

Parliamentary **Assembly** **Assemblée** parlementaire



AS/Per (2008) PV 1
20 June 2008

Standing Committee

Minutes¹

**of the meeting held
in Stockholm
on 29 May 2008**

¹ Approved by the Assembly on 23 June 2008.

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

Mr de Puig, President of the Assembly, opened the meeting at 1.30 pm and thanked the Swedish Parliament, the Swedish parliamentary delegation and its Chair, Mr Lindblad, for their invitation to hold the Standing Committee meeting in Stockholm, and for their hospitality.

He asked the Standing Committee to observe a minute's silence in memory of Lord Burlison, member of the UK parliamentary delegation, who had died on 20 May 2008.

2. WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR PER WESTERBERG, SPEAKER OF THE RIKSDAG

Mr Westerberg, Speaker of the Riksdag, welcomed the Standing Committee to the Swedish Parliament. The Swedish parliamentary delegation, of which he had been a member, showed a profound and enthusiastic commitment to the work of the Parliamentary Assembly and the activities of the Council of Europe, as evidenced by their active participation in the sessions. The Council of Europe's standard-setting role with regard to human rights, democracy and the rule of law was widely acknowledged; its unique system of treaties and conventions was essential for Europe's democratic development and stability; it was also a source of inspiration for national parliaments and citizens. The Riksdag fully supported the Council of Europe's activities. For example, it had held several seminars as part of the Council of Europe campaign against domestic violence.

The President thanked Mr Westerberg for his address. He welcomed Ms Malmström, Minister for European Affairs. Documents setting out the priorities of the Swedish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and taking stock of the previous Slovak Chairmanship were in the files.

3. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH MS CECILIA MALMSTRÖM, MINISTER FOR EU AFFAIRS OF SWEDEN

CM/Inf(2008)16
CM/Inf(2008)17

Ms Malmström outlined the priorities of the Swedish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, which were in line with those of the preceding Chairs. Having been a member of the European Parliament and several of its committees, she was anxious that the Committee of Ministers should maintain a high standard of dialogue and close co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly during the period of the Swedish Chairmanship. The priorities of the Swedish Chairmanship came under four main headings.

The protection and promotion of human rights were the Council of Europe's core mission. The Swedish Chair therefore made consolidation of the Council of Europe system of human rights protection and the implementation of those rights its primary objective. In this context, it intended to continue studying ways of reforming the European Court of Human Rights in order to guarantee the long-term effectiveness of the system established by the Convention. At the beginning of June Sweden would be organising a seminar on the theme "Towards stronger implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights at national level", the findings of which would be taken into account in subsequent reform decisions. The ratification of Protocol No. 14 by all member states was essential for these reforms. Special attention would also be paid to the different Council of Europe monitoring bodies, whose key role in the protection of human rights could be strengthened through the development of methods for more effective implementation of standards and through the provision of adequate resources. Implementation of human rights at national level was the theme of a conference to be held in Stockholm in November 2008. Sweden would also give priority to the rights of the child by developing a new strategy on "Protection, provision and participation for children in Europe", which would be discussed at a conference to be held in Stockholm in September. Sweden wanted to give other states the benefit of its experience in combating violence against children and prohibiting corporal punishment. The rights of persons with disabilities, with the holding of a joint conference with the Nordic Council in Strasbourg in October, gender equality and the prevention of violence against women, with the setting up of a monitoring mechanism provided for under the Council of Europe convention, the protection of persons belonging to national minorities, and action against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation were further human rights-related priorities to which the Swedish Chair wished to give priority.

Strengthening democracy and good governance in the member states was the second priority of the Swedish Chair, which aimed at fostering a systematic approach to promoting democratic development. The Forum for the Future of Democracy offered an ideal platform for stimulating progress in this area. The Swedish Chair would encourage follow-up to the proposals which had emerged from the last Forum session held in Stockholm/Sigtuna in 2007, and would support the preparatory work for the next Forum session, scheduled for

October 2008. Promoting democracy also meant ensuring compliance with European standards relating to free and fair elections. The Swedish Chair intended to promote efficient co-operation in this area and the provision of assistance through the Council of Europe. This had been the tenor of the statement by the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chair of the Committee of Ministers, Carl Bildt, on 23 May in connection with the parliamentary elections in Georgia. The Swedish Chair was also interested in democratic development in Belarus and would encourage initiatives to support and establish dialogue with civil society and independent media organisations in that country.

Among its priorities, the Swedish Chair also intended to put emphasis on strengthening the rule of law in Europe by making the most of the whole range of existing legal instruments, standard-setting activities, and activities for raising awareness and providing assistance to member states.

Lastly, Sweden would seek to develop relations and strengthen co-operation between the Council of Europe and other international organisations – the EU, the OSCE and the UN – on the basis of co-ordination, dialogue and complementarity. The Swedish Chair intended to foster the development of working relations with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency; it would also support the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of a resolution on co-operation between the Council of Europe and the UN.

These were a particularly ambitious set of objectives. They were a key step if human rights were to be made effective.

The President thanked Ms Malmström for her statement.

Replying to **Mr Kox**, **Ms Malmström** said, in connection with the ratification of Protocol No. 14, that the Swedish Chair had no specific strategy in this regard, but would devote its energies to ensuring that the protocol came into force. On the subject of relations with the European Union and the division within the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe between the bloc of 27 and the EU non-members, she noted that co-operation was not optimal and that one priority action area was the Fundamental Rights Agency.

Concerning the Organisation's budget and member states' obligations in this regard, a major concern for **Mr Van den Brande** and **Mr Kox**, who was alarmed at the Organisation's disastrous financial situation, **Ms Malmström** said that she could not give an answer at this stage.

Mr Greenway considered that before any thought was given to new commitments for the member states, the existing ones should first be honoured, and he agreed with Ms Malmström on this point. In reply to a question about the European Union's neighbourhood policy, **Ms Malmström** pointed to the need to improve co-operation with the countries concerned by identifying specific areas and concrete projects which would be conducive to such co-operation. This issue would remain a priority for Sweden as it would be taking over the Presidency of the Union in a year's time.

Following a question from **Ms Hurskainen** about Belarus, **Ms Malmström** said that the situation there was disconcerting and that hopes of an improvement had diminished as a result of recent events. The Council of Europe and the European Union should work hand in hand in Belarus to find ways of improving the dialogue with the country's authorities while maintaining contact with civil society, opposition parties and the intelligentsia.

The President warmly thanked the Minister for European Affairs for her statement and her detailed remarks in reply to members' questions.

4. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH ERKKI TUOMIOJA, PRESIDENT OF THE NORDIC COUNCIL

The President warmly thanked Mr Tuomioja for having accepted the Standing Committee's invitation. He outlined Mr Tuomioja's political career, first as a Finnish MP, then as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland from 2000 to 2007, and then, in 2008, as President of the Nordic Council, an institution whose priorities tied in with those of the Assembly.

Mr Tuomioja, President of the Nordic Council, said that, in many respects, the five Nordic countries formed a homogeneous and coherent bloc, although some obvious differences could be noted: five different currencies, five different approaches, especially on European or defence issues, and different political regimes – parliamentary monarchies or republics. The Nordic Council had been founded in 1952. From the institutional standpoint, after the abortive attempt in the 1970s to form an economic union, the five states had given priority to integration with the wider European Union. Well before their accession to the EU, however, the Nordic

countries had been pioneers of the citizens' union, adopting various joint measures in, among other, the social, labour and educational fields – free movement between the five countries without a passport, common labour market, social security agreements, right to vote in European elections, etc – an approach on which the European Union had embarked some years later. However, there were still some obstacles to be overcome, and these were currently a priority for the Nordic Council, particularly in the economic sphere.

Furthermore, the Nordic countries had always had an open-minded attitude towards other countries; they were against protectionism and were actively involved in international co-operation at all levels, particularly within the European Union. At the regional level, this co-operation was reflected in the unfailing commitment of the Nordic countries – and the Nordic Council – to two other organisations: all the Nordic countries were members of the Arctic Council and the Council of the Baltic Sea States, thus reflecting their dual concern to address the main problems facing both areas, the Arctic and the Baltic. Admittedly, the large number of different co-operation organisations in the Baltic area might lead to confusion, and a restructuring of these organisations was in fact under consideration, but they were essentially resource structures designed to resolve clearly defined problems. These institutions were innovative in several respects. For example, the Arctic Council was a unique forum because representatives of the indigenous communities sat on it. Within the Nordic co-operation framework, the autonomous regions participated on an equal footing with the governments of the member states.

Environmental protection was the absolute priority in the work of these assemblies, especially climate change and its impact in the Arctic and Baltic areas. The report on the Arctic had opened the eyes of the whole world and many governments to the impact of climate change on the region. Globalisation was another crucial issue which had become a priority of the Nordic Council. In April the Nordic countries had organised the first forum on this issue, which had led to publication of the "Nordic Globalisation Barometer", which assessed the Nordic countries' position in the global economy, inter alia in terms of their economic performance and competitiveness, and catalogued the measures adopted by the Nordic countries in this field.

The concept of the Nordic model of the welfare-state, to which many European countries and citizens referred, was another feature common to the Nordic countries, which the Nordic Council had set out to analyse in depth in a recent report. This model dated back to the 1960s, although its foundations had been laid earlier, and was based on policies of inclusion and a basic principle: equal access for all citizens. Indeed, social policies, whether they related to the health system or the education system, were not only aimed at the lowest income groups; all citizens enjoyed the same rights and had access to social rights on an equal footing, without any distinction and on a non-means-tested basis, either free of charge or subject to payment of a contribution. These systems had been judged a success, but, in exchange, heavy taxation was necessary to finance them.

Lastly, this review would not be complete without a mention of another feature common to the Nordic countries: their view of democracy, which was one of the preconditions of sustainable development and was incorporated as such into the Nordic Council's strategy in this area.

The President warmly thanked Mr Tuomioja for his very interesting statement and opened the floor to members wishing to ask questions.

Mr Gross also congratulated Mr Tuomioja on his statement, which revealed an original approach and an interesting and unique perspective on issues, particularly as regards the attention given to globalisation. Nordic culture had great resonance in Europe, particularly in its links with democracy. He wondered, however, about the correlation between economic prosperity, particularly that of Norway, based on oil, and democracy. He felt that oil-induced wealth, which could not conceal problems of poverty, was at variance with democracy.

Mr Tuomioja said that the Nordic model of democracy was based on a concept of democracy universally accepted in the Nordic countries, whose roots lay at the very heart of society, and was relayed by political parties, trade unions, trade organisations etc.

Referring to regional co-operation, **Mr Van den Brande** wondered about the geographical limits which could be placed on such co-operation in Europe. If it was considered logical for the Nordic countries to participate in Arctic co-operation, then Europe could equally well engage in Mediterranean co-operation. He also wondered about the place and role of autonomous regions in this institutional architecture.

Mr Tuomioja said that, the Nordic Council being a parliamentary organisation, the autonomous regions elected their own representatives. There was nothing inconsistent about becoming involved in geographically remote institutions. During its Presidency of the European Union in 2006, Finland had included the Northern dimension as a common policy of the Union while at the same time continuing the dialogue on development of the Mediterranean dimension.

Mr Meale welcomed the development efforts of the Arctic region. The prospects for economic development were beyond doubt, especially considering the oil and gas reserves. He also wondered about the safety of the region in terms of nuclear waste.

Regarding the extremely controversial issue of nuclear waste, **Mr Tuomioja** conceded that no one had THE solution, but he was sure there was one.

The President once again warmly thanked Mr Tuomioja for his participation.

5. EXAMINATION OF NEW CREDENTIALS

Doc. 11616

The Standing Committee **ratified** the credentials of new representatives and substitutes in respect of the Armenian parliamentary delegation, as set out in Doc 11616.

6. MODIFICATIONS IN THE COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

Commissions (2008) 4

The Standing Committee **ratified** the modifications in the composition of Assembly committees in respect of the Armenian delegation, as set out in document Commissions (2008) 4.

7. REQUEST(S) FOR A CURRENT AFFAIRS DEBATE OR DEBATE UNDER URGENT PROCEDURE

The President said that no requests for a current affairs debate or debate under urgent procedure had been submitted within the time limit. Item 12 of the draft agenda therefore no longer applied.

8. AGENDA

AS/Per (2008) OJ 1 rev

The President informed members that Mr Ayva, rapporteur for opinion, had asked that the discussion of the report on "Realising the full potential of e-learning for education and training", which came under item 16 of the draft agenda, be moved forward as his parliamentary obligations made it necessary for him to return to his country. He proposed that this item be discussed after item 10 and that the floor then be given immediately to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, who had been unable to present his communication at the Bureau meeting that morning. Furthermore, given that Mr Eörsi was unable to attend, there was no need to discuss the observation of the parliamentary elections in Georgia under item 11.

The revised draft agenda, as amended, was **adopted**.

9. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY'S SITTINGS HELD ON 17 APRIL (AFTERNOON) AND 18 APRIL (MORNING) 2008

AS(2008)PV 17 and 18

The minutes of proceedings of the Parliamentary Assembly's sittings held on 17 April (afternoon) and 18 April (morning) 2008 were **approved**.

10. REFERENCES, TRANSMISSIONS AND MODIFICATIONS OF REFERENCES TO COMMITTEES

AS/Bur (2008) 38

The Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly referred to document AS/Bur (2008) 38 which contained proposals relating to the references, transmissions and modifications of references to committees considered by the Bureau at its meeting on 29 May, and informed members of the modifications suggested by the Bureau under this item.

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

Mr Lindblad, Vice-President of the Assembly, replaced Mr de Puig in the Chair.

11. CULTURE, SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

Realising the full potential of e-learning for education and training

Doc. 11523
Amendments

Rapporteur of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education:

Mr Axel Fischer (Germany, EPP/CD)

Rapporteur of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development (for opinion): Doc. 11525

Mrs Antigoni Papadopoulou (Cyprus, ALDE)

Rapporteur of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (for opinion):

Mr Lokman Ayva (Turkey, EPP/CD)

Ms Brasseur, Chair of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, introduced the report on “Realising the full potential of e-learning for education and training” (Doc 11523), in the absence of the rapporteur, Mr Fischer. The report called on European governments to promote the use of e-learning tools and techniques in education and training, at school or on a remote basis, as the potential offered by these tools was not used to the fullest extent possible. E-learning also offered new opportunities in vocational training. The promotion of e-learning could open up education to students or other persons who did not have access to traditional education. The report put forward several recommendations regarding the specific measures to be adopted. Ms Brasseur said that, at its last meeting, the Committee on Culture had adopted a position on the 15 amendments presented by the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, but had not considered the other amendments tabled later.

Ms Papadopoulou presented the opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development (Doc 11525). Internet teaching tools were valuable both as regards access to education for pupils and students and as regards access to training for specific, isolated population groups. In a highly competitive business world, Europe’s future economic competitiveness and prosperity would depend on its ability to develop innovative products and services with a high added value. This called for constant improvement in the standard of education and training. E-learning should therefore be an integral part of education and training at all levels. However, these technological tools were complex and expensive, and it was crucial to ensure that access to them was not restricted for these reasons, thus further increasing the digital divide. Lastly, use of these tools entailed potential risks to the health and safety of children, in particular the risk of cyberdependence.

Mr Ayva presented the opinion of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. Owing to its flexibility of use, e-learning reduced the isolation factors which deprived some groups of access to an optimum level of education and training. The development of these technological tools should benefit certain groups with specific training needs or faced with specific constraints, such as disabled pupils and students or migrants. Accessibility of e-learning was the keyword here. Women who had had to put their career on hold to take on family responsibilities thus had the opportunity to continue their studies or update their knowledge, which made it easier for them to return to the world of work. However, e-learning had its disadvantages, and especially a cost. Its development was likely to bring about changes in society and might generate sociological, psychological, educational and other effects which would need to be anticipated.

Mr Fischer, rapporteur, thanked the two committees to which his report had been referred for opinion for their very positive contributions. He said that the committee had been in favour of most of the amendments presented and that there was no need to vote on those which had been unanimously approved.

The President said that 20 amendments to the draft recommendation and one sub-amendment had been presented. Ms Brasseur would state the position of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education on each of them.

In line with the information provided by **Ms Brasseur** and **Ms Papadopoulou**, **the President** announced that amendments Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13 and 15 to the draft recommendation, which had been unanimously approved by the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, **were declared adopted** pursuant to Rule 34.10 of the Rules of Procedure.

Ms Papadopoulou presented amendment 5 on behalf of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development. **Mr Fischer** proposed a sub-amendment, to which **Ms Papadopoulou** was opposed. **Ms Brasseur** said that the Committee on Culture, Science and Education had declared itself in favour of the amendment as sub-amended. Amendment 5 as sub-amended was **adopted**.

Mr Ayva presented amendment 16, which was **adopted**.

On behalf of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, **Ms Papadopoulos** presented amendments 10 and 12, to which **Mr Fischer** said he was opposed. **Ms Brasseur** confirmed that the Committee on Culture, Science and Education had come out against them. Amendments 10 and 12 were **rejected**.

Mr Ayva presented amendment 17. **Mr Sigfusson** presented an oral sub-amendment calling for the inclusion of persons living in rural areas, which was **adopted**. Amendment 17 as sub-amended was **adopted**.

Amendment 18 proposed by **Mr Ayva** was **adopted**.

Mr Ayva presented amendment 19. **Mr Sigfusson** presented an oral sub-amendment calling for the inclusion of persons living in rural areas, which was **adopted**. Amendment 19 as sub-amended was **adopted**.

Amendment 20 proposed by **Mr Ayva** was **adopted**.

Amendment 14 presented by **Ms Papadopoulos**, to which **Mr Fischer** and **Ms Brasseur**, on behalf of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, were opposed, was **rejected**.

The President put to the vote the draft recommendation contained in Doc 11523, as amended, which was unanimously **adopted** [Recommendation 1836 (2008)].

Mr de Puig, *President of the Assembly*, resumed the Chair.

12. COMMUNICATION BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Terry Davis, welcomed the opportunity to address the Standing Committee. He wished to focus his statement on three questions – current Council of Europe campaigns, the visibility of the Organisation, and external relations, three questions which were ultimately interrelated.

With regard to the Council of Europe's awareness-raising campaigns, the closing conference of the campaign to combat violence towards women, including domestic violence, would be taking place on 10 and 11 June. The report produced for the occasion by the task force would put forward recommendations for future action, including the idea, supported by the Parliamentary Assembly, of a convention for combating violence against women. This campaign was also significant because, like the campaign currently in progress on action against discrimination, it marked a change in the nature of the Council of Europe campaigns: the aim was not merely to organise conferences or seminars bringing together NGOs or government representatives, but to reach ordinary people, the victims and the media; instead of preaching to the converted, the important thing was to evangelise the agnostics.

Enhancing the visibility of the Council of Europe was a priority. It involved drawing up an effective communication strategy and enlisting the services of communication specialists. Certain initiatives had been taken by the Council's Directorate of Communication, such as increased co-operation with major broadcasting companies and the national press or an overhaul of the Organisation's internet site.

Where the Council of Europe's external relations were concerned, the Secretary General's report on this subject would be published very shortly. The duplication and overlapping of activities between international organisations, and particularly with the European Union, remained a significant issue. The Secretary General mentioned the signing of a joint declaration on the strengthening of co-operation between the Council of Europe and the International Organisation of La Francophonie in February 2008, pointing out that 25 of the 47 member states were members of that organisation.

Lastly, the Secretary General reported on various meetings he had held recently.

Reacting to the Secretary General's remarks about the Organisation's visibility, **Mr Kox** said there was much progress still to be made. The conference of the European Movement held in the Netherlands on 24 May to mark the 60th anniversary of the Hague Congress had not been given any publicity. The present meeting had not attracted the press either. In a context of budget restrictions, he wondered about the utility of some Council of Europe campaigns, such as the one against discrimination, which lacked visibility.

The **Secretary General** said that the Organisation's financial resources were put to the best possible use and were soundly managed in order to achieve the greatest possible visibility for each activity. Moreover, efforts to improve internal co-ordination of the Organisation's activities were continuing.

In reply to **Mr Meale, the Secretary General** confirmed that every effort was being made to ensure that the convention on action against trafficking in human beings, which had come into force in February 2008, was ratified by as many member states as possible.

Mr Seyidov welcomed the campaign on violence against women, which had been excellent and effective in many member states, and wondered what measures could be taken to maintain the momentum. A review of the awareness-raising campaign methodology should indeed be a priority.

Ms Wurm also welcomed the excellent results achieved by this innovatory campaign, especially because it was based on the use of new technologies. The work did not stop with the closing conference and consideration should now be given to practical solutions for the continued pursuit of the campaign objectives.

The **Secretary General** pointed out that the campaign was in the final evaluation stage, which was a necessary preliminary to the development of new initiatives.

Mr Van den Brande wanted a bilateral meeting with the Secretary General to be organised rapidly so that certain topics, such as communication policy, could be discussed in greater detail.

13. OBSERVATION OF ELECTIONS

Observation of the parliamentary elections in Serbia (11 May 2008)

Doc. 11618

*Rapporteur of the Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau:
Mr Jean-Charles Gardetto (Monaco, EPP/CD)*

Mr Gardetto introduced the ad hoc committee's report on observation of the parliamentary elections in Serbia. The elections had been very well organised and had generally complied with democratic standards; the campaign had been particularly open and very lively, with debate focusing on Kosovo and Europe. Voters had been given a real choice. The stabilisation and association agreement with the European Union had come at just the right time to boost Europe's image among the Serbian electorate. However, a number of incidents had tarnished the campaign. The ad hoc committee had made a number of recommendations concerning, in particular, changes that should be made to electoral legislation on specific points. Lastly, although the Assembly's ad hoc committee had led the observation mission at these elections, the need remained to conclude a co-operation agreement with the other international organisations carrying out observation missions in order to avoid all competition in the field.

Mr Aligrudic welcomed the conduct of these elections, which, despite a few isolated incidents, testified to Serbia's political maturity.

In the view of **Mr Kox**, these elections showed that, even in a difficult political context it was possible to have free and fair elections.

The Standing Committee **took note** of the report (Doc 11618).

14. ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT

a. Budgets of the Council of Europe for the financial year 2009

Doc. 11599

b. Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the financial year 2009

Doc.11600

Amendments

Rapporteur of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development: Mr Paul Wille (Belgium, ALDE)

Mr Wille introduced the report on the "Budgets of the Council of Europe for the financial year 2009" (Doc 11599) and the report on "Expenditure of the Council of Europe for the financial year 2009" (Doc 11600). Over the last few years the Assembly had constantly drawn attention to the Council of Europe's worsening financial situation. Efficient management should go hand in hand with a vision for the Organisation in the medium and long-term. With regard to the audit of the 2006 accounts, he fully supported the external auditor's analysis and recommendations, in particular his remark about reducing the time spent by staff on administrative tasks and

paying greater attention to the Organisation's activity programmes. Regarding the current budget and the prospects for 2009, the policy of zero growth in real terms had adverse effects both on activity programmes and on staff management. The central issue was still the future of the European Court of Human Rights and how it could be given the resources needed for its work without this affecting the activities of other bodies. For the first time in a number of years, however, the Court was not asking for additional appropriations. There was an urgent need to consider where the Council of Europe was heading and to look closely at ways of ensuring that it was not starved of resources. This was the responsibility of governments, and the budget issue would need to be examined very closely at the Joint Committee meeting. The same applied to the shortfall in the pension reserve fund: states must assume responsibility for their past decisions and honour their financial commitments.

As regards more specifically the budget of the Assembly, excellent management could not make up for a shortage of funds. The Assembly had made a major effort to streamline its operations. It had now reached a funding threshold where any additional cuts would entail drastic changes in its activities and in the way it operated.

The Secretary General reacted to the rapporteur's statement, saying that it was untrue to say that staff were leaving the Organisation: the Council of Europe had one of the lowest staff leaving rates among international organisations.

In the view of **Mr Meale**, the zero growth strategy was unacceptable, as was the situation regarding the staff pension scheme.

Mr Kox regretted that the Committee of Ministers had not responded as the Assembly had wished. It was therefore for the chairs of national delegations to put questions to their governments about the need to increase the Organisation's budget and, more generally, the need to support its action.

Mr Braun, Chair of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, fully supported Mr Wille's statement. He reminded members that the committee had held an exchange of views with the Secretary General at its meeting in March 2008. The reports submitted contained some strong language, which, unfortunately, was essential if the urgency of the situation was to be appreciated.

The President said there were two proposed amendments to the draft opinion.

Mr Wille presented amendment 1 and **Ms Brasseur** supported amendment 2. Amendments 1 and 2 were unanimously **adopted**.

The President put to the vote the draft opinion as amended contained in Doc 11599, which was unanimously **adopted** [Opinion no. 268(2008)].

The President then put to the vote the draft opinion contained in Doc 11600, which was unanimously **adopted** [Opinion no. 269(2008)].

15. ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE AND LOCAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Chemical munitions buried in the Baltic Sea

Doc. 11601

*Rapporteur of the Committee on Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs:
Mr Gediminas Jakavonis (Lithuania, ALDE)*

Mr Jakavonis, rapporteur, introduced the report on "Chemical munitions buried in the Baltic Sea" (Doc 11601) and outlined the background to it. After the Second World War, the Allies had dumped in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea some 300,000 tonnes of chemical munitions that had not been used by Germany and other armies. Information on the dumping sites had been kept secret for over 60 years. In view of the dangers posed by these munitions to the marine environment and fisheries, it was essential for the states concerned – the United Kingdom and the United States – and NATO to declassify this information. The Assembly should send out a very strong message to them. Some of the dumping sites were known, thanks to surveys conducted in particular by HELCOM (the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission) and the Baltic Council. It was all the more important to lift the secrecy in order to assess the present state of the dumped munitions and avert an environmental disaster, given the planned construction of a gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea linking Russia to Germany.

Mr Meale, Chair of the Committee on Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, emphasised the importance and quality of the work done by the rapporteur and the committee, which was based on contributions from several experts.

The President put to the vote the draft resolution contained in Doc 11601, which was unanimously **adopted** [Resolution 1612 (2008)].

16. POLITICAL QUESTIONS

Use of experiences of “the truth commissions”

Doc. 11459

*Rapporteur of the Political Affairs Committee:
Mr Andreas Gross (Switzerland, SOC)*

Mr Gross, rapporteur, introduced the report on “use of experiences of the ‘truth commissions’” (Doc 11459). “Truth commissions” were an original concept. They were non-judicial bodies playing a complementary role to criminal justice which were set up with a clear aim in view, namely the conduct of investigations to establish the truth concerning past violent events, internal conflicts or wars, and to promote reconciliation in societies torn apart by these events. They all exhibited similar characteristics. The positive experience acquired in some countries – South Africa, Argentina, Chile etc – showed that these commissions were an effective instrument of national reconciliation. Many European countries in which society was divided by the heritage of the past could derive benefit from this, in particular the Russian Federation with Chechnya.

The President put to the vote the draft resolution contained in Doc 11459, which was unanimously **adopted** [Resolution 1613 (2008)].

17. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Van den Brande returned to the question raised earlier, in the statement by the Secretary General, about the Council of Europe’s communication policy. There were many problems regarding the way in which the Directorate of Communication pursued that policy. A dialogue with the Secretary General on this matter was essential.

18. NEXT MEETING

The President informed members of the planned arrangements.

The Standing Committee **decided** to hold its next meeting in Madrid on Friday 28 November 2008, this date being subject to confirmation.

The meeting **rose** at 5.10 pm.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

President of the Parliamentary Assembly

M. Lluís Maria de PUIG Spain

Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly

Mr Joachim HÖRSTER Germany
 Mr Paul WILLE Belgium
 Mr Göran LINDBLAD Sweden
 M. Jean-Claude MIGNON France
 Mr Serhiy HOLOVATY Ukraine
 Mrs Danuta JAZŁOWIECKA Poland
 Mr Mladen IVANIĆ Bosnia and Herzegovina
 Mr Konstantin KOSACHEV Russian Federation
 Mr Davit HARUTYUNYAN Armenia
 Mr Samad SEYIDOV Azerbaijan
 Mr Miloš ALIGRUDIĆ Serbia
 Mr Andros KYPRIANOU Cyprus

Chairpersons of Political Groups

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

Chairpersons of National Delegations

Mr Aleksandër BIBERAJ Albania
 Mrs Gisela WURM Austria
 Mrs Anna ČURDOVÁ Czech Republic
 Mr Andres HERKEL Estonia
 Mrs Sinikka HURSKAINEN Finland
 Mr Zoltán SZABÓ Hungary
 Mrs Guðfinna S. BJARNADÓTTIR Iceland
 M. Jean-Charles GARDETTO Monaco
 Mrs Darja LAVTIŽAR-BEBLER Slovenia
 M. Maximilian REIMANN Suisse
 M. Ivan POPESCU Ukraine

Chairperson of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

Mr Márton BRAUN (EPP/CD) Hungary

Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

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

Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Mrs Anne BRASSEUR (ALDE) Luxembourg

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

Mr Steingrímur J. SIGFÚSSON (UEL) Iceland

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 Lokman AYVA Turkey
Mr Axel FISCHER Germany
Mrs Antigoni PAPADOPOULOS Cyprus
Mr Gediminas JAKAVONIS Lithuania

Also present:

Other member of the Parliamentary Assembly

Mrs Anna BENAKI Greece

Invited personalities

Mr Per WESTERBERG, Speaker of the Swedish Parliament
Mrs Cecilia MALMSTRÖM, Minister for EU Affairs of Sweden
Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA, President of the Nordic Council

Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe

Mr Viacheslav EGOROV, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Russia to the Council of Europe

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
Mr Petr SICH, Head of the Private Office of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly
Mrs Valérie CLAMER, Secretary of the Standing Committee
Ms Alexandra ALLEON, Deputy Secretary of the Bureau of the Assembly

Council of Europe

Mr Terry DAVIS, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
Mrs Mireille PAULUS, Secretary to the Committee of Ministers
Mrs Stefania KRUGER, Private Office of the Secretary General

APPENDIX II

SYNOPSIS

The **Standing Committee**, meeting on 29 May 2008 in Stockholm with first Mr de Puig, President of the Assembly, and then Mr Lindblad, Vice-President of the Assembly, in the chair:

- heard a welcome address by Mr Per Westerberg, Speaker of the Riksdag;
- held an exchange of views with Mrs Cecilia Malmström, Minister for EU Affairs of Sweden;
- held an exchange of views with Mr Erkki Tuomioja, President of the Nordic Council;
- ratified the credentials of new members of the Assembly submitted by the delegation of Armenia;
- ratified the changes in the composition of Assembly committees in respect of the delegation of Armenia;
- ratified the references and modification and extension of references proposed by the Bureau which are contained in Appendix I hereafter;
- heard a communication by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe;
- held an exchange of views on the observation of the parliamentary elections in Serbia (11 May 2008), and took note of the report of the Bureau Ad hoc Committee;
- adopted, on behalf of the Assembly, the following texts:

Opinion 268 (2008)	Budgets of the Council of Europe for the financial year 2009
Opinion 269 (2008)	Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the financial year 2009
Recommendation 1836 (2008)	Realising the full potential of e-learning for education and training
Resolution 1612 (2008)	Chemical munitions buried in the Baltic Sea
Resolution 1613 (2008)	Use of experiences of “the truth commissions”

- decided to hold the next meeting:
 . in Madrid on 28 November 2008 (date to be confirmed).

Appendix I

Decisions on documents tabled for references to committees

A. REFERENCES TO COMMITTEES

1. **Doc. 11558**
Motion for a resolution presented by Mr Margelov and others
Islam, Islamism and Islamophobia in Europe, to the Committee on Culture, Science and Education *for report* and to the Political Affairs Committee *for opinion*, to deal with paragraph 3 of the motion
2. **Doc. 11571**

Motion for a resolution by Mr Pieter Omtzigt and others

Children without Parental Care: Urgent need for Action, to the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee *for report*

3. Doc. 11572

Motion for a resolution by Ms Carina Ohlsson and others

Children who witness domestic violence, to the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee *for report* and to the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men *for opinion*

4. Doc. 11573

Motion for a resolution by Mrs Christine McCafferty and others

Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the Maghreb in fighting social exclusion, to the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee *for report*

5. Doc. 11574

Motion for a resolution by Mr Konstantin Kosachev and others

Inhumane treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo, to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for report*

6. Doc. 11578

Motion for a resolution by Mr Francis Grignon and others

Protecting innovation and consumers in Europe, *consultation* of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development *on the follow-up to be given*

7. Doc. 11581

Motion for a resolution by Mr John Prescott and others

The challenges posed by climate change, to the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs *for report*

8. Doc. 11582

Motion for a resolution by Mr Bernard Marquet and others

Water: a strategic challenge for the Mediterranean Basin, to the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs *for report*

9. Doc. 11583

Motion for a resolution by Mr Paul Rowen and others

Human rights and the family division in England and Wales, to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for information*

10. Doc. 11520

Motion for a resolution presented by Mrs Bilozir and others

European expatriates: relations to their countries of origin, to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population *for report*

B. MODIFICATION OF A REFERENCE

1. Decision of the Bureau of 17 December 2007

Situation of democracy in Europe

Ref. No. 3413 of 21 January 2008, to the Political Affairs Committee *for report*, and to the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men *for opinion*

C. EXTENSION OF A REFERENCE

1. Doc. 10753

Motion for a resolution presented by Ms Bousakla and others

Abduction and "re-education" of Muslim women and children who have become too "Western-minded"

Ref. No. 3200 of 17 March 2006 - Validity: 17 March 2008, extended to 27 June 2008 by Bureau decision on 21 January 2008, extension until 31 December 2008.