

The Session

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The Session is the information bulletin for plenary sessions of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE). It is published four times a year in the two official languages of the Organisation and is also available on the Assembly's website.



Monday 25 June 2007

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VERSION

<http://assembly.coe.int>

25-29 June 2007

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 - Blasphemy, religious insults and hate speech against persons on grounds of their religion

The 47

The Council of Europe brings together 47 democracies including 22 central and eastern European countries. Today, the Organisation has almost completed its enlargement but continues to increase its monitoring to ensure that all its members respect the obligations and commitments they entered into when they joined.



Member states: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

The Parliamentary Assembly

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 636 members (318 representatives and 318 substitutes) from the national parliaments of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

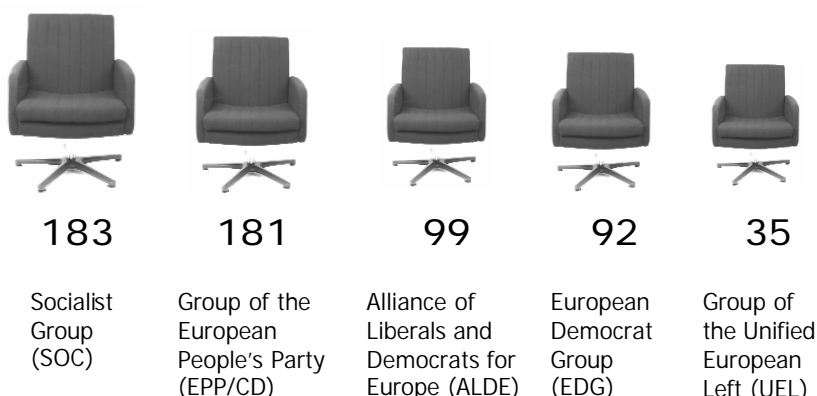
Countries that have joined the Council of Europe since November 1990: Hungary (1990), Poland (1991), Bulgaria (1992), Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Romania (1993), Andorra (1994), Latvia, Albania, Moldova, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine (1995), the Russian Federation, Croatia (1996), Georgia (1999), Armenia, Azerbaijan (2001), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002), Serbia and Montenegro (2003), replaced by Serbia (2006), Monaco (2004), Montenegro (2007).

Applications for membership: Belarus (12 March 1993).

The Special Guest status of the Belarus parliament was suspended on 13 January 1997.

The parliaments of Canada (1997), Israel (1957) and Mexico (1999) hold observer status with the Assembly.

The political groups



The Assembly committees

84 seats

Political Affairs
 Legal Affairs and Human Rights
 Economic Affairs and Development
 Social, Health and Family Affairs
 Migration, Refugees and Population
 Culture, Science and Education
 Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs
 Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
 Honouring of obligations and commitments by member states of the Council of Europe (Monitoring)

52 seats

Rules of Procedure and Immunities



Monday 25 June 2007

☞ Morning (11.30 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ Opening of the third part of the 2007 Ordinary Session

Parliamentary Assembly President René van der Linden opened the third part of the 2007 Ordinary Session and made an opening statement.

The Assembly approved the credentials of new members notified by national delegations and elected Boris Zala (Slovakia, SOC) as a Vice-President of the Assembly with respect to Slovakia before dealing with changes in the membership of committees. It also considered requests for urgent or current affairs debates and then adopted its order of business.

Finally, it adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee held in Belgrade on 24 May 2007.

◆ Address by Alfred Gusenbauer, Federal Chancellor of Austria

Dr Gusenbauer was a member of the Parliamentary Assembly from 1991 to 2007, and assumed office as Federal Chancellor of Austria on 11 January 2007.

Following his address, the Chancellor will answer questions from members of the Assembly.

Monday 25 June 2007

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-5.15 p.m.)

◆ **Euro-Mediterranean agricultural and rural policy**

Doc. 11301

Report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs

Rapporteur: Walter Schmied (Switzerland, ALDE)

It is in Europe's interest to promote stability in the Mediterranean Basin, according to the Environment Committee, and co-operation on agriculture could be one way of helping to bridge differences between countries in the region, especially as farming – and trade with Europe – is vital to many of their economies.

Europe should work with the Med countries to set "strategic priorities" for agriculture, focusing on building up their rural infrastructure, gradually liberalising agricultural trade with them, and transferring the know-how to encourage bio-friendly, sustainable farming and products adapted to an environment where water is scarce. Europe can also help with marketing techniques to build quality brands, improvements in transport and distribution logistics and initiatives which link town and country – such as making local produce more available in tourist resorts.

The EU should expand its efforts to use agriculture as a motor for development in the South and a way of bringing countries on the northern and southern shores of the Med closer together, while other international organisations can offer finance, policy advice, expertise and networking. The national parliaments of Med countries, as well as European and Mediterranean parliamentary assemblies, can play a vital role in promoting co-operation. For their part, Med countries need to co-ordinate their agricultural policies so that their different strengths complement each other in the global market-place.

Statement by Jacques Diouf, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Contact in the secretariat: Alfred Sixto, tel. 2244.

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

Doc. 11313 Parts 1 and 2, addendum

Rapporteur: Darja Lavtiž ar-Bebler (Slovenia, ALDE)

The progress report covers the discussions held and decisions reached by the Bureau and the Standing Committee since the last part-session.

Leo Platvoet (Netherlands, UEL) will also present a report on the observation by the Assembly of the parliamentary elections in Armenia (12 May 2007).

Statement by Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament

Tuesday 26 June 2007

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Election of the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

Doc. 11284

Voting takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the area behind the presidential rostrum.

The Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe is elected by the Assembly for a five-year renewable term of office.

A single candidate has been submitted to the Committee of Ministers by the Governments of the Netherlands and Italy, and subsequently transmitted to the Assembly: Maud De Boer-Buquicchio.

Mrs De-Boer Buquicchio is standing for re-election following completion of her first five-year mandate.

◆ **The image of women in advertising**

Doc. 11286

Report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Rapporteur: Gülsün Bilgehan (Turkey, SOC)

Too often, according to the Committee on Equal Opportunities, advertising shows women in situations which are humiliating and degrading, or even violent and offensive to human dignity. The rapporteur cites as an example the "porno chic" phenomenon.

Although laws have been strengthened in some countries, negative images persist, sometimes because national advertising codes are either ignored or do not exist, according to the committee.

The Council of Europe's member states should change their laws to make incitement to discrimination in any advertising medium an offence, give women's associations the right to bring proceedings, strengthen the self-regulating machinery set up by national advertising standards authorities and take action to foster critical attitudes to advertising. Toll-free phone lines could be set up where the public can complain of degrading ads, and a prize created for advertising which breaks most effectively with sexist stereotypes.

For its part, the Committee of Ministers should instruct an international committee of experts to make a thorough study of the image of women and men in advertising and on the basis of the findings, draw up a European code of good conduct, encouraging advertisers to present images of women and men which are not discriminatory and which respect their dignity.

Contact in the secretariat: Jannick Devaux, tel. 3503.

◆ **The feminisation of poverty**

Doc. 11276

Report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Rapporteur: Hermine Naghdalyan (Armenia, ALDE)

Opinion of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Catherine Fautrier (Monaco, EPP/CD)

Contact in the secretariat: Jannick Devaux, tel. 3503.

◆ Europe's social dimension: full implementation of the revised European Social Charter and evaluation of new labour regulations and minimum wages

Doc. 11277

Report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Walter Riester (Germany, SOC)

Opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

Europe's policies on social protection and social inclusion today face major challenges, according to the Social Affairs Committee. Global competition, the impact of new technologies and an ageing population shape the long-term policy context, while weak growth, high unemployment and persistent inequalities dominate the short term.

It is time for reforms which create a better balance between flexibility and security on the labour market – the so-called “flexicurity” approach. Europe must adopt a global approach which combines an active labour market policy, flexible contractual arrangements and social security, as well as an emphasis on training and qualifications.

The revised European Social Charter contains provisions which most of the member states accept, yet both the public and sometimes even political decision-makers are insufficiently aware of its content. The rights it enshrines must be publicised more widely and feed into the process of creating a social Europe. Finally, there is an urgent need for the Council of Europe and the European Union to co-operate more intensively with other multilateral organisations such as the International Labour Organisation, in order to give globalization itself a social dimension.

Contact in the secretariat: Geza Mezei, tel. 2143.

Tuesday 26 June 2007

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-7.30 p.m.)

◆ **The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD):
focus on eastern and south-eastern Europe**

Doc. 11300

Report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

Rapporteur: Carles Gasòliba i Böhm (Spain, ALDE)

Since 1992 the Assembly has engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, preparing annual reports on its progress and acting as its parliamentary forum. In this latest report, the Economic Affairs Committee views the Bank as a great success, and a catalyst for reform across its 29 countries of operation, even as it seeks to shift its operations to countries east and south-east of the European Union.

Russia remains the largest beneficiary of the Bank's funding, and is due to receive nearly half of all its new lending in 2007. The committee hopes the Bank will assist Russia in overcoming its excessive dependence on natural resources, improving corporate governance, modernising infrastructure, and promoting SMEs and regional development. The South Caucasus countries deserve more intensive support, the committee says, since they lag behind other EBRD countries in terms of development, while the Bank should remain a major actor in the Balkans.

Finally, the Bank has a special role in promoting energy efficiency and environmentally clean technologies in the countries it funds.

Statement by Jean Lemierre, President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Contact in the secretariat: Aiste Ramanauskaite, tel. 3117.

◆ Promotion by Council of Europe member states of an international moratorium on the death penalty

Doc. 11303

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Pietro Marcenaro (Italy, SOC)

Opinion of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Fátima Aburto Baselga (Spain, SOC)

The Council of Europe is strongly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances and its member states make up a *de facto* death penalty-free zone. Yet it also believes that it should work towards abolition of the death penalty world-wide.

The small number of countries that still resort to executions on a significant scale is becoming increasingly isolated in the international community. Between 1977 and 2006, the number of abolitionist countries rose from 16 to 89. This number increases to 129 if those countries which have not carried out any executions for the past 10 years or more are included. More than 90 per cent of known executions in 2006 took place in only six countries: China, Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Sudan, and the United States of America – an observer state of the Council of Europe.

A moratorium on executions is an important step, the Legal Affairs Committee points out, as it saves lives at once and has the potential of demonstrating to the public in retentionist countries that an end to state-sponsored killings does not lead to any increase in violent crime.

The committee therefore strongly welcomes the Italian initiative in the UN General Assembly in favour of an immediate and world-wide moratorium on executions, and believes the Assembly should support the European Union in pushing this initiative forward in such a manner as to guarantee the best possible success within the UN.

Contact in the secretariat: Günter Schirmer, tel. 2809.

Wednesday 27 June 2007

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Secret detentions and illegal transfers of detainees involving Council of Europe member states: second report**

Doc. 11302 rev. and addendum

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Dick Marty (Switzerland, ALDE)

In his report a year ago, Mr Marty exposed a global “spider’s web” of illegal US detentions and transfers as part of the so-called “war on terror”, and alleged collusion in this system by fourteen Council of Europe member states, seven of whom may have violated the rights of named individuals.

In this second report, he goes much further: it is now factually established, he says, that secret detention centres operated by the CIA existed for some years in Poland, at Stare Kiejkuty intelligence training base, and in Romania, in a “secure zone” in the south-east of the country.

Based on what he calls the credible and concordant testimonies of over 30 serving and former members of intelligence services in the US and Europe who spoke on condition of anonymity, cross-referenced with information from other sources, the rapporteur describes in detail how these centres formed part of the CIA’s so-called “High Value Detainee” (HVD) program, created after 9/11 to handle only the most important suspected terrorists. He also names leading figures – including the former Presidents of Poland and Romania – who were aware of and authorised these activities on European soil.

Based on a new analysis of “data strings” embedded in the international flight planning system, Mr Marty also shows how flights to Szymany in Poland – including one that may have carried Khalid Sheikh Mohammed from Kabul on 7 March 2003 – were deliberately disguised through the filing of “dummy” flight plans and the complicity of Polish air traffic controllers.

Mr Marty also alleges a series of partly secret decisions among NATO allies in October 2001, soon after 9/11, which provided the basic framework for these detentions and other illegal CIA activities in Europe.

Such human rights violations must be fully investigated, and the victims compensated, according to the Legal Affairs Committee. Finally, state secrecy or national security should never be invoked to block investigations into serious human rights violations involving the state’s representatives. Ways should be found – such as trusted judges having privileged access to secret information – to prosecute such violations without endangering legitimate national security.

Dissenting opinions from the Polish and Romanian delegations to the Assembly are appended to the report.

Contact in the secretariat: Günter Schirmer, tel. 2809.

Wednesday 27 June 2007

Afternoon (3 p.m.-7.30 p.m.)

◆ Combating anti-Semitism in Europe

Doc. 11292

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Mikhail Margelov (Russia, EDG)

Opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Renate Wohlwend (Liechtenstein, EPP/CD)

Anti-Semitism is on the rise in Europe, according to the Political Affairs Committee. Fuelled to some extent by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly among immigrants in European cities, it is conveyed frequently – but not exclusively – by both extreme-right and extreme-left political movements.

The Political Affairs Committee is aware that the fight against anti-Semitism presents democracies with a dilemma, as they must on the one hand guarantee basic rights to freedom of expression and association, and allow for the full spectrum of political views, while on the other tackle a phenomenon which undermines their core values.

Yet there is plenty that can be done: public figures or political parties making anti-Semitic statements should be prosecuted, public financing for anti-Semitic groups blocked and states sponsoring Holocaust-denial firmly condemned. The media should take care in their handling of potentially anti-Semitic stereotypes, while hate-speech against Jews on the internet and in sport should be resolutely stamped out.

Finally, more could be done to foster inter-faith dialogue and a more inclusive teaching of history and religions.

Statement by Rabbi Arthur Schneier, Founder and President of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation

Contact in the secretariat: Pavel Chevtchenko, tel. 3835.

◆ **Situation of longstanding refugees and displaced persons in South-East Europe**

Doc. 11289 rev.

Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Rapporteur: Nikolaos Dendias (Greece, EPP/CD)

Twelve years after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and eight years after the armed conflict in Kosovo, over half a million refugees and displaced people still remain in South-East Europe, according to the Migration Committee – a group of highly vulnerable people that is becoming ever-more neglected as local resources are diverted elsewhere and humanitarian aid dwindles.

The governments of the region need to set out clear legal and institutional frameworks, and provide the necessary financial resources, to enable local integration and voluntary return in safety and dignity. They should implement international human rights instruments to avoid statelessness, grant special protection – including for members of national minorities – and undertake the necessary administrative, judicial and police reforms. They should also continue to prosecute war criminals as part of a more vigorous pursuit of the process of reconciliation.

The committee calls on the member states, as well as the Council of Europe and its Development Bank, to fully support this process, and on the European Union to maintain the political momentum in the region, by offering the countries of the region the perspective of European integration.

Statement by António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Contact in the secretariat: Dana Karanjac, tel. 4877.

Thursday 28 June 2007

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Prosecution of offences falling within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)**

Doc. 11281

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Tony Lloyd (United Kingdom, SOC)

More than ten years have elapsed since the end of the Balkan War but so far only a tiny proportion of those responsible for war crimes have been brought to justice. Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladic, to name only the best known examples, are still at large. The fact that they have not been brought to justice is – in the view of the Legal Affairs Committee – an insult to the memory of the victims.

While the length and complexity of the Hague Tribunal's proceedings were sometimes criticised, and the death of Slobodan Milošević – its most high-profile indictee – deprived thousands of his victims of justice, this institution played a pioneering role in the development of international law, the committee points out.

Yet when the Tribunal closes its doors, which it must do soon when its mandate expires, it will fall to the national courts of the countries concerned to prosecute the remaining perpetrators of war crimes (with the exception of the six fugitives already indicted by the Tribunal, who must still appear before international jurisdictions). Although judicial systems in the countries concerned are stronger than they were, national legislation is still an obstacle to effective prosecutions, not least the ban on the extradition of nationals in all the countries concerned.

The committee spells out a series of steps these countries should take to make national prosecutions more effective, including signing and ratifying the relevant Council of Europe conventions.

Statement by Carla Del Ponte, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

Contact in the secretariat: Isild Heurtin, tel. 4100.

◆ **Urgent debate: how to prevent cyber-crime against state institutions in member and observer states**

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Opinion of the Political Affairs Committee

Opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

This report is due to approved by the Legal Affairs Committee at its meeting on Tuesday 26 June at 8.30-10 a.m.

Contact in the secretariat: Isild Heurtin, tel. 4100.

Thursday 28 June 2007

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-6.30 p.m.)

- ◆ Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly presented by Vuk Jeremic, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers

Following his presentation, the Foreign Minister will answer parliamentarians' questions.

- ◆ Honouring of obligations and commitments by Monaco

Doc. 11299

Report of the Monitoring Committee

Co-rapporteurs: Pedro Agramunt (Spain, EPP/CD) and Leonid Slutsky (Russia, SOC)

When Monaco joined the Council of Europe in October 2004, it pledged to honour its obligations as a member state, and committed itself to ratify a number of Council of Europe treaties and revise or extend a number of its laws to bring them into line with Council standards.

In this first assessment of progress, the Monitoring Committee points out that Monaco's first two years of membership have been marked by events which both deeply affected the people of the Principality and had important implications for its ability to fulfil on schedule the commitments it made in 2004. Prince Rainier died in April 2005 after a 56-year reign, leaving Prince Albert II to take over from his father and set a new course for the country.

The committee welcomes the signature in November 2005 of a convention between Monaco and France allowing Monegasques to hold senior government posts currently reserved for French nationals – one of the Council of Europe's key requirements during accession negotiations. The Principality has also ratified 30 of the Council's 200 conventions, and signed two others.

However, it has not yet honoured its commitment to ratify Protocol No. 1 to the ECHR, which guarantees property rights, the right to free elections and the right to education, nor signed Protocol No. 12, and ratification of the Revised Social Charter is still outstanding. While the efforts made on money-laundering are encouraging, the committee notes there is still progress to be made on extending the powers of the National Council.

The committee proposes to continue monitoring Monaco until it makes tangible progress on honouring its remaining commitments.

Contact in the secretariat: Caroline Ravaud, tel. 2327.

◆ **Iran's nuclear programme: the need for an international response**

Doc. 11294

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Göran Lindblad (Sweden, EPP/CD)

The situation surrounding Iran's nuclear programme has deteriorated considerably since the Assembly debated the issue a little over two years ago, according to the Political Affairs Committee. Iran has failed to respond to the international community's serious and well-founded concerns about the nature of its past and present nuclear programme, has broadened its nuclear activities – including Uranium enrichment on an industrial scale – and is now openly defying the UN.

A nuclear-armed Iran would pose an unacceptable threat to the already fragile situation in the Middle East, the committee says, while its provocative statements on Israel, denial of the Holocaust and support for terrorist groups have put it outside the generally accepted norms of international relations.

The solution must be found through negotiation, the committee believes, which will require mutual confidence and broader contacts with Iranian society. For its part, the Assembly should continue seeking to open a dialogue with the Iranian Parliament – also on questions of human rights and democracy – in order to contribute to regional stability and encourage a peaceful outcome.

Contact in the secretariat: Pavel Chevtchenko, tel. 3835.

The Joint Committee, which is the organ of co-ordination between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, meets at 6.30 p.m., or at the end of the sitting, in Room 5. Items on the draft agenda include future developments concerning the European Court of Human Rights, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, and the relationship between the Council of Europe and the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency.

Friday 29 June 2007

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

Special debate on intercultural and inter-religious dialogue

◆ **State, religion, secularity and human rights**

Doc. 11298

Report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Rapporteur: Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain, SOC)

Religions – which have shaped Europe and its values over the centuries – still have a role to play in modern national life, according to the Culture Committee. States should welcome and respect them, in all their plurality, “as a form of ethical, moral and ideological expression” on the part of European citizens, but should treat them as part of civil society. Individuals’ freedom to worship should be protected, but there should also be a clear separation of church and state.

Many of the problems faced by contemporary society – such as fundamentalist movements, terrorist acts, racism and xenophobia – have a religious aspect to them, which makes it all the more important that children learn about religions. Even societies where one religion predominates have therefore a duty to teach about the origins of all major religions, rather than to proselytise.

Ultimately human rights principles must take precedence over religious ones. Freedom of speech, for example, should not be restricted out of deference to particular religious beliefs.

Contact in the secretariat: João Ary, tel. 2112.

◆ **Blasphemy, religious insults and hate speech against persons on grounds of their religion**

Doc. 11296

Report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Rapporteur: Sinikka Hurskainen (Finland, SOC)

Opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Jaume Bartumeu Cassany (Andorra, SOC)

Opinion of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Rapporteur: John Dupraz (Switzerland, ALDE)

Freedom of expression is a fundamental cornerstone of democracy and should be protected – even for statements that shock, offend or disturb the state or a sector of the population, according to the Culture Committee. Religious groups, for example, must tolerate critical public statements and debate about their activities, teachings and beliefs, provided that such criticism does not amount to intentional and gratuitous insult.

But hate speech – inciting hatred, discrimination or violence against people of a particular religion – is another matter and should be penalised. Even religious laws must themselves respect this principle: death threats issued by religious leaders against journalists and writers, for example, are unacceptable.

Similar considerations should apply to blasphemy laws, which often came about in individual member states as a result of the dominant position of a particular religion. In view of the greater diversity of religious belief in Europe today, and the clear principle of separation of church and state, such laws should be reviewed.

A greater understanding of different religions – and their understanding of each other – is the best way to avoid religious conflict. The UN's "Alliance of civilisations" initiative, which promotes contacts between Muslim and so-called Western societies, is one good example, though in the committee's view it should avoid using the stereotype of "Western" culture and widen its scope to include other world religions.

Contact in the secretariat: Rüdiger Dossow, tel. 2859.

◆ **Closure of the third part of the 2007 Ordinary Session**

Practical information

1. Meetings of committees and political groups

The list of meetings held by the committees and the other organs of the Assembly (Bureau, political groups, etc.) appears in the notice paper (*bulletin*) published before each sitting.

Unless a committee decides otherwise, committee meetings are not public.

Meetings of political group take place on Monday morning and late afternoon as well as Wednesday morning.

2. Languages

The official languages of the Assembly are English and French. German, Italian and Russian are working languages. Speeches made in plenary session in any of these five languages are interpreted simultaneously into the other official and working languages. Members may, however, speak in languages other than English, French, German, Italian and Russian, provided that their delegation arranges for interpretation into one of the official or working languages. During sittings this is generally the case for Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese and Greek.

3. Assembly documents

The following documents are available in French and English at the document counter (on the first floor, to the right of the top of the main staircase, near lift No. IV).

Official documents

The main official documents are:

Reports: All items on the agenda are debated on the basis of a report by one of the Assembly's committees (with the exception of current affairs debates, elections, appointments, statements by guest speakers and communications from and questions to the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe).

Committee reports comprise one or more draft texts for adoption (recommendations, opinions, resolutions) and an explanatory memorandum prepared by the rapporteur. Only draft texts can be amended and adopted by the Assembly.

Amendments: Amendments to draft texts must be tabled in keeping with the relevant rules of procedure, particularly Rule 34 (see section 4 below). They are distributed at the document counter. They must be signed by at least five Representatives or Substitutes, unless they are being submitted on behalf of a committee seized for report or opinion.

Order of business: For each part-session the Bureau prepares a draft order of business listing the sittings at which the agenda items will be examined. **The draft order of business** is made available to members of the Assembly two weeks before the opening of the part-session. The Assembly is required to adopt the draft

order of business (Rule 25.7 of the Rules of Procedure). A member may propose an amendment to the draft order of business drawn up by the Bureau. The adoption of such a motion requires a majority of the votes cast (Rule 25.8). Once adopted, the order of business can be altered only by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast.

Once it has been approved by the Assembly at the first sitting of the part-session, the order of business is published (Rule 25) and made available to the members at the document counter.

Minutes of proceedings: Generally, after each sitting of the Assembly, the **minutes of proceedings** are produced. They list the Assembly's decisions and record speakers' names, the results of votes on texts and amendments, and points of order raised. At the start of the sitting the President submits the minutes of proceedings of earlier sittings to the Assembly for approval. If the minutes of proceedings are objected to, their approval may be postponed to the following sitting, at which the President may put to the Assembly any necessary modification (see Rule 29 of the Rules of Procedure).

Report of debates: A **provisional report of debates** is issued after each sitting. The French version of the provisional report (pink pages) contains the full text of all speeches made in French and a summary in French of speeches made in other languages. The English version (yellow pages) contains the full text of speeches in English and summaries in English of speeches in other languages. Speeches in German or Italian are also reported verbatim in a separate publication (green pages). Speakers may make corrections to the provisional report of debates within 24 hours of publication.

Representatives and Substitutes who were entered on the list of speakers and present in the Chamber but were unable to speak because of lack of time may hand in their typewritten texts for inclusion in the report of debates. They should do so within 24 hours of the end of the debate concerned at the Table Office (Room 1083).

Adopted texts: The texts adopted by the Assembly are also published after each sitting, separately in English (yellow pages) and French (pink pages).

The texts adopted by the Assembly are:

- Recommendations (proposals addressed by the Assembly to the Committee of Ministers, for implementation by that Committee or the governments);
- Opinions (addressed to the Committee of Ministers);
- Resolutions (embodying a decision by the Assembly on a question of substance which it is empowered to put into effect, a point of view for which it alone is responsible, or a question of form, transmission, execution or procedure);

The other official documents (Rule 22 of the Rules of Procedure) are:

- reports, communications, requests for an opinion or further consideration transmitted by the Committee of Ministers;
- questions addressed to the Committee of Ministers;
- communications from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe;
- reports of international organisations;
- written declarations.

Other documents

Before each sitting a **notice paper** is produced, setting out the orders of the day. It also contains other information relevant to the proceedings, including:

- time limits for tabling amendments;
- time limits for lists of speakers;
- procedural notices, for example concerning elections;
- information about meetings of committees and other Assembly bodies;
- information about changes in the membership of committees.

For each part-session the following lists are published:

- List of Representatives
- List of Substitutes
- List of national delegations
- List of the Secretariat officials, giving office locations and contact telephone numbers for the part-session.

The latest edition of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly was published in April 2006 and is available in a bilingual version (English/French), with an update of December 2006.

4. Tabling amendments

Members who wish to table amendments or sub-amendments to the draft texts before the Assembly should submit them to the Table Office (Room 1083). Amendments and sub-amendments must be **signed by at least five Representatives or Substitutes**, unless they have been submitted on behalf of the committee submitting the report or an opinion.

Under the provisions on the organisation of debates (page 88 and ff. of the Rules of Procedure), the **time limits for tabling amendments** are the following (where appropriate the Bureau may decide to change these limits, in particular for urgent debates or debates on general policy):

- for debates on the afternoon of Monday 25 June: Monday 25 June at 12 noon;
- for debates on Tuesday 26 June: Monday 25 June at 4 p.m.;
- for all other debates (except urgent debates, unforeseen debates or as otherwise indicated on the order of business): 23 and a half hours before the opening of the sitting at which the debate is to begin.

Sub-amendments must be tabled at least two hours before the opening of the sitting at which the debate is to begin.

The procedure for tabling, examining and voting on amendments and sub-amendments is set out in Rule 34 of the Rules of Procedure.

5. Motions for resolutions and recommendations

Motions for resolutions and recommendations must be signed by ten or more Representatives or Substitutes from at least five national delegations (Rule 23.2). The President decides which motions are admissible.

Any motion considered admissible is printed and distributed as soon as possible. The Bureau then decides whether it should be referred to one or more committees, or forwarded to one or more

committees for information, or that no further action should be taken. The Bureau's decision must then be ratified by the Assembly or the Standing Committee.

For Motions tabled during a part-session, the Bureau has decided that only those Motions which have been tabled by **12 noon on Tuesday of the Part-Sessions** will be examined by the Bureau meeting after the Part-Session.

A document may be referred to only one committee for report but to any other committee for opinion (Rule 24.2). The opinion of the latter concerns the report of the former committee. The report concerned must therefore be made available to the committee whose opinion has been sought in good time for it to prepare its opinion. Committee opinions may be presented orally or in writing. An opinion presented in writing must contain a chapter at the beginning entitled "Conclusions of the committee" and an explanatory memorandum by the rapporteur (Rule 49.3 of the Rules of Procedure).

6. Written declarations

Written declarations may be tabled provided that they:

- do not exceed 200 words;
- are on subjects within the competence of the Council of Europe;
- are signed by at least twenty Representatives or Substitutes belonging to four national delegations and two political groups.

They are neither referred to a committee nor debated in the Assembly (Rule 53 of the Rules of Procedure).

Any representative or Substitute may add his signature to such a declaration, in which case the declaration will be distributed again two weeks after the end of the part-session, with the names of all the members who signed it.

A written declaration which has not received any new signatures before the opening of the following part-session is closed to further signature.

7. Opinions of the Assembly (to the Committee of Ministers)

According to the Statute of the Council of Europe, or to other texts of a statutory character, the Committee of Ministers seeks the Assembly's opinion on such matters as the accession of new member states, draft conventions or the Council of Europe's budget. These requests for opinions are debated in the Assembly, following which the Assembly votes on the opinion to be transmitted to the Committee of Ministers (Rule 57).

8. Changes in the membership of national delegations or committees

Members of the Assembly are appointed for the whole Ordinary Session. Following parliamentary elections, the national parliament concerned or other competent authority shall make appointments to the Assembly within six months of the elections (Rule 10.2 and 3).

Should any seat on a national delegation fall vacant in the course of a session as a result of death or resignation, the president of the national parliament concerned or the Minister for Foreign Affairs, presents the credentials of the member who is to fill the vacant seat to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, who submits them to the Assembly or the Standing Committee for ratification at the first sitting or meeting following their receipt (Rule 6.4).

The chairperson of a national delegation informs the President of the Assembly of any proposed change(s) in committee membership concerning that delegation's members. The President of the Assembly submits the proposed change(s) to the Assembly, the Standing Committee or, failing that, the Bureau for ratification (Rule 43.6).

9. Requests for debates under urgent procedure or current affairs debates

At the request of the Committee of Ministers, of the committee concerned, or of twenty or more Representatives or Substitutes, a debate may be held on an item which has not been placed on the Assembly's agenda. Requests for debates under urgent procedure must be addressed to the President of the Assembly. The President submits them to the Bureau, which makes a proposal to the Assembly. The adoption of urgent procedure requires a two-thirds majority of the votes cast (Rule 50).

At least twenty members, or one political group or national delegation may request a current affairs debate (Rule 52) on a subject which is not on the Assembly's agenda. The request must be made to the President of the Assembly at least a week before the start of the part-session. The Bureau decides whether or not to grant the request, subject to approval by the Assembly. A current affairs debate may not exceed one and a half hours. The debate shall be opened by one of the members who requested it, chosen by the Bureau. The first speaker has ten minutes speaking time, other speakers five. A current affairs debate does not give rise to a vote, though the Bureau of the Assembly may subsequently propose that the subject be referred to the appropriate committee for report.

10. Electronic voting, notification of Substitutes, list of speakers, and quorum

All votes in the Assembly, except elections, take place by electronic voting.

Voting cards

Voting cards issued to all members are simultaneously used for identification and voting.

Distribution of voting cards is ensured by the Badge Service of the Council of Europe. In principle, this distribution is organised via secretaries of each national delegation. Members who do not have their card (in case a card has been lost or forgotten, or when the Parliamentary Assembly database does not contain the member's photo) should present themselves at the welcome Protocol desk at the main entrance of the Palais de l'Europe in order to receive their card. Staff of the Badge Service, before delivering a new card, will invite the member to present his or her identification document. If a third and consecutive card is issued to the same member during the same calendar year for whatever reason, loss or otherwise, the national delegation will be required to pay the cost (6 euros per card).

Voting cards as distributed by the Badge Service do not give an automatic right to vote. In order to enjoy such a right, the member's card has to be validated. This operation will be carried out by the Assembly Secretariat.

Notification of Substitutes

In principle all Representatives at the opening of the first sitting (on Monday, at 11.30 a.m.) have their cards validated, but not Substitutes unless the Secretariat of the Assembly is properly informed about substitutions. Therefore secretaries of national delegations have the duty to inform the Secretariat of the Assembly about all cases of substitution. If this is not done, Substitutes attending the sitting do not have speaking and voting rights.

Notice of substitutions has to be given before the opening of the sitting concerned (if possible by the previous day and at the latest before 8.30 a.m. for a morning sitting and before 1 p.m. for an afternoon sitting). For the first sitting on Monday at 11.30 a.m., the deadline is 10 a.m. This notification, including the names of Substitutes, the names of Representatives to be substituted and the length of substitution, must be given in writing for each sitting to the Secretariat of the Assembly (Jocelyne Gibert, Room 1076, fax during session weeks +33 3 88 41 27 27, fax outside session weeks +33 3 88 41 27 33).

If the Substitute is replacing the Representative for one or more consecutive sittings, the substitution for each sitting must be notified. Substitutions are never carried automatically over to the following sitting.

When the correct notification has been given, Substitutes will have their voting cards validated. At the same time, cards of Representatives who are to be replaced by Substitutes will become invalid, preventing them from speaking in the debate and voting, including in elections.

Register of attendance

Members shall continue to sign the register of attendance before entering the Chamber for a sitting (Rules 11.2 and 39.1). A duly designated Substitute will find his or her name in the register next to the name of the Representative for whom he or she is substituting. If, in the register of attendance, no name is found next to the Representative's name, it means that no substitution was notified for the Representative for that particular sitting and therefore the Representative is authorised to speak in the debate and vote.

All members of the Assembly – Representatives and Substitutes as well as Observers – have access to the Chamber at any time of the sitting, regardless of their speaking and voting rights. Therefore, all Members, even those who are not authorised to speak in the debate or vote, are invited to sign the register of attendance if they attend the sitting.

Speakers' register

Members who wish to speak in a debate must enter their names on the list of speakers. They may do this by post in advance of the part-session, or in person during the part-session at the Table Office (Room 1083). The list is closed one hour before the scheduled end of the previous sitting, except in the case of the first sitting of a part-session when the deadline is one and a half hours before the start of the sitting (i.e. at 10 a.m.). It should be noted that in any one part-session members may enter their names on the list for a maximum of **five debates** but may take the floor **not more than three times** (this limit does not apply to members appointed as political group spokespersons or as rapporteurs). A substitute whose name has not been notified to the secretariat before a sitting cannot participate in the debate.

The order of speakers on the list for each debate is determined according to criteria set by the Bureau and can be found on pages 92 to 96 of the Rules of Procedure.

Speaking time is limited to a maximum of 8 minutes for committee rapporteurs and 3 minutes for rapporteurs for opinion. Other speakers on the list normally have a maximum of 5 minutes. At the start of each sitting the President announces the speaking arrangements.

Only authorised members – i.e. Representatives or their duly appointed Substitutes – may speak in debates or submit questions for oral reply to the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers or to guest speakers. The list of speakers is verified accordingly.

Questions to invited guest speakers

For most invited guest speakers, the draft order of business indicates whether there is the possibility for members to ask questions. Where there is that possibility, members are encouraged to register their names with the Table Office as soon as the draft order of business is published and the name of the guest speaker appears. For guest speakers other than the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, members are invited to submit the subject of their question. For the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, the name of the member wishing to ask a question is only registered on the list if accompanied by the full written text of the question. The names of persons wishing to ask a question are published and listed in chronological order.

For the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, a precise deadline is specified in the draft order of business. The written questions for oral answer by the Chairperson are then published in a Doc. of the Assembly. For the other guest speakers, there is no formal deadline as such as the questions are "spontaneous". However, members have an interest in registering their names as early as possible as there is usually not enough time to answer all questions.

Electronic voting

While they are sitting in the Chamber, members are invited to keep their voting cards inserted in the voting terminals. However, when they leave, they should take their cards with them.

Voting cards should be inserted correctly into the terminals (the photo side of the member's card is facing the President's table; then the card is pushed down until a "click" is heard). A card correctly inserted is signalled by its number being displayed on a small screen in the voting terminal. Any malfunctioning or error message displayed on the voting terminal screen should be immediately reported to the Secretariat present in the Chamber.

The opening of a vote by the President is confirmed by a small green light on the voting terminal.

After the opening of a vote, members should vote by putting their hands into the small booth of the voting terminal and by pressing one of the three voting buttons (stickers which are on the top of voting terminals are put there only for information in order to indicate the positions of the "for", "abstention" and "against" buttons). The chosen vote is confirmed by a coloured light on the terminal: green ("for"), white ("abstention") or red ("against").

Rule 39.8 indicates that a member cannot modify his or her vote after the voting is closed.

The names of Assembly members who participate in votes as well as how they voted in each case are published on the Assembly's website.

Quorum

The Assembly may deliberate, decide the orders of the day, approve the minutes of proceedings, decide upon procedural motions, and agree to adjourn, whatever the number of Representatives present.

All votes other than votes by roll-call shall be valid whatever the number of members voting, unless, before the voting has begun, the President has been requested to ascertain whether there is a quorum. At least one sixth of the Representatives authorised to vote, belonging to at least five national delegations, must vote in favour of the request. To ascertain whether there is a

quorum, the President invites Representatives to mark their presence in the Chamber using the electronic voting system.

The quorum is one third of the number of Representatives of the Assembly authorised to vote (Rule 41.3).

A vote by roll-call shall not be valid unless one third of the Representatives authorised to vote took part. The President may decide to ascertain whether there is a quorum before proceeding to a vote by roll-call.

In the absence of a quorum, the vote shall be postponed until the next sitting or, on a motion from the Chair, until a subsequent sitting.

Majorities required

A majority of two-thirds of the votes cast is required for the adoption of a draft recommendation or a draft opinion to the Committee of Ministers, for the adoption of urgent procedure, for an alteration to the order of business, for the setting up of a committee and for the fixing of the date for the opening or resumption of Ordinary Sessions. For the adoption of a draft resolution and for any other decision, a majority of the votes cast is required, in the case of a tie the question being rejected.

Mobile phones

Members are reminded that mobile phones must be switched off at all times in the Chamber and during committee meetings.

Directory

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Services

Internet access

Free Wi-Fi access is available in most areas of the Palais building. Terminals with free broadband access are also available in the lobby of the debating chamber and outside the second floor meeting rooms. The Assembly's website and the Council of Europe portal, including other language portals, can be accessed here.

Badges

Wearing badges is compulsory for admittance to the Chamber. Voting cards are used as ID badges. Contact the Protocol desk in the entrance hall.

Bars and restaurants

Parliamentarians' Bar: 1st floor, opposite the Chamber, open from 8.30 a.m. to the end of the sitting. Restaurant Bleu: ground floor, for official meals (tel. 3704 for reservations). Palais cafeteria: ground floor, open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Palais self-service: ground floor, lunch from 12 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Bank

Société Générale, in the entrance hall, open from 8.15 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., tel. 7060. A cash dispenser is located opposite the cafeteria (ground floor).

Bus

Free shuttle service departing from Allée Spach to the railway station via downtown (and vice versa). Badges must be shown. Time schedules are available at the reception desk.

Bookshop

Librairie Klébér: In the entrance hall, open from 9.30 a.m. to 12.45 p.m. and from 1.30 p.m. to 5.45 p.m., tel. 3712.

Philatelic agency

Council of Europe stamps and, since 1949, philatelic envelopes commemorating every session of the Parliamentary Assembly, tel. 03 88 35 08 88.

Post office

La Poste: in the entrance hall, open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., tel. 3463.

Medical centre

Entrance hall, open from 8.30 a.m. to the end of the sitting, tel. 2442.

Newsagent

Just off the entrance hall, open from 7.30 a.m. to 7.00 p.m., tel. 3549.

City of Strasbourg information desk

The City of Strasbourg is represented at the reception desk in the entrance hall, providing lists of hotels, restaurants and local events, flight/train times etc, tel. 3838. For accommodation or transport, call 03 88 52 28 38.

Travel agent

Carlson Wagonlit: Palais, ground floor, near the Restaurant. Open from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 1.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m., tel. 3714.