



Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

<http://assembly.coe.int>



Standing Committee
Commission permanente

AS/Per (2008) PV 2
23 January 2009

Standing Committee

Minutes¹

**of the meeting held in Madrid
on 28 November 2008**

¹ Approved by the Assembly on 26 January 2009.

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

Mr de Puig, President of the Assembly, opened the meeting at 9.30 am and thanked the Spanish Senate and the Spanish parliamentary delegation for their invitation to hold the Standing Committee meeting in Madrid and for their hospitality.

2. WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR FRANCISCO JAVIER ROJO, PRESIDENT OF THE SPANISH SENATE

The President welcomed Mr Rojo, President of the Spanish Senate and thanked him for his support in promoting co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly. The timetable of committee activities in 2008 and 2009 in which the Spanish parliament had been involved bore witness to the vitality of this fruitful co-operation.

Mr Rojo, President of the Spanish Senate, extended a warm welcome to the Standing Committee. The Spanish parliamentary delegation had constantly shown its commitment to the work of the Parliamentary Assembly and the activities of the Council of Europe, as shown by the launch in Madrid in 2006 of the campaign to combat domestic violence. It was an honour for Spain to take the chair of the Council of Europe at a time when the organisation would be celebrating its 60th anniversary and the 50th anniversary of its European Court of Human Rights. The Council of Europe held a place all of its own because of its role in promoting and defending human rights and consolidating the rule of law and democracy in Europe. Spain was taking over the Chairmanship of the Council at a key moment when the world economic and financial crisis was severely taxing our collective capacity to sustain the welfare state. National parliaments had a role to play in the dialogue on such fundamental issues as human rights, democracy, the rule of law, intercultural dialogue, migration etc, which were the priorities of the Spanish Chairmanship. The Spanish parliament had long stood up for freedom and democracy, especially in its consistent denunciation of terrorism, whether Basque terrorism or the events currently taking place in India which he unequivocally condemned. It was our duty to promote human dignity in our societies.

The President warmly thanked Mr Rojo for his words and, for his part, also condemned the terrorist attacks in Mumbai. He informed the members of the Standing Committee of developments in the conflict between Georgia and Russia since the October part-session and the follow-up to Resolution 1633. Political dialogue with the Assembly was continuing. He reported on the Presidential Committee's visit to Georgia and paid tribute to the work of Ms Jonker, rapporteur of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population who had the previous week made a visit to the area. The international financial crisis and its domino effect on the economy of all countries was a further shock for Europe. It entailed radical changes which called into question the political dogma of our governments. This sudden and severe crisis had not been anticipated, although it could have been avoided; in the name of liberalism, our political leaders had let things take their course. Prosperous Europe would go into recession and those in our societies who were in a position of weakness, insecurity or poverty would feel the consequences of this the most. In an interdependent world, the poorer countries with a developing economy, which had set such store by unfettered capitalism, would now be in a much worse situation than before. This widespread context gave even more meaning to the Council of Europe's role of defending the values it had been promoting for 60 years.

3. EXAMINATION OF NEW CREDENTIALS

Doc. 11768

The Standing Committee **ratified** the credentials of the new representatives and substitutes in respect of the parliamentary delegations of Denmark, France and Serbia, as set out in Doc. 11768.

4. MODIFICATIONS IN THE COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

Commissions (2008) 7
and addendum 1

The Standing Committee **ratified** the changes in the composition of Assembly committees in respect of the delegations of Denmark, France, Italy and Russia as set out in documents Commissions (2008) 7 and addendum 1.

5. REQUEST FOR A CURRENT AFFAIRS DEBATE OR DEBATE UNDER URGENT PROCEDURE

The President said that he had received a request for a current affairs debate on "The World Financial Crisis: the economic collapse of Iceland" from the Icelandic delegation on 17 November 2008, within the time-limit stipulated in Rule 52 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure. At its meeting the previous day, the Bureau had decided in favour of holding a current affairs debate on this issue and had suggested that Mr Sigfússon open the debate.

This was **agreed**.

6. AGENDA

AS/Per (2008) OJ 2 rev

The President said that the exchange of views with Mr Moratinos, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, would take place later that morning and that Infanta Doña Pilar de Borbón, President of Europa Nostra, would speak at the beginning of the afternoon on agenda item 15. The order in which the different reports would be considered, bearing in mind the commitments of certain rapporteurs, was modified accordingly.

The revised draft agenda was **adopted**.

Mr Mignon felt that the Standing Committee should react firmly to the budgetary decisions for 2009 taken by the Committee of Ministers and unreservedly condemn the cuts it was imposing on the Assembly budget.

The President found it unacceptable for the budget of both the Council and the Assembly to be reduced each year, obliging the organisation to cut back on certain activities. The parliamentary delegations should take joint action and steadfastly promote the work of the Assembly and the Council of Europe at national level. The Bureau would be looking again at this question at its meeting on 9 January 2009.

Mr Eörsi also felt it essential to react firmly vis-à-vis the Committee of Ministers which contemptuously ignored the Assembly's opinions and recommendations, as was shown yet again by the adoption the previous day by the Committee of Ministers of the Convention on access to public documents without any of the Assembly's proposed amendments being taken into account.

Mr Hancock wondered about the circumstances which had led the Committee of Ministers to take such budgetary decisions. Were there clear directives from governments or did the permanent representatives act spontaneously without instructions? The Assembly should obtain detailed explanations of the reasons behind these decisions.

Mr Meale expected the Bureau to discuss developments in the Council's budget on the basis of existing documents and reports, and define a strategy for the Assembly which delegations and members should implement at national level.

The Secretary General of the Assembly pointed out that Committee of Ministers' decisions on the 2009 budget, taken on the basis of the proposals put forward by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and after consideration of the Assembly's opinion, were irrevocable. The Secretary General was obliged to deal with an increase in certain major expenses and had asked a number of bodies within the Council, including the Assembly, to make a corresponding financial effort. The French permanent representative had suggested that the financial effort in question should be doubled. The Committee of Ministers' final decision would mean for the Assembly's budget a cut of 350,000 euros in its running costs in 2009. The question of the Assembly's budget and, more generally, that of dialogue between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers should appear on the agenda of the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

Mr Greenway commented that France's draconian position applied also to the budget of the Parliamentary Assembly of the WEU.

Mr Wille said that the Assembly and its Committee on Economic Affairs and Development had always adopted a unanimous decision when discussing opinions on the budget. Clearly governments would always be inclined to accept ever more budgetary restrictions. There was no point at all in discussing the issue in the Joint Committee: it was governments and parliaments in the capitals that had to be persuaded. What head of government and what minister could say that human rights were not important?

Mr Mignon found it regrettable that the Committee of Ministers treated the Assembly with such disdain and that, as Chair of the French parliamentary delegation, he had been left in the dark about the proposals put forward by the French permanent representative. He also found it regrettable that the Secretary General was not present at this meeting.

The President felt that it was for the Assembly and its members to take action and bring pressure to bear on national governments since it was abundantly clear that many governments had no idea of the impact that the budgetary restrictions had on its activities.

7. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY'S SITTINGS HELD ON 2 OCTOBER (AFTERNOON) AND 3 OCTOBER (MORNING) 2008

AS (2008) PV 35, 36

The minutes of proceedings of the Parliamentary Assembly's sittings on 2 October (afternoon) and 3 October (morning) 2008 were **approved**.

8. REFERENCES, TRANSMISSIONS AND MODIFICATIONS OF REFERENCES TO COMMITTEES

AS/Bur (2008) 76

The Standing Committee **approved** the references, modifications of references and extensions of references as set out in Appendix 1 to Appendix I below.

9. OBSERVATION OF ELECTIONS

Observation of the presidential election in Azerbaijan (15 October 2008)

Doc. 11769

*Rapporteur of the Bureau's Ad hoc Committee:
Mr Andres Herkel (Estonia, EPP/CD)*

Mr Herkel presented the ad hoc committee's report on the observation of the presidential election in Azerbaijan. The voting had been managed appropriately and the electoral legislation had been improved. The authorities had taken on board a number of the Venice Commission's main recommendations, but not all of them, in particular regarding the composition of the electoral boards which still posed a problem. The election had taken place without any real competition as five political parties had decided not to participate. He referred to the restrictions on certain fundamental freedoms, the unequal media coverage in favour of the president, the government and the party in power, the issue of the independence and freedom of the media and the continued imprisonment of political opponents, and asked how one could assess this election in such a political context.

Ms Hurskainen, as a member of the Bureau's ad hoc committee, fully endorsed the rapporteur's conclusions. On a more general level, there was the question of how election observation missions were conducted. All Council of Europe and OSCE member states were supposed to observe the fundamental principles underlying democratic, free and fair elections. The international organisations themselves were supposed to work together towards the same objective of promoting democratic values. However, the joint statement of the international observation mission revealed serious friction between the organisations in situ which could not but undermine the credibility of the whole exercise. There needed to be more co-operation and dialogue between the organisations concerned in order to safeguard their respective roles and preserve complementarity.

Mr Hancock, also a member of the Bureau's ad hoc committee, said he had very serious reservations about how the international observation mission had been run and expressed his extreme displeasure that the OSCE/ODIHR had played a dominant role in the evaluation of the election and the drafting of the final statement. Only the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly had been present as the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE had decided not to take part. The Parliamentary Assembly should not be the puppet of a non-representative OSCE body headed by a non-elected ambassador. It was absolutely scandalous that none of the ad hoc committee's proposals had been accepted by the ODIHR in the drafting of the joint statement. He also disagreed with the conclusions of the rapporteur who seemed to suggest that the election would have been in accordance with democratic principles if there had been candidates from the opposition. The fact of the matter was that it was up to the observation mission to monitor the way the election had been carried out, not to assess the political situation in the country. In future, it would be

preferable for the Assembly to avoid a confusion of roles so that a rapporteur on the monitoring of a country's obligations and commitments was not also rapporteur on the observation of elections in the country concerned.

Mr Popescu, also a member of the Bureau's ad hoc committee, concurred with Mr Hancock. The observation of elections required genuine consultation and dialogue between organisations at all stages of the procedure. In this case this had not happened at all; the ODIHR had rejected the ad hoc committee's conclusions, had refused to take into account the objective points it had put forward and had refused to change anything at all in its final report. The fact that the opposition had boycotted the election was not something that should interfere with the assessment made.

Mr Wilshire pointed out that he had drawn attention to the difficulties in co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR during the presidential election in Montenegro in April 2008 and had asked the Bureau to hold a meeting for all Assembly members who had been involved in observation missions in order to discuss ways of improving working relations with the ODIHR.

Ms Wurm, member of the Bureau's ad hoc committee, also deplored the problems regarding co-operation with the ODIHR, the rigid attitude of its officials and experts and their preconceived and biased view of the situation. Added to this was the disagreement within the ad hoc committee itself which could have been avoided if it had met in advance to agree on a joint position. This was imperative in order to maintain the credibility of future missions.

Mr Iwiński said that the OSCE/ODIHR conducted its observation process by following a uniform framework of pre-determined conditions to be complied with. There needed to be a common approach to what constituted free and fair elections otherwise the whole joint evaluation process was distorted.

Mr Greenway concurred and said that the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States had highlighted the same problems regarding co-operation.

Mr Seyidov also agreed with the comments on the OSCE/ODIHR. With regard to the presidential election in Azerbaijan, there had been significant progress in the organisation and conduct of elections since the country had joined the Council of Europe, in terms of both revising electoral legislation and more technical and material aspects. All the Council of Europe's recommendations had been taken into account, even if it had not been possible to implement all of them. The setting up of a public television service was a major step towards greater transparency in information. The boycott of this election by opposition parties should not have an impact on the assessment made by the observation mission of the way the election had been carried out.

Mr Gross thought that there was a need for clear criteria in assessing elections. It was therefore imperative to reach agreement on this point among all parliamentary delegations observing elections. With regard to relations with the ODIHR, the Assembly could contact the new director and relay its concern.

Mr Eörsi thought that one should avoid simplistic criticism of the exercise, putting parliamentarians in one camp and civil servants in the other. This was overlooking the fact that the latter were following instructions. Nor should the recent negative experiences overshadow the good practices and positive experiences which had emerged from 15 years of co-operation between the international organisations in the field of election observation.

With regard to the election in Azerbaijan, **Mr Kosachev** felt that the Assembly should encourage co-operation with the country. As for relations with the OSCE, he pointed out that the same problems had been raised when the OSCE had wished to impose its pre-defined standards on Russia.

In reply to the comments made, **Mr Herkel** said that the OSCE/ODIHR had, in point of fact, accepted several amendments put forward by the ad hoc committee. The ODIHR was the most effective tool for promoting democracy in Europe and it was therefore imperative to co-operate with it. Concerning the actual election observation process itself, it was his view that such an exercise could not be carried out without looking at the same time at the overall political and social situation in the country, particularly respect for fundamental freedoms and the role of the opposition in public debate.

The President thanked the speakers. There was indeed an urgent need to convene an informal meeting of Assembly members who had participated in election observation missions. Obviously, the status of elected representatives and the experience of parliamentarians in electoral matters should not be placed on the same footing as the expertise of civil servants. Under no circumstances was a parliamentary delegation of

observers obliged to fall in with the conclusions of the ODIHR. In the case of the election in Azerbaijan, the observation mission had concluded that the result had reflected the wishes of the electorate.

The Standing Committee **took note** of the report (Doc. 11769).

10. MIGRATION, REFUGEES AND POPULATION

a. Europe's "boat people": mixed migration flows by sea into southern Europe Doc. 11688

*Rapporteur of the Commission on Migration, Refugees and Population:
Mr Morten Østergaard (Denmark, ALDE)*

Mr Østergaard presented the report on "Europe's "boat-people": mixed migration flows by sea into southern Europe". The Committee had been alarmed by the massive influx of irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers by boat, described in a first report in 2004, and had since then been constantly concerned about their fate. Pressure had in the meantime increased on Italy, Spain, Malta and Greece, since in 2007 some 51,000 people had landed on the coastlines of southern Europe. Nonetheless, arrivals by sea accounted for no more than 10% of irregular migration in Europe. For some countries, the consequences were dramatic. It was essential for the Assembly to look at what happened to these people from the humanitarian and human rights point of view. Minimum reception standards by all the countries concerned should be guaranteed, in terms of the conditions and duration of detention, infrastructure and sanitary installations, medical assistance and legal aid. The draft recommendation called on the Committee of Ministers to draw up European standards to be applied to the detention of irregular migrants and asylum seekers.

Mr Greenway said that the arrival by sea of migrants, whose ordeals had been widely covered in the media, was just one aspect of the bigger picture. It was not possible to address such an emergency without turning attention to the situation in the countries of origin in Africa. The Assembly should therefore take every opportunity to speak out on the conflicts rocking the African continent.

Mr Iwiński said that the Assembly had highlighted the dramatic fate of migrants who had landed on the coasts of Mediterranean islands in 2004 and 2006. Urgent reaction was needed, requiring co-ordination among the different international organisations, particularly the European Union, to implement practical solutions. This was not happening at present: the planned opening of a new Council of Europe agency had faltered, and the Union's response with Frontex was just not appropriate.

Mr Lindblad expressed his appreciation for this excellent report which clearly stated the problem of "Fortress Europe" and the migration policies of the various European countries. Closing doors merely served to boost illegal immigration.

Mr Gross concurred with this analysis and fully supported the report's conclusions. It was the Assembly alone that was calling for a common and concerted response from all European countries whether they were directly affected by the phenomenon or not. The fate of these tens of thousands of people ready to sacrifice their lives to set foot in Europe was staggering.

Mr Østergaard, in response to the comments, agreed that while it was indeed necessary to turn attention to the countries of origin, it was also essential to look at the situation in the transit countries. A real industry in trafficking of human beings had emerged in some of these countries, for example Libya. European states which were not the host countries needed to consider how they could help those countries which had to deal with this influx of refugees.

Ms Jonker, Chair of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, congratulated the rapporteur on his investment in the preparation of the report and on his very fair approach. This was a problem which could be resolved only with the active involvement of all the states concerned, including the countries of origin.

The President said that one amendment had been tabled to the draft resolution.

M. Østergaard presented Amendment No. 1 which was **adopted** unanimously.

The President put the draft resolution contained in Doc. 11688, as amended, to the vote. It was **adopted** unanimously [Resolution 1637 (2008)]. The draft recommendation was also **adopted** unanimously [Recommendation 1850 (2008)].

11. CURRENT AFFAIRS DEBATE

Mr Sigfússon opened the current affairs debate on “The World Financial Crisis: the economic collapse of Iceland”. He did not intend to discuss all aspects of the financial crisis but rather to limit the debate to the economic collapse of his country and the action taken by the United Kingdom authorities which had triggered this collapse. On 7 October 2008, the UK government had applied the 2001 Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act against the Icelandic bank *Landsbanki* and frozen its assets in the UK without any prior warning or consultation of the Icelandic government. It was the first time that the UK government had used this law against a European state. It was a disproportionate measure which placed the Icelandic bank on the same footing as international terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda. On 8 October, the UK government decided, without any prior consultation of the Icelandic authorities, to place the subsidiaries of the *Landsbanki* and the *Kaupthing Bank*, the largest bank in Iceland, under the control of the UK Financial Services Authority, thereby triggering the collapse of the bank, the cessation of international currency transactions with Iceland and the meltdown of the Icelandic financial system, with devastating effect on the economy and population of the country.

The UK government had said that these measures had been taken to guarantee the stability of the UK financial system and to protect the interests of some 300,000 UK depositors. The Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, had announced his government’s intention to freeze the assets of all Icelandic companies and to take other measures against the Icelandic authorities to ensure that they honoured their commitments. It had been until nine days after the initial measures, ie very late in the course of action, that the UK authorities had finally made it clear that the other Icelandic banks and companies were not affected by these measures.

The measures adopted, taken unilaterally by the UK authorities, and the statements of the UK government seriously damaged Iceland’s reputation and the commercial interests of Icelandic companies throughout the world. In short, a Council of Europe member state had been instrumental in bringing about the economic collapse of another member state. This was an unprecedented and totally irresponsible step in a period of crisis which, on the contrary, required solidarity between friends and allies and joint solutions. If the UK authorities had acted in accordance with best diplomatic practice, the problem could have been sorted out through bilateral discussions and the worst could have been avoided. Iceland could only wonder about the real intentions of the UK government underlying the application to Icelandic banks of legislation intended for quite a different purpose, namely combating terrorism. Would the UK government have had the same attitude vis-à-vis an EU member state or the United States in the same circumstances? It should be recalled that deposits in Icelandic banks represented less than 0.5% of total UK deposits.

Iceland was anticipating a 10% fall in GDP in 2009, a 10% rise in unemployment and a 10-20% increase in the national debt. Many Icelandic companies were going bankrupt and Icelandic citizens had lost a large part of their savings and, for many of them, their jobs; the value of the national currency had fallen significantly. Many were contemplating emigrating.

The Icelandic bank had acted in full compliance with European and UK legislation. Iceland, committed to compliance with the rule of law, had never defaulted on its legal obligations but had always said, on the contrary, that it would fully honour them. The Icelandic government intended to comply with Community directives and legislation applying to members of the European Economic Area. It had, moreover, initiated discussions with governments of countries in which the collapse of Icelandic banks had had serious consequences for depositors. The application of the Anti-terrorism Act was an aggressive and disproportionate measure having unacceptable consequences for the Icelandic economy. Using this Act for purposes other than the fight against terrorism was a dangerous precedent which ran the risk of undermining the credibility of that fight.

Mr Wilshire said that he had serious doubts about various aspects of the question. The UK anti-terrorism legislation made provision for the implementation of measures whenever British interests were threatened. It was clear when it was passed that this legislation would never be used against a friendly country. The measure taken had had disastrous effects for Iceland and its population. Were British interests under threat? Was the measure lawful? A parliamentary inquiry was under way and would provide some clarification on that point. Was the measure proportionate? There too he had serious doubts since other approaches could have been taken. Added to these initial measures were the statements of the UK Prime Minister which had caused chaos for all Icelandic companies. It was imperative for the Assembly to look into this matter, on the basis of a report by its Committee on Economic Affairs.

Mr Kox felt it important to clarify the circumstances behind the international financial crisis and to determine its consequences, especially on individuals. The situation in Iceland was a factor in that crisis. It was the citizens who had to suffer the consequences and it was distressing that the politicians did not accept

responsibility but claimed their innocence. The UK government's decision to resort to the Anti-Terrorism Act was a radical response that was wholly inappropriate. He fully shared Mr Wilshire's doubts on this point. What had become of co-operation and solidarity between states?

Mr Meale thought that things were more complicated than they appeared and that the Icelandic banks were involved in transactions that were not totally transparent. Investigations needed to be carried out, not only in the United Kingdom but also in all the countries concerned; this would help shed some light.

Mr Gross thought that the problem of the crisis in Iceland entailed complex legal aspects which would require an opinion by the Legal Affairs Committee.

Mr Hancock pointed out that the action taken by the UK government had been intended to protect small-scale depositors who were in a disastrous situation, without any access to their bank or their savings. Providing the Assembly members with the memorandum written by the Secretariat of the House of Commons would help inform the discussion. The Icelandic government had to be ready to provide serious answers to the questions that would be asked of it.

Mr Eörsi felt that it was imperative to discuss this question at the January part-session. Economic liberalism had been called into question and globalisation severely criticised, but what had happened in the United States which had then snowballed to other countries was a totally different matter. It was the lack of transparency of the financial system that was at issue.

In response to **Mr Reimann** on the reimbursement of depositors and compensation for those having lost their investments, **Mr Sigfússon** confirmed that Iceland wished to honour these commitments. In a capitalist world, everyone had to accept his or her responsibilities at all levels, including those who had opted for risky investments, knowing perfectly what they were doing. He supported the proposal for a substantive report by the Committee on Economic Affairs, with an opinion by the Legal Affairs Committee.

The President said that the Bureau would be discussing the follow-up to be given to this debate, in accordance with Rule 52.5 of the Rules of Procedure, at its next meeting.

12. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH MR MIGUEL ÁNGEL MORATINOS, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND CO-OPERATION OF SPAIN, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CM/Inf (2008) 44

CM/Inf (2008) 45

The President welcomed Mr Moratinos, Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation. The documents detailing the priorities of the Spanish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and the report on the outgoing Swedish Chairmanship were to be found in the files.

Mr Moratinos said that there was a long tradition of co-operation between Spain and the Council of Europe: there had been three Spanish Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly and one Spanish Secretary General. The fact that the Spanish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers coincided with Lluís Maria de Puig's presidency of the Assembly augured well for harmonious co-operation. He set out the priorities of the Spanish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, which were fully consistent with those of the preceding Chairmanships and the decisions taken in 2005 at the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government. Promoting fruitful and harmonious dialogue between the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly and, more generally, the parliamentary dimension of the organisation were among these priorities. Spain appreciated the Assembly's role as a forum for dialogue and a body monitoring the honouring of obligations and commitments, and the great importance of its activities in a number of fundamental fields.

Concerning its priorities, Spain intended, first of all, to promote the fundamental values of the Council of Europe, namely human rights, the rule of law and democracy. It would undertake a series of forward-looking activities to promote an inclusive and cohesive Europe. The Council of Europe, with its 60 years of activity, experience and its standard-setting achievements, had to rise to the challenges of the 21st century. By reasserting its values, the Council demonstrated to European citizens that it was the guarantor of their fundamental rights. The Spanish Chairmanship would coincide with the 60th anniversary of the Council of Europe and the 50th anniversary of the European Court of Human Rights. The next ministerial session, in May 2009, would be held in Madrid.

One of the major challenges at present concerned consolidation of the human rights protection system and drawing up concrete objectives to guarantee the long-term effectiveness of the Court. It was also necessary to encourage member states to apply the decisions of the Court.

In order to promote and defend the Council of Europe's values, the Spanish Chairmanship also intended to take initiatives in a number of fields: the fight against the death penalty, combating gender-based discrimination, the fight against trafficking in human beings, promoting the rights of people with disabilities, the fight against domestic violence, and promoting the rights of children.

Promoting democracy was also on the agenda of the Spanish Chairmanship which would in addition be seeking to ensure implementation of the conclusions of the latest Forum for the future of democracy, held in Madrid, and to be closely involved in the next Forum, to be held in Kyiv, looking at electoral systems.

In the context of the "bringing about an inclusive and cohesive Europe" priority, Spain intended to focus particular attention on immigration. There was no doubt that Spain was more aware of this problem than some other European countries as it had been host to a large number of migrants in a short space of time; it would seek to ensure that there was a collective response at international level and that the Council of Europe and the European Union co-operated as closely as possible in this field, in consultation with the countries of origin.

In order to respond to the challenges posed by migration flows our countries were obliged to look at the way we managed our multi-ethnic and culturally diverse societies. The Council of Europe's White Paper on intercultural dialogue, the Spanish translation and wide-scale dissemination of which would be financed by Spain, contained extremely useful recommendations in this regard.

The Spanish Chairmanship would also be paying special attention to children's rights, as part of the new strategy on "Building a Europe for and with Children".

It would also be supporting the co-operation programmes with Belarus. The opening of a Council of Europe Information Centre in Minsk was a major step forward in bringing Belarus closer to the Council. It would also be closely monitoring the situation in south-east Europe and in the Caucasus in a spirit of co-operation and dialogue with all the parties involved.

Lastly, the Spanish Chairmanship placed a priority on strengthening relations and complementarities with other international organisations, especially the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations, promoting the application of the memorandum of understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union, and the memorandum of understanding with the Forum for the Alliance of Civilisations.

The Spanish Chairmanship was counting on the support of the Assembly in implementing all its priorities.

The President warmly thanked Mr Moratinos for his address.

Mr Meale referred to the successive budgetary restrictions suffered by the Council and the Assembly for several years and asked how the Assembly could be expected to carry out in future the work to which Mr Moratinos had paid tribute, if it did not have the necessary resources. He was happy to see that the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities featured among the Spanish Chairmanship's priorities but found it regrettable that the environment, the fundamental challenge facing the planet at the moment, was totally absent.

Mr Kox protested at the Council's disastrous budgetary situation. Given the derisory sums in question, especially compared with the enormous budget of other organisations such as the European Parliament, it was clearly not a question of money as far as governments were concerned but quite simply a lack of political will. He hoped that the Spanish Chairmanship would take firm action to bring the Council of Europe out of this rut.

Mr Eörsi referred to the tense relations between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, citing, for example, the recent adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the convention on access to public documents, which was a fundamental document for the recently democratised countries, without taking on board any of the Assembly's proposals.

With regard to budgetary issues, **Mr Moratinos** said that the economic context obliged the Committee of Ministers to maintain a pragmatic approach by rationalising the budget and optimising resources. A 6-month Chairmanship was not long enough to change radically the position of states which had already adopted

their own national budgets, especially in a context in which everyone was tightening their belts. A specific project in an area of fundamental interest could always be financed outside the normal contributions of states. The fact that the Spanish Chairmanship had not included protection of the environment as a priority did not mean that it would not be taking initiatives in this area. The Council of Europe needed to remain close to the concerns of citizens. Parliamentary democracy was the very essence of the functioning of our institutions. As he had indicated, he would strive to promote smooth dialogue between the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly.

In reply to **Mr Van den Brande**, **Mr Moratinos** confirmed that the implementation of the memorandum of understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union, and in particular the defining of each one's activities in order to take better account of the Council of Europe's role, was a priority for the Spanish Chairmanship. Regarding relations between Georgia and Russia, the Spanish Chairmanship would take all useful initiatives to promote dialogue and reconciliation through implementation of the Council of Europe's action plan.

Mr Gross shared the view of Mr Kox. He had the impression that the Committee of Ministers treated the Council of Europe like an organisation of the past with no future. How could one expect the Council of Europe, the Assembly and the European Court of Human Rights to fulfil their roles effectively with a laughable budget? The European Union spent colossal sums on its neighbourhood policy, although the Council of Europe had had a neighbourhood policy for the last thirty years or more. It was thanks to the Council of Europe that states had not sunk into totalitarianism.

Mr Iwiński was pleased to see migration among the Spanish Chairmanship's priorities. However, there was a fundamental difference between the European Union's immigration policy and the Council of Europe's approach. The terms of reference of the Council of Europe's European Migration Agency, which the Assembly had called for in 2004 to no avail, had little in common with those of the European Union's Frontex agency. He was also concerned about the re-emergence of racist attitudes and words, complacently repeated in the media, which because of the demonisation of one religion in particular, fostered confusion between terrorism and religion.

Mr Moratinos said that it was the Spanish Chairmanship's intention to promote the adoption of a Declaration on the Role and Future of the Council of Europe in Madrid in May 2009 for the organisation's 60th anniversary. With regard to the neighbourhood policy, the Council of Europe's action had indeed been essential in relation to the emerging democratic countries, as was the case of Spain in the late 1970s. Dialogue with neighbouring states had to be established on constructive foundations: in the Council of Europe, the political role of consolidating the Europe of democracy, the rule of law and human rights; in the European Union the funding of co-operation activities in the field of consolidating the economy, industry and agriculture, and the financing of infrastructure and amenities. The Council of Europe had its own terms of reference which it needed to turn to account, and should stop always seeing itself in competition with the European Union. The fight against discrimination, including against the demonisation of Muslims, was part and parcel of the efforts to strengthen intercultural dialogue. The agreement signed by the Council of Europe with the Alliance of Civilisations was especially meaningful in this context.

In response to a question from **Ms Hurskainen** on Belarus, **Mr Moratinos** said that the Spanish Chairmanship would go as far as possible in dialogue with the country's authorities. He also reassured **Baroness Hooper**, who felt that protection of the cultural heritage was being jeopardised by budget cuts, on the intentions of the Spanish Chairmanship to maintain the Council's commitments in this field.

Replying to **Mr Reimann**, **Mr Moratinos** said that Spain intended to promote co-operation between the Council of Europe and the Euro-Mediterranean Union.

Ms Jonker welcomed the importance placed on migration issues in the priorities of the Spanish Chairmanship. She asked what practical initiative it intended to take to ensure that the Committee of Ministers became more attentive to the work of the Assembly and showed greater regard for its positions.

Mr Hancock found it regrettable that the European Commission and the European Parliament continued to trespass on the Council of Europe's attributions in disregard of the terms of reference of each institution. The member states, including Spain, all had to accept some of the responsibility for this because of the framing of policies and funding; there had never been any question of reducing the Community budget.

It was **Mr Moratinos'** belief that improving relations between the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly and improving co-ordination in decision-making were a matter of overall political will and everyone's responsibility. It was therefore up to parliamentarians to improve the profile of the Council of Europe and the

Assembly in their own country. He had taken due note of the unanimous message conveyed by the Assembly members regarding the budget issue – if the Council was to do more, it needed more resources, but he still believed that the resources were there and that they needed to be optimised. The Council of Europe had a genuinely fundamental role to play, that of defending democracy, the rule of law and human rights. No price could be placed on this role.

The President thanked the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation for his contribution and his detailed observations in response to the members' questions. The budget issue was indeed paramount. The Assembly was not asking for an increase in resources, but for current resources to be maintained, so that it could face the future with the serenity and stability needed to fulfil its political role.

The meeting was suspended at 1.30 pm and resumed at 3 pm.

13. CULTURE, SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

Crafts and cultural heritage conservation skills

Doc. 11761

*Rapporteur of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education:
Baroness Gloria Hooper (United Kingdom, EDG)*

The President welcomed Doña Pilar de Borbón, President of Europa Nostra, who was honouring the Standing Committee with her presence.

Baroness Hooper said that the Council of Europe played an eminent role in protecting the cultural heritage. She presented the report on "Crafts and cultural heritage conservation skills" which sought to identify practical ways in which the Council of Europe could help promote the skills necessary for conservation of the cultural heritage, via public-private interfaces. It was essential to encourage the development of old and traditional crafts, especially by encouraging the training of young people in particular in these crafts and, in this context, to support private initiatives such as the European Centre for Heritage Crafts. It was also necessary to promote crafts and skills, both ancient and modern, relating to the conservation of the physical cultural heritage.

HRH the Infanta Doña Pilar de Borbón, President of Europa Nostra, thanked the Standing Committee for giving her the opportunity to present the activities of Europa Nostra. The uncertainties arising from the present economic crisis, the difficulties involved in resolving that crisis and the deterioration which this could cause in existing imbalances between peoples and between nations, were set against a background of social change strongly marked by the globalisation of economic relations, growing social mobility and the development of the new information technologies – enabling those of us living in the developed countries at least to witness in real time what was happening anywhere in the world – which could impact on the way our citizens' economic and social future unfolded, their daily lives, job opportunities, welfare and education.

Cultural heritage, with its wealth of diversity, was a shared value, on the same footing as the other fundamental values promoted by the Council of Europe – the rule of law, respect for human rights, the exercise of parliamentary democracy.

Originally, and in its early stages, Europa Nostra was an offshoot of the Council of Europe. Its first President was Sir Duncan Sandys, one of the Assembly's most illustrious former members, who was succeeded by Hans de Koster, a former President of the Parliamentary Assembly.

European cultural heritage policies had first seen the light of day some forty years earlier at the initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and as a result of the concerted action of governments and civil society, in a united response to citizens' demands. It had radically changed the approach to cultural heritage not only in Europe but throughout the world.

Important changes had taken place in Europe in the course of the 1990s, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the opening up of the countries of central and eastern Europe, bringing the division of the continent to an end, and renewed impetus to the process of European integration through the European Union and its institutions. In this process, the concept of 'cultural heritage' had undergone significant changes, incorporating new types of cultural assets and broadening its remit to cover new areas, thereby acquiring a territorial dimension.

This development had culminated in the Florence Convention, drawn up by the Council of Europe, the first international treaty on the protection, conservation and management of the landscape, combining the concepts of cultural and natural heritage. Heritage, both tangible and intangible, above and beyond its historical, artistic, scientific and ethnological interest, had firmly become one of the pillars of the human-oriented model of society promoted by the Council of Europe. It was also a decisive factor in the approach to organising the way our citizens live together in their communities on a day-to-day basis, whether in towns and cities or in the country.

In this context, the role that cultural heritage could and must play should be considered at this crucial juncture for our continent and the whole of humanity. For Europa Nostra, this question was a major challenge for the future.

What could be done, within this model of society, to strengthen the fundamental values of our common cultural heritage? Cultural heritage was a source of shared identity which enabled us to deepen our roots; but at the same time it prompted us to understand and accept the roots of others.

How could we harness the capacity of cultural heritage to generate social cohesion and unite people in a shared feeling of belonging to such a culturally diverse society in which new identities were constantly emerging, and which was therefore at risk from dangerous outbreaks of xenophobia, violence and racism that were incompatible with the model of society we wished to establish?

If we managed not to destroy or deplete the cultural and natural heritage in the short space of a generation, as we currently risked doing, how could we best use these assets to foster sustainable economic development?

What role should we assign to the cultural heritage in a context as complex as the one we were currently experiencing? How should we develop the political, economic and social potential identified over all these years?

Baroness Hooper's report on crafts and cultural heritage conservation skills asked very similar questions and reflected the same concerns.

It was to be hoped that national governments, international organisations, the European institutions and civil society would be able to renew and deepen their commitment to the cultural heritage, despite having to cope with such far-reaching changes at the beginning of this third millennium. Europa Nostra was ready to pursue this joint momentum and co-operate closely with the different European institutions, including, of course, the Council of Europe.

The President thanked Doña Pilar de Borbón for her contribution and assured her of the Parliamentary Assembly's full support in the efforts to promote the cultural heritage.

Mr López Aguilar also believed that the cultural heritage carried with it a host of human values and that it should be promoted as a factor for social cohesion, identity and shared values. In a Europe now in the era of globalisation, it was extremely important to promote the heritage bequeathed to us from the past.

Baroness Hooper thanked Europa Nostra for its valuable contribution to the drafting of her report and hoped that the fruitful relations with the Assembly would continue.

The President submitted to the vote the draft recommendation contained in Doc. 11761, which was **adopted** unanimously [Recommendation 1851 (2008)]. The draft resolution was also **adopted** unanimously [Resolution 1638 (2008)].

14. FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTION 1633 (2008) ON THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR BETWEEN GEORGIA AND RUSSIA

Press releases

The President said that the Bureau had taken several decisions regarding the follow-up to be given to Resolution 1633 adopted at the October part-session. The Presidential Committee had been instructed to visit Georgia and Russia for meetings at the highest level with the authorities of the two countries. He reported on the Presidential Committee's visit to Tbilisi on 30 and 31 October. The Georgian authorities had demonstrated a realistic approach and a commitment to engage in constructive dialogue with the international community and other parties in the conflict. The dates of the visit to Russia had not yet been

firmly fixed, but the Presidential Committee hoped to travel there before the January part-session when the Assembly would be considering a report by the Monitoring Committee on implementation of Resolution 1633.

Mr Eörsi wished to supplement what the President had said. Since the Presidential Committee's visit, new information had emerged. Recent news in the press, coming from the different parties, highlighted the extent of the controversy and the contradiction in the accounts of the circumstances which had led to the outbreak of the war. This demonstrated the need for an independent international inquiry, as the Assembly had called for. Certain information, in particular the information to be gathered by the Georgian parliamentary committee of inquiry which had just been set up could prove to be embarrassing for the Georgian government.

Ms Jonker gave a report on her recent fact-finding visit to Georgia, from 16 to 22 November, in the region of Abkhazia and the border region with South Ossetia. Many of the people displaced by the war had been able to return home. Nonetheless, the situation remained of concern for the newly displaced persons, returnees and those remaining in the former conflict zones. She also deplored the security problems affecting people of Georgian ethnic origin living in the Gali region of Abkhazia and in the Kodori valley. She also had fears about the security situation of people of Georgian ethnic origin remaining in South Ossetia, those living close to the de facto "border" with South Ossetia and those remaining in the district of Akhgori. Georgia, Russia and the "de facto" authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia should do much more to guarantee the security of persons and goods in the former conflict regions and in the occupied territories. Lastly, she criticised the measures taken by all sides to restrict movement between the de facto "borders", in particular when such movements were humanitarian in nature. It was clear that if the situation were to erupt once more, it would be the responsibility of the militia on both sides.

Mr Lindblad said that it was unacceptable for each side to act as it saw fit, without any consideration for its international obligations. Deciding, as the Russian parliamentarians had done, to recognise the secessionist regions, was a very serious step.

Mr Kosachev welcomed the fact that members now had some objective information on the origin of the conflict and on the current situation, making the discussion more constructive than it had been at the October part-session. Russia recognised the territorial integrity of Georgia, and the statement by the State Duma did not change this one iota. Under international law, Kosovo was still part of Serbia. If the Assembly wished to play the role it aspired to in the name of credibility, it needed to provide the necessary assistance to ensure that such events did not reoccur. The European Union was the only organisation with the competence to define arrangements for finding a way out of the crisis and settling the conflict. Tribute should also be paid to the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights for the effectiveness of his action. The situation in the region was generally speaking under control; there was no more fighting and the Russian forces were under instruction to secure the area so as to prevent any renewed outbreak of the conflict. Nonetheless, he shared Ms Jonker's concerns. In his eyes, it was important to determine who had started the conflict: clearly it was Georgia that had initiated the hostilities and Russia that had brought them to an end. Had the latter not intervened, the number of victims and the extent of the destruction would have been much more significant.

Mr Fahey said that the settlement of any conflict had to involve rebuilding trust. This was the key to the success of a peace process.

Mr Eörsi expressed his hope that a Duma committee of inquiry would be set up to identify responsibilities in the acts carried out by the militias.

Mr Herkel drew a parallel with the war in Chechnya and noted that there were many points in common, in terms of the destruction that had occurred, the role of the militias, insecurity and impunity.

Mr Popescu was concerned about the fate of the displaced persons now that winter had arrived. Attention had to be focused on a humanitarian approach to the issue.

Mr Iwiński criticised the passivity of the organisation in preventing and managing the crisis between Georgia and Russia, whereas it had played an active and effective role in the Chechen crisis.

Mr Kosachev found it regrettable that the discussion was limited to consideration of what Russia had or had not done. This was not the right approach.

The President said that it was worrying that some speakers felt the conflict could blow up again. That must not happen under any circumstances. Discussing the scenario of events was pointless: it would never be

possible to agree on a single interpretation. It was necessary to go back to basic issues and discuss with the Georgians and the Russians how dialogue could be re-established. It was up to the Assembly to take a joint stand and to take action via its relevant committees.

10. MIGRATION, REFUGEES AND POPULATION *(continued)*

b. Migration and mobility in the Eurasian region – prospects for the future

Doc. 11747

*Rapporteur of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and population:
Mr Tadeusz Iwiński (Poland, SOC)*

Mr Iwiński presented the report on “Migration and mobility in the Eurasian region – prospects for the future” which was the result of over three years’ work and five fact-finding visits. The border with the countries of the former Soviet Union was one of the longest borders in Europe and as such it was essential to look closely at the significant level of migratory movements between Europe and Asia which were increasing, particularly from China to Russia. The Russian Far East had an indigenous population of some 6 million and one million Chinese; the Chinese accounted for more than half of the officially registered foreign workers. It was estimated that there were six million irregular migrants in Russia. The region of the Central Asian countries of the former Soviet Union were experiencing considerable demographic growth – in contrast to the population decline in Russia and Ukraine – which, combined with freedom of movement in the area and the porosity of borders, added to the large-scale economic migration, primarily irregular, towards Russia and Kazakhstan.

Mr Kosachev fully supported this report which showed that immigration did not stop at the borders of European Russia.

Ms Jonker expressed her appreciation for the excellent co-operation with the countries concerned in drafting this report. She referred to the United Nations Convention on protection of the rights of migrant workers, finding it regrettable that it had been signed thus far by few member states.

The President put the draft resolution contained in Doc. 11747 as amended to the vote. It was **adopted** unanimously [Resolution 1639 (2008)]. The draft recommendation was also **adopted** unanimously [Recommendation 1852 (2008)].

15. POLITICAL QUESTIONS

Use by Assembly members of their dual parliamentary role – both national and European

Doc. 11684

*Rapporteur of the Political Affairs Committee:
Lord Tomlinson (United Kingdom, SOC)*

Mr Lindblad, Chair of the Political Affairs Committee, presented the report on the “Use by Assembly members of their dual parliamentary role – both national and European” (Doc. 11684), in the absence of Lord Tomlinson, who had been unable to attend. The participation in the Assembly of national members of parliament afforded an opportunity to heighten their awareness of issues in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, thereby helping to promote these fundamental values at national level. This dual role helped to give the Council of Europe a higher profile and to make the work of the Assembly better known at national level. Conversely, Assembly members could draw the attention of the international community to problems encountered in a member state or particular region.

The President put the draft resolution contained in Doc 11684 to the vote. It was **adopted** unanimously [Resolution 1640 (2008)].

16. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN

Involving men in achieving gender equality

Doc. 11760

*Rapporteur of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men:
Mr Steingrímur Sigfússon (Iceland, UEL)*

Mr Sigfússon presented the report on “Involving men in achieving gender equality” (Doc. 11760). If one was serious about promoting a more egalitarian society and changing mentalities, it was vital to ensure that men were involved, whether in combating violence against women, the balanced participation of women and men in political and public life, reproductive health, reconciling working and private life and parenthood. The report put forward a number of practical recommendations to promote policies to combat stereotypes and encourage the involvement of men.

The President put the draft resolution contained in Doc. 11760 to the vote. It was **adopted** unanimously [Resolution 1641 (2008)]. The draft recommendation was also **adopted** unanimously [Recommendation 1853 (2008)].

The President informed members that because of a lack of time, consideration of the following reports would be postponed:

- . Mobilising parliaments for Africa’s development (Doc. 11636)
- . Attitude to memorials exposed to different historical interpretations in Council of Europe member states (Doc. 11746)
- . Riots in European cities: lessons and Council of Europe response (Doc. 11685)
- . Promoting the participation of children in decisions concerning them (Doc. 11615).

17. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

18. NEXT MEETING

The Standing Committee **decided** to hold its next meeting in Paris on Friday 13 March 2009.

The meeting **rose** at 5.30 pm.

APPENDIX I**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****President of the Parliamentary Assembly**

Mr Lluís Maria de PUIG i OLIVE Spain

Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly

Mr Joachim HÖRSTER Germany
 Mr Paul WILLE Belgium
 Mr Göran LINDBLAD Sweden
 Mr Jean-Claude MIGNON France
 Mr Andreas GROSS Switzerland
 Mr Serhiy HOLOVATY Ukraine
 Mrs Danuta JAZŁOWIECKA Poland
 Mr Konstantin KOSACHEV Russian Federation
 Mr Davit HARUTYUNYAN Armenia
 Mr Samad SEYIDOV Azerbaijan
 Mr Andros KYPRIANOU Cyprus
 Mr Luigi VITALI Italy
 Mr Juan Fernando LÓPEZ AGUILAR Spain

Chairpersons of Political Groups

Mr Luc Van den BRANDE Group of the European People's Party
 Mr Andreas GROSS Socialist Group
 Mr David WILSHIRE, Vice-Chair European Democrat Group
 Mr Mátyás EÖRSI Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
 Mr Tiny KOX Group of the Unified European Left

Chairpersons of National delegations

Mrs Gisela WURM Austria
 Mr Frano MATUŠIĆ Croatia
 Mr Michael Aastrup JENSEN Denmark
 Mr Andres HERKEL Estonia
 Mrs Sinikka HURSKAINEN Finland
 Mr Petré TSISKARISHVILI Georgia
 Mr Zoltán SZABÓ Hungary
 Mr Frank FAHEY Ireland
 Mr Maximilian REIMANN Suisse
 Mr Mevlüt ÇAVUŞOĞLU Turkey
 Mr Ivan POPESCU Ukraine

Chairperson of the Political Affairs Committee

Mr Göran LINDBLAD (EPP/CD) Sweden

Chairperson of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee

Mrs Christine McCAFFERTY (SOC) United Kingdom

Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Mrs Corien W.A. JONKER (EPP/CD) The Netherlands

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

Mr Alan MEALE (SOC) United Kingdom

Chairperson of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Mr Steingrímur J. SIGFÚSSON (UEL) Iceland

Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)

Mr Serhiy HOLOVATY (ALDE) Ukraine

Chairperson of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

Mr John GREENWAY (EDG) United Kingdom

Rapporteurs (not members of the Standing Committee)

Mr Vidar BJØRNSTAD	Norway
Mr Mike HANCOCK	United Kingdom
Baroness Gloria HOOPER	United Kingdom
Mr Tadeusz IWINSKI	Poland
Mr Morten ØSTERGAARD	Denmark

ALSO PRESENT:

Invited personalities

Mr Francisco Javier ROJO, President of the Spanish Senate

Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

HRH the Infanta Doña Pilar DE BORBÓN, President of Europa Nostra

Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe

Mrs Marta VILARDELL COMA , Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Spain

Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly

Mr Mateo SORINAS, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly

Mr Wojciech SAWICKI, Director General

Mr Horst SCHADE, Director for General Services

Mr Alfred SIXTO, Head of the Table Office

Mr Kjell TORBIÖRN, Head of the Office of the Secretary General of the Assembly and Head of Secretariat of the Bureau of the Assembly

Ms Bonnie THEOPHILOVA, Head of the Private Office of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, *ad interim*

Mrs Valérie CLAMER, Secretary of the Standing Committee

Council of Europe

Mrs Maud DE BOER-BUQUICCHIO, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Mr Gianluca ESPOSITO, Adviser to the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General

APPENDIX II

SYNOPSIS

The **Standing Committee**, meeting on 28 November 2008 in Madrid with Mr de Puig, President of the Assembly, in the chair:

- heard a welcome address by Mr Francisco Javier Rojo, President of the Spanish Senate;
- held an exchange of views with Mr Miguel Ángel Moratinos, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe;
- ratified the credentials of new members of the Assembly submitted by the delegation of Denmark, France and Serbia;
- ratified the changes in the composition of Assembly committees in respect of the delegation of Denmark, France, Italy and Russia, and in the composition of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs in respect of the EPP/CD group;
- ratified the references and modification and extensions of references proposed by the Bureau which are contained in Appendix I hereafter;
- held an exchange of views on the budgets of the Council of Europe and of the Parliamentary Assembly for the financial year 2009 adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 25 November;
- held an exchange of views on the observation of the presidential election in Azerbaijan (15 October 2008), and took note of the report of the Bureau Ad hoc Committee;
- held a current affairs debate on the world financial crisis: the economic collapse of Iceland, following the request of the Icelandic parliamentary delegation, introduced by Mr Sigfusson (Iceland, UEL);
- held an exchange of views on the follow-up to Resolution 1633 (2008) on the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia ;
- unanimously adopted, on behalf of the Assembly, the following texts:

Recommendation 1850 (2008)	Europe's "boat-people": mixed migration flows by sea into southern Europe
Recommendation 1851 (2008)	Crafts and cultural heritage conservation skills
Recommendation 1852 (2008)	Migration and mobility in the Eurasian region – prospects for the future
Recommendation 1853 (2008)	Involving men in achieving gender equality
Resolution 1637 (2008)	Europe's "boat-people": mixed migration flows by sea into southern Europe
Resolution 1638 (2008)	Crafts and cultural heritage conservation skills
Resolution 1639 (2008)	Migration and mobility in the Eurasian region – prospects for the future
Resolution 1640 (2008)	Use by Assembly members of their dual parliamentary role – both national and European
Resolution 1641 (2008)	Involving men in achieving gender equality

- postponed consideration of the following reports :
 - . Mobilising parliaments for Africa's development (Doc. 11636)
 - . Attitude to memorials exposed to different historical interpretations in Council of Europe member states (Doc. 11746)
 - . Riots in European cities: lessons and Council of Europe response (Doc. 11685)
 - . Promoting the participation of children in decisions concerning them (Doc. 11615);
- decided to hold the next meeting in Paris (Assemblée Nationale) on 13 March 2009.

Appendix I

Decisions on documents tabled for references to committees

A. REFERENCES TO COMMITTEES

1. **Implementation of Resolution 1633 (2008) on the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia**
Decision of the Bureau on 3 October 2008

Reference to the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) for report and to the Political Affairs Committee and the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights for opinion

2. **Humanitarian consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia**
Decision of the Bureau on 3 October 2008

Reference to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population for report

3. **Drafting an additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights, concerning the right to a healthy environment**
Motion for a recommendation presented by Mr Marquet and others (Doc. 11729)

Reference to the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs for report and to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights for opinion

4. **Extending the "most favoured European woman clause" to all Council of Europe member states**
Motion for a recommendation presented by Mrs Err and others (Doc. 11715)

Reference to the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for report

5. **Cases of sexual violence against women in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo**
Motion for a recommendation presented by Mrs Smet and others (Doc. 11633 rev.)

Reference to the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for report which would include cases of such violence in Europe

B. MODIFICATION OF A REFERENCE

1. **Forests : the future of our planet**
Motion for a resolution presented by Mr Jakavonis and others (Doc. 11634)
Ref. no. 3471 of 27 June 2008

Reference to the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs for report

C. EXTENSION OF REFERENCES

- 1. The need for a global consideration of Human rights implications of Biometrics
Motion for a recommendation presented by Mr Wodarg and others (Doc. 11066)
Ref. 3288 of 22 January 2007 – validity: 22 January 2009**

Extension until 31 January 2010

- 2. Protection of human rights in emergency situations
Motion for a resolution presented by Mrs Wohlwend and others (Doc. 10641)
Ref. no. 3230 of 29 May 2006 – validity: 31 December 2008 (extended on 25 January 2008)**

Extension until 30 April 2009

- 3. Freedom of religion and other human rights for non-Muslim minorities in Turkey and for
Muslim minorities in Thrace (Western Greece)
Motions for a resolution presented by Mr Pourgourides and others (Doc. 10714 and 10724)
Ref. no. 3203 of 17 March 2006 – validity : 31 December 2008 (extended on 23 November
2007)**

Extension until 31 March 2009