece and grasp that quite clearly it cannot deal with such a situation alone. I was also able to take measure of the catastrophic situation of both the migrants and the detained refugees and I was particularly shocked by the conditions for the women and children. I called for solidarity between all European nations and recalled the urgent need for a true European policy in this particular area.

I would like to underline that, in spite of the very difficult situation in which it finds itself, Greece is tackling this genuine humanitarian drama with much courage and dedication.



With Mr. Meimarakis, President of the Greek Parliament, January 2013

3) Ukraine

I made an official visit to Ukraine in March 2013. The aim of this trip was to encourage the authorities of the country to respect the commitments which they had freely undertaken upon becoming members of the Council of Europe. This was, in particular, the case regarding the guarantee of the independence of justice and its proper operation.

During my various meetings, and in particular during a very constructive session of over two hours with the President of the country, I saluted the good will clearly expressed by the highest Ukrainian authorities to scrupulously respect their obligations and commitments towards the Council of Europe, as well as to comply with the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. I called upon the authorities to continue their reforms without hesitation and without delay and to place constitutional reform at the top of the list of priorities.

As regards the members of the former Government who are still imprisoned, I urged the authorities to find a swift response in order to solve, within the respect of the principles of the Council of Europe, the problems arising from the selective application of justice (first of all in the emblematic cases of Ms Tymoshenko et de Mr. Loutsenko) as well as to reform justice to avoid recurrences of such cases. In the framework of the current Ukrainian presidency of the OSCE, I brought up the question of the resolution of frozen conflicts in Europe and in particular in Transnistria. I once more met with

President Viktor Yanukovich on November 15, 2013 to look at the current state of affairs on these issues.



With Mr. Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine, November 2013

4) Serbia – constructive dialogue

I made an official visit to Serbia in March 2013. In addition to talks with the Serbian authorities, I had the honor of speaking before the Serbian National Assembly. During that speech I was able to bring up, in a frank and open manner, the issue of Kosovo and was able to salute the constructive approach of the Government concerning dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. I was delighted with the positive welcome which was given to the proposals set down in the report by our colleague Bjorn Von Sydow on this subject. During this visit, I threw my full support behind the Serbian objective to obtain a date for the opening of negotiations concerning membership of the European Union. I underlined that the Council of Europe is ready to do everything within its power to help Serbia carry out the progress necessary in this field.

5) “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

I visited “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” in June 2013. I was accompanied by Mr. Robert Walter, the *rapporteur* of the Post-Monitoring Committee.

Our aim was to engage in political dialogue with the political authorities and with all the political groupings so as to better prepare the debate on the PACE report concerning the post-monitoring dialogue with “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” in order for that dialogue to represent a true shared vision of the priorities of our cooperation.

At the end of our visit we called for an intensification of the cooperation between the country and the Council of Europe so as to fulfill the implementation of the commitments made at the time of membership and so as to make faster progress on the road to European integration.

During my speech to the Members of Parliament gathered in a plenary sitting, I launched an appeal to both the ruling majority and to the opposition to commit to a normal and constructive dialogue within the Parliament. I called for this dialogue to be carried out in the mutual respect of all

parties so that the Parliament might fully play its political and institutional role. At the same time, I underlined the need to continue the necessary reforms along with the support of the expertise of the Council of Europe. In order to better target the priorities of cooperation, I called for the development of a multi-annual joint plan of action.

6) Bulgaria

I visited Bulgaria in June 2013. During this trip, in particular, I called upon the main political parties of the country to renew a constructive dialogue. This was to be translated by a return to the Parliament of the main opposition party which topped the polls at the general elections the previous month. I called upon the Government to continue the necessary reforms whilst using the mechanisms of the Council of Europe and in particular the Venice Commission and the GRECO.

C – Continuing a dynamic neighbourhood policy

PACE has already bestowed “Partner for Democracy” status upon the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco and upon the Palestine National Council. Israel has observer status at the Council of Europe. The Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic is a candidate for “Partner for Democracy” status. This all shows that our neighbours strive towards our standards and both the Council of Europe and our Assembly must continue their policy of openness and commitment in the neighbouring regions so as to meet, in a satisfactory way, the challenges of the 21st century.

In this context, I made an official visit to Tunisia from October 28-31, 2012, along with the Chair of the Committee of Ministers, the Albanian Foreign Affairs Minister and the Chair of the Venice Commission. The President of the National Constituent Assembly, M. Mustapha Ben Jaafar, made a speech before PACE in the follow-up to my visit.



With Mr. Moncef Marzouki, President of Tunisia, October 2012

I also carried out an official visit to Morocco from December 5-7, 2012, accompanied by Ms Fatiha Saïdi, *rapporteur* for PACE on equality between women and men: a condition for the success of the Arab Spring.

During my meetings with the Presidents of the two Chambers, I saluted the exemplary form of cooperation between the Moroccan Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly. I encouraged cooperation between equals which would be mutually beneficial to both parties. We discussed the means to be implemented in order to strengthen the partnership for democracy. In particular we dealt with the commitments which the Moroccan Parliament undertook at the time of its obtaining the status of “Partner for Democracy”. We also debated the possible contribution to be made by the Parliamentary Assembly in the resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara.



Visit of Karim Ghellab, President of the Chamber of Representatives of the Kingdom of Morocco, June 2013

I made an official visit to Algeria from June 17-19, 2013. I especially urged all those with whom I met to intensify their relations with the various bodies of the Council of Europe and to consider the interest they might have in seeking the status of “Partner for Democracy”. I also saluted Algeria’s commitment in the field of gender equality. We also dealt with the situation in Syria, in Libya as well as Western Sahara.

It is in a more general framework and with a deep awareness of the importance of what happens in the southern Mediterranean, which is of concern to us all, that I followed this particular neighbourhood policy. It is for this reason that I participated in November in the 2013 Lisbon Forum organized by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. At this meeting, I underlined our role as representatives of the oldest pan-European organization and recalled it was our task to put our expertise at the disposal of the states of the south of the Mediterranean, whilst taking into account the particularities of each one. I also followed with great interest, the conference organized at the same time by our Committee on Political Affairs. Numerous representatives of the states of the south of the Mediterranean participated in this conference.

Furthermore, I am convinced that the neighbourhood policy of the Council of Europe should not be limited to the south of the Mediterranean. I am thinking, in particular, about our relationships with our partners in the East. In this framework, I arranged for meetings, during my participation in the plenary sitting of the CIS Inter-parliamentary Assembly, with the Presidents of the Kazakhstan and

Kyrgyz Parliaments, so as to explore together possible roads towards the strengthening of our cooperation. At the same time, in January 2013, I had a very fruitful working meeting with Mr. Kong Quan, Ambassador of the Republic of China to France and we discussed the possible tightening of ties between PACE and the National People's Congress of China. I had already mentioned this possibility in a report I presented to our Assembly in 2008.

We should not forget that our organization counts among its members all European states with one exception – Belarus. I am convinced that Belarus is a European state which is destined to be part of our pan-European project. Therefore it is essential to open up dialogue with Belarus whilst at the same time, clearly laying down our requirements as regards human rights and democracy. The choice of the first laureate for the Václav Havel Prize - Mr. Ales Bialiatsky, who is imprisoned in Belarus for having defended his convictions – shows that there is no incompatibility between the desire for dialogue and the will to remain strong on principles.

It is thus within such a context, that I met on several occasions with the Vice-President of the Belarus Parliament, M. Guminsky, as well as with Belarusian parliamentarians taking part in the meetings of the PACE's Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy. My aim was to convince these authorities to commit to the road of closer ties with the Council of Europe, by taking concrete measures such as the implementation of a moratorium on capital punishment. In a similar vein, I urged the authorities to fully cooperate with PACE's *rappporteur*. I hope that my efforts, along with those of my colleagues from ACE will bear fruit.

Given the importance of human rights for both the Council of Europe and the Vatican (the Holy See does in fact hold observer status within our organization), it seemed to me self-evident to attempt to strengthen the links between us, so as to share, in particular, our thoughts upon such issues. I was particularly delighted with the private audience which Pope Francis granted me on October 11, 2013 in Rome. At this meeting, I highly stressed the notions of humanism and human rights. We also dealt with the question of migrants and refugees. I invited the Holy Father to come to speak before the Parliamentary Assembly during one of our upcoming sessions. I also met with Monsignor Dominique Mamberti, Secretary of State for the Relations between the Holy See and States.



With Pope Francis, Rome, October 2013

D – Strengthening cooperation with all our member states

Although I did give priority to certain countries on account of the most pressing items on my agenda, I nonetheless attempted to visit as many of the member states representing all the regions and the political persuasions of our organization as possible. It is for this reason that I visited Croatia, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Luxemburg, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, the United Kingdom, Russia, Switzerland and Turkey.

1) Germany

Having been invited by the President of the Bundestag, Mr. Norbert Lammert, I carried out an official visit to the Federal Republic of Germany between November 19-22, 2012. When I visited Berlin I met with the Federal President, Mr. Joachim Gauck, the President of the Bundestag, M. Norbert Lammert, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Guido Westerwelle, with Mr. Michael Link, Deputy Foreign Minister, as well as with the Federal Minister for Justice, Mme Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger. I also held talks with the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, with members of the European Affairs Committee as well as with members of the Law Committee and the Sub-committee on Human Rights. I also met with the chairs of the said committees. In addition, I held talks with the chairs of the political groups represented in the Bundestag. During my stay in Berlin I also addressed the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. .



With Mr. Joachim Gauck, President of the German Federal Republic, November 2012

Our discussions centered upon the notion of concentrating the action of the Council of Europe on the areas which are fundamental to the remit of our organization, i.e. democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

In the case of countries which do not respect our standards, our role is certainly to sustain support and dialogue in respect of the opinions of each party concerned but it is also to maintain a critical eye at the same time. I thus underlined that we must be firm concerning our principles and our values in respect of our action and equally regarding our discussions.

In addition, I stressed the question of complementarity between the work of the Council of Europe and that of the European Union in order to strengthen our synergy and to avoid duplication of our action.

2) Croatia

As a follow-up to the meetings of the Presidential Committee and to those of the Assembly's Bureau in Dubrovnik, I carried out an official visit to Zagreb between September 3-4, 2013. During this visit, I met with the President of the Parliament, the First Deputy Prime Minister and with the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs as well as with members of the Foreign Affairs Committee and of the European Affairs Committee. I also had talks with the Chair of the Zagreb City Council and with representatives of the Croatian Youth Network.

I availed of this opportunity to congratulate Croatia on its recent membership of the European Union. Such an event marks an enormous success for the country but also for the Council of Europe which was the first European institution to welcome Croatia as a member in 1996.

I underlined the fact that Croatia has played an essential part in the strengthening of stability and reconciliation in the region, as well as in the process of regional cooperation.

3) Finland

During my visit, which took place 2-3 April, 2013, I met with Mr. Eero Heinäluoma, President of the Parliament of Finland, Mr. Paavo Arhinmäki, Minister for Culture and sports, Mr. Pertti Torstila, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Timo Soini, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee and with Mr. Johannes Koskinen, Chair of the Parliamentary Constitutional Committee.

I also held talks with Mr. Jussi Pajuojja, Deputy Parliamentary Ombudsman, Ms Elisabeth Nauclér, Chair of the Human Rights Group of the Finnish Parliament, with the representatives of youth bodies, as well as with the Finnish delegation to PACE, chaired by Ms Susanna Huovinen.

During these talks, I saluted the enormous contribution played by Finland in the work of the Council of Europe since its membership in 1989. This contribution includes its involvement in the monitoring procedure of the Parliamentary Assembly, in the setting-up of the position of European Commissioner for Human Rights, in the defense of our values on the international stage and in the application of good practices concerning human rights which make Finland one of the most developed countries in this field in the world.

I particularly saluted the action of the Finnish Government regarding young people. In addition, the rights of children were at the centre of our discussions and we concluded unanimously that the interests of the child should have priority in all issues on this particular subject.

4) Hungary

During my official visit to Hungary (2-4 December 2013), I welcomed the cooperation between Hungary and the Council of Europe. This particular visit provided the opportunity to discuss the situation in Hungary following the adoption of Resolution 1941, last June, by the Parliamentary Assembly. I am very happy with the good will shown by Hungarian authorities in the pursuit of their constructive cooperation with the Council of Europe. Hungary is an important European state which was, moreover, the first state from Central and Eastern Europe to become a member of the Council of Europe.

During my trip, I made a speech, at the European Youth Centre, to a group of young human rights activists coming from a broad spectrum of European and Arab countries.

I began my visit with a trip to Tata which won the Europe Prize in 2013.



Meeting with the Prime Minister, Mr. Viktor Orbán, December 2013

5) Ireland

During my official visit to Ireland in December 2013, I highlighted the fact that the role of the Council of Europe is to support, through dialogue and the sharing of expertise, all member states, without exception, in the implementation of our standards. Ireland's particularly deep experience in this field is extremely precious to us. I am convinced that it is through dialogue that we can help our member states to gain the greatest advantage from the tools proposed by the Council of Europe. I am also very pleased with our agreement on the need to develop the broadest possible synergy between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of human rights and in the area of the rule of law. Mr. Michael Mc Namara's report is an important basis on which to make further progress in this domain. We also discussed the future of the European Court of Human Rights, as Ireland's experience in the implementation of the Court's decisions is particularly interesting. Also during this trip, I had the opportunity to hold very useful talks with Mr. Pat Cox on the situation in Ukraine.

6) Iceland

In answer to an invitation from the Parliament of Iceland, I travelled to Reykjavik on 14-15 October 2013. During this visit I met the President of the Parliament, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the representatives of the various political groupings in the Parliament, as well as the members of the

Iceland delegation to PACE. I also visited a centre for children who have suffered sexual abuse, called 'The Children's House'. In addition, I met with the representatives of the political parties' youth movements and visited the "Skólathing" (School Parliament)



With Mr. Einar Kristinn Guðfinnsson, President of the Icelandic Parliament, October 2013

At the end of my visit to Iceland, I saluted the commitment of the country to the values and standards of the Council of Europe. I, in particular, underlined that cooperation with the Venice Committee on the drawing-up of a new constitution, represented a very good example of the use of the expertise of the Council of Europe.

I also drew attention to the importance which Icelandic authorities pay to the issue of the struggle against violence towards women.

During my visit to 'The Children's House', I was very impressed by the structures which have been set up in Iceland to fight against sexual abuse towards children. I was also struck by the support measures which have been implemented for victims and by the advertising campaigns which have been carried out throughout the country.

In addition, I underlined the need to develop synergies with the structures and the institutions representing regional cooperation such as, the Nordic Council, the West Nordic Council or the Arctic Council.

7) *Italy*

During my visit on October 10-11, 2013, I saluted the good will of the Italian authorities, at the highest level, to deal with problems regarding the field of human rights in Italy. As my visit took place just after the tragedy which had just taken the lives of hundreds of migrants and refugees along the coast of the island of Lampedusa, migration issues were clearly at the very core of the discussions I had during my meetings with Italian officials. I saluted the efforts which Italy has taken to save the lives of migrants and refugees in distress at sea and in particular the never-ending and extraordinary work carried out by the Coast Guards.

In this framework, I recalled that dealing with migratory flows is not the problem of Italy alone, nor even only that of the European states with a southern border. Quite clearly, Lampedusa cannot be considered only as an Italian border but in fact as a European border. However the problem must also be dealt with on the other side of the Mediterranean in the countries at the origin of such flows and the countries through which they transit.

My talks with the Italian authorities also dealt with the need to reform the prison system with a view to reducing congestion. I was, in particular, impressed by the statement made by the President of the Republic before the two Chambers of Parliament on the very difficult issue of overpopulation of prisons. In my opinion, this statement displays both great political courage and good will to provide a solution to this real problem.

8) *Luxemburg*

In response to an invitation by the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Laurent Mosar, I carried out a visit to Luxemburg on 18-20 February, 2013. During this visit I met with the Prime Minister, Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Laurent Mosar, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean Asselborn, the Minister for Justice, Mr. François Biltgen, the members of the Foreign Affairs, Defense, Cooperation and Immigration Committee chaired by Mr. Ben Fayot, the Luxemburg delegation to PACE and the Ombudsman of the Grand Duchy Of Luxembourg, Ms Lydie Err. I was also received for an audience with His Royal Highness the Grand Duke.

The main subjects of discussion during these talks included the role of national Parliaments in the implementation of the rulings of the European Court for Human Rights, the reform of this Court, the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the ratification of certain conventions of the Council of Europe by Luxemburg as well as the reform of the Council of Europe and the relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union.

On 20 February, 2013, I had a very fruitful exchange with the President of the European Court of Justice, Mr. Vassilios Skouris, on the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights. Since the Court of Justice will be asked to provide an opinion on any possible agreement reached between the Council of Europe and the European Union on this subject, I felt that it was interesting to hear the opinion of the judges on this process and discuss any questions which remain to be clarified concerning the accession procedure.

9) Monaco

Upon an invitation issued by the National Council of Monaco, I carried out an official visit to the Principality on March 23, 2012. During this trip I met with the President of the National Council, Mr. Jean-François Robillon, the Minister of State, Mr. Michel Roger, the leaders of the political parties represented in the National Council, as well as with members of the Monaco delegation to the Assembly. I was also received by H.S.H. Prince Albert of Monaco.

During my meetings, I saluted the efforts made by Monaco to modernize its institutions and, at the same time, I encouraged the authorities to adopt the most modern of international standards possible in order to deal with current challenges.

10) Montenegro

On October 12-13 2013, I visited Montenegro, at the invitation of the President of the Parliament of Montenegro, Mr. Ranko Krivokapic, who is also President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE. During this trip I met with the President of Montenegro, Mr. Filip Vujanovic, with Mr. Igor Luksic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and for European Integration, as well as with Mr. Ranko Krivokapic, President of the Parliament.

11) Norway

During this visit between April 4-5, 2013, I was received for an audience with His Majesty Harald V, King of Norway. I also met with Mr. Dag Terje Andersen, President of the Storting (Norwegian Parliament), with Ms Ine Eriksen Søreide, President of the Standing Commission of the Foreign Affairs Committee, with Ms Gry Larsen, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as with the Norwegian delegation to PACE, chaired by Ms Karin S. Woldseth.

I also held talks with Ms Marit Nybakk and Mr. Per-Kristian Foss, respectively President and Vice-President of the Nordic Council, with Mr. Geir Lundestad, Director of the Nobel Institute, as well as with Ms Ana Perona-Fjeldstad, Director of the European Wergeland Centre.

I saluted the active role which Norway has played within the Council of Europe since its setting-up and its substantial financial contribution to various projects. I urged those with whom I spoke to continue to work in the same direction so as to make our organization more reactive and political in its approach and thus to better deal with the challenges facing Europe.

At the end of my stay, I made a declaration stating that Norway, with its culture of tolerance and dialogue as well as with its long tradition of action in favour of peace, could contribute enormously to the defense and promotion of our values in countries where democracy and human rights were challenged.

12) The United Kingdom

I travelled to London on February 13-14, 2013. I met with Baroness D'Souza, Speaker of the House of Lords, with Mr. Nigel Evans, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, with Mr. Richard Ottaway MP, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and with Dr Frances Hywell MP, Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, as well as with his colleagues. I also met with the Right Honorable David Lidington, Minister for European Affairs, with the Right Honorable Dominic Grieve QC MP, Attorney General for England and Wales, and with Lord Boswell, Chair of the European Union Committee of the House of Lords, as well as with the Right Honorable Lord Mance, President of the Supreme Court. During this visit, I also held talks with the British delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and with its chair, Mr. Robert Walter.

Our discussions mainly centered on the relations between the United Kingdom and the European Court for Human Rights. We specifically dealt with problems concerning the implementation of the rulings of the Court, the selection process for its judges and the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights. We also discussed the issue of frozen conflicts.

13) Russia

This visit, which took place between November 12-15, 2013, was a follow-up to the speech made by the President of the Douma to PACE in October 2013.



With Mr. Serguey Narychkine, President of the State Douma of the Russian Federation, November 2013

I underlined that the organization needs the support of Russia to make progress on strategic issues, in particular the reform of monitoring mechanisms, the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights, the development of a complete and efficient pan-European system for the protection of rights and basic liberties in Europe, the situation in the region of our

southern neighbours, notably in the Near East, as well as North-South cooperation. I have a strong wish to set up the conditions for true constructive dialogue with Russia.

As regards PACE's monitoring procedure, I declared that it was *"urgent to take stock of the situation regarding the implementation of this essential function of the Assembly. It is, in particular, necessary to have all member states, without exception, face up to their responsibilities, so as to ensure the application of our standards in the entire geographical space of the Council of Europe. I salute the commitment of Russian parliamentarians, as well as that of other national delegations, to this specific issue. I hope that, together, we will be able to speed up this process so that the monitoring procedure, as a tool for dialogue and cooperation, may become even more efficient"*.

During my visit, I met with the President of the State Douma, with the President of the Federal Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs as well as with the members of the State Douma Foreign Affairs Committee. I also held talks with the President of the Central Electoral Commission and with the Ombudsman.

I also participated in the second International Parliamentary Forum, as well in a Conference organized by the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University)

14) Switzerland

In answer to an invitation from the President of the National Council of Switzerland, Ms Maya Graff, I made an official visit to Bern on September 11-12, 2013. During this trip, I had talk with the President of the National Council of Switzerland, the President of the Council of States, the Head of the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, as well as with the members of the Swiss delegation to PACE.

During our discussions, I raised various issues linked to current international politics as well as questions related to the main fields of action of the Council of Europe. These items included, in particular, the reform of the monitoring mechanism of the Council of Europe, the scrutiny procedure of the Assembly, cooperation with neighbouring countries and the search for solutions to frozen conflicts.

In addition, I discussed with the Head of the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, the issue of the preparation of both the Swiss and Serbian presidencies of the OSCE. This question was dealt with in order to strengthen our cooperation with the OSCE in the areas covered by the priorities of the two future presiding countries. The topic of the search for solutions to frozen conflicts could, in particular, become a priority area in the field of our cooperation.

15) Turkey

In response to an invitation from the President of the Grand National Turkish Assembly, I made an official visit to Turkey from May 13-15, 2013. During this visit, I met with the President of the Republic, the President of the Grand National Turkish Assembly, the Minister for Families and Social Policy and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs as well as the representatives of various political parties and the members of the Turkish delegation to PACE. I also visited the Council of Europe's Office for Programmes in Ankara and the University of Galatasaray in Istanbul.

Following on from our debate on post-monitoring dialogue which was held at the Assembly in April 2013 and the adoption of Resolution 1925 (2013), I invited Turkey to continue on the road to reform, following the recommendations proposed by this Assembly resolution, specifically concerning judicial reforms and the reform of the Constitution. In this framework, I saluted the reforms carried out by Turkey a regards democratic institutions and human rights as well as its exemplary cooperation with the Council of Europe in the implementation of these reforms. I very specifically congratulated Turkey on its commitment to the struggle against violence towards women and I proposed to the authorities to work together for the swift coming into force of the Istanbul Convention and the promotion of this convention throughout Europe.



With Mr. Abdullah Gül, President of the Turkish Republic, May 2013

I underlined that Turkey is a vital partner on the road to making progress concerning the aims and values of the Council of Europe and that it represents an example for the whole region, particularly for Arab countries on the way to democracy, as well as for the countries of Central Asia. I also made it very clear that Turkey is an essential partner in the resolution of frozen conflicts, especially that in Nagorno-Karabakh.

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During my chairmanship I have received many high-ranking figures in Strasbourg. My main concern has always been to maintain dialogue, without exception, in order to enable the progression of the implementation of our values.



With David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, January 2012

“All different – all equal” is a motto which faithfully sums up the philosophy of our organization. All the member states have something to receive and something to give to our organization. The final aim is that we all reach the level of certain standards but that this should happen within the framework of the respect of the specificities of each member state.

III – Making PACE more “collective”, more participatory and more visible

A –A more participatory and more “collective” PACE

1) Closer links between the national delegation chairs and the committees

It has been my desire to create greater participation within our Assembly. In order to make this possible, I first of all, organized a Conference bringing together the President and the chairs of national delegations. This was done in order to set up a true dialogue on issues of primary importance such as the electoral procedure for judges or the question of monitoring.

In this framework, I set up, along with the chairs of national delegations, a reflection process on the future of monitoring within PACE. I am extremely satisfied with the fruitful discussion which came out of this conference and with the fact of having received around twenty written replies, all very thought-provoking in the lessons to be learnt. These lessons will certainly provide essential food for thought in the debate on this vital question.

Another of my desires was that the Presidential Committee should meet with the chairs of committees before the meeting prior to the sessions, so that the two bodies could examine the issues linked to the setting-down of the agenda for the sessions.

2) Strengthened links with the bodies of the Council of Europe and their partners

First of all, I have held regular meetings with the Chair of the Venice Commission and with the heads of the different monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe. I have also made it my business to meet with the representatives of the different bodies of the Council of Europe, such as the CPT, Moneyval, the European Audiovisual Observatory, the European Committee on Social Rights or the Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ).

Given the primary importance of issues concerning the European Court of Human Rights, I have very closely followed all questions which concern this body and in particular that of the selection of its judges, which is one of the most essential tasks of our Assembly. I have also closely observed the issue of the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights and I am extremely satisfied that this question appears to have been successfully resolved. In this framework, I have had several meetings with the President of the European Court of Human Rights and in addition, I have met the President of the Court of Justice of the European Union. This meeting was a first for a President of PACE. During my various visits to member states, I made it my business to meet judges of the highest level, such as Lord Mance, President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, Ms Susan Denham, President of the Supreme Court of Ireland, Mr. John Loyola Murray, judge and former President of the aforementioned court or Mr. Jean-Marc Sauvé, Vice President of the French Council of State and President of Committee 255 (which provides an opinion on the candidates to the position of judge in the CJEU)

I also made it my business to develop the links between our Assembly and national Parliaments through bilateral meetings with the presidents of Parliaments and the presidents of National delegations. During my many trips t, I have systematically attempted to hold talks with the various parliamentary foreign affairs and European affairs committees so as, in particular, to meet with parliamentarians who are not members of the national delegations to PACE. At the same time, I had the good fortune to chair the European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments, 2012, which took place in Strasbourg. I was extremely involved in the running of this event and I took advantage of it to meet with the Presidents of Parliament of over twenty member states in order to better understand their vision of the future of PACE and of the Council of Europe in general.



European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, Strasbourg, September 2012

3) Promoting ongoing and coordinated action between all the bodies of the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe would be even more efficient if all of its members were to act in a collective manner. It is for this reason that I have chosen to work in close collaboration with the Committee of Ministers and the Venice Commission. In particular, I carried out a visit to Tunisia along with the Presidents of the Committee of Ministers and the Venice Commission.



*With Mr. Moncef Marzouki, President of Tunisia,
and Mr. Edmond Haxhinasto, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania,
Chair of the Committee of Ministers,
Tunisia, October 2012*

I have also made it my business, after each PACE part session, to appear before the Committee of Ministers to take part in a question and answer exercise, notably on the follow-up to be provided to each session as well as on current political issues.

More generally speaking, I have attempted to meet regularly with the Ambassadors representing their countries in Strasburg and in all the bodies of the Council of Europe. Inter-institutional dialogue is essential for the proper running of our organization.

B – A more visible PACE

I am deeply convinced that our action will be more visible and more relevant if we highlight the various tools which we have at our disposal. In this context, I travelled to Prague on March 25, 2013, in order to participate in the launching ceremony for the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize. The aim of this prize is to reward exceptional actions carried out by civil society in the defense of human rights in Europe and outside our continent. The prize will be awarded every year by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in partnership with the Václav Havel Library and the Charter 77 Foundation.

At this event, I signed a cooperation agreement with the Václav Havel Library and the Charter 77 Foundation concerning the setting-up of this prize. The signature took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic in the presence of the Minister, Mr. Karel Schwarzenberg, who also announced the financial contribution of the Czech Republic to this prize.



I am particularly delighted that we have been able to set up such a prize in a very short time period. The jury met in Prague on August 26 in order to make a pre-selection of three candidates. The second meeting of the jury was held in Strasburg on September 29, to decide upon the winner of the prize. The prize itself was awarded on Monday September 30, 2013, to Mr. Ales Bialiatski, a Belarusian human rights activist imprisoned in his country and was presented, in his absence, to his wife.



Awards ceremony for the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize, October 2013

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In conclusion, I would say that many initiatives have been launched during my term and that certain of them are beginning to bear fruit. I am thinking, in particular, of measures aiming at more closely associating parliamentarians with the operation of their Assembly, for indeed it is a case of THEIR assembly. I am also considering the efforts engaged in order to obtain greater participation on behalf of the chairs of committees and the chairs of national delegations in the decision-making process. We must continue along this path.

At the same time, I am convinced that we all together, *rapporteurs*, group leaders, committee chairs and every single member of PACE, have managed to render our Assembly more present and more relevant in political terms on the ground, in reply to the numerous challenges which our organization faces. These challenges include the strengthening of our pan-European system of the protection of human rights, the situation of migrants and refugees and the sensitive political and institutional contexts in which our states find themselves.

Our relations with the European Union remain both a subject of satisfaction and dissatisfaction: progress has certainly been made, notably with the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy, Stefan Füle. Nonetheless, much is still to be done so as to create true synergy between the projects of the Council of Europe and those of the European Union. I am convinced that the foundations of this process have been put in place and I hope that the continuation of this rapprochement will gradually lead the two great European bodies to cooperate efficiently in the achievement of their common aims on a pan-European level.

As regards frozen conflicts, my constant concern has been to renew dialogue between the various parties. Over the last two years we have managed to foster mutual trust between the different parties and, from this point of view, I am sure that we shall achieve even greater progress. Even though it is clear that we all wish for swift headway to be made, we also know deep down that time must be allowed to play its role in the process of making breakthroughs. I am convinced that we have taken the right road and are heading in the right direction.
