



Standing Committee  
*Standing Committee*

**AS/Per (2009) PV 01**  
23 April 2009

## Standing Committee

### Minutes<sup>1</sup>

of the meeting held  
in Paris  
on 13 March 2009

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<sup>1</sup> Approved by the Assembly on 27 April 2009.

## 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

**Mr de Puig, President of the Assembly**, opened the meeting at 9.30 am. He welcomed the excellent co-operation with the French parliamentary delegation and thanked its Chair for the invitation to hold the Standing Committee meeting in Paris, at the National Assembly.

**Mr Mignon**, Chair of the French parliamentary delegation, welcomed the members of the Standing Committee. The French delegation was actively committed to the work of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Europe's activities.

**The President** wished, in his opening address, to mention a number of important issues, beginning with the gravity of the economic and financial crisis with which Europe and the entire world was confronted. The situation of some countries was downright catastrophic. The crisis marked the end of worldwide financial engineering, which was to blame for the problems, whose full extent they were only now beginning to understand. Responsibilities had been established and appropriate measures, including the issuing of standards, now had to be taken. In this context, it was up to the Assembly to support the efforts being made by European countries to solve the crisis and, drawing on the work of its committees, to define new norms which could, in the future, prevent such bad practices. The President also mentioned the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Europe. The Assembly would launch the commemoration at its April part-session. Other events had already been scheduled in the context of the 119<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee of Ministers, which would be held in Madrid on 12 May. Most of the celebrations would, however, be held at the part-session in September. The celebration of this anniversary would undoubtedly raise the organisation's visibility.

**The Deputy Secretary General** intervened at this point to inform the Standing Committee of the arrangements made by the Committee of Ministers. The ministerial session in Madrid, which had been prepared by the Spanish chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, would discuss the future policies and future prospects of the Council of Europe. 1 October had been chosen as the key date for the culmination of the celebrations with many events being held at all levels of the organisation and to which prominent figures such as Mikhail Gorbachev had been invited.

## 2. EXAMINATION OF NEW CREDENTIALS

Doc. 11844

The Standing Committee **ratified** the credentials of the new representatives and substitutes in respect of the parliamentary delegations of Belgium, Latvia, Netherlands, Serbia and Spain, as set out in Doc. 11844.

## 3. MODIFICATIONS IN THE COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

Commissions (2009) 3

The Standing Committee **ratified** the changes to the composition of the Assembly committees in respect of the delegations of Belgium, Latvia, Netherlands, Serbia, Spain and Switzerland, as set out in the document Committees (2009) 3.

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

**The President** said that there had been no requests for current affairs debates or debates under urgent procedure within the time-limits set. Item 8 of the draft agenda was therefore no longer relevant.

## 5. AGENDA

AS/Per (2009) OJ 1 rev2

**The President** told members that it was impossible for the two members of the French government invited to speak on two reports on the agenda to attend the meeting, as had been indicated on an earlier version of the agenda. He warmly thanked the head of the French parliamentary delegation for his untiring efforts. Moreover, the Social, Health and Family Affairs wished to withdraw the report on "Women in prison" (Doc. 11619) from the agenda so that it could be discussed at the April 2009 part-session of the Assembly; **Ms McCafferty** confirmed this.

**Agreed.**

Finally, Mr Bjørnstad, rapporteur of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, requested that his report be discussed at an earlier stage of the meeting as his parliamentary commitments required him to return to his country. The President proposed that this item be discussed after item 8.

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

**Mr Zingeris** reverted to the question of the world economic and financial crisis to which the President had referred, and its consequences. Political opinions were more radical and there was more political extremism as a result of the crisis; it therefore presented a challenge to the Council of Europe's values. He thought that the Assembly should hold a debate on the subject at its next part-session. Other prominent figures who were ardent defenders of democracy and human rights, for example Vaclav Havel, should also be invited to the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organisation.

**The Secretary General of the Assembly** said that the Social Affairs Committee was preparing two reports, one on the social impact and the human dimension of the economic and financial crisis, the other on a new social vision for Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the Political Affairs Committee was preparing one on combating extremism.

**Mr Hancock** thought it would be more beneficial to involve young people on whom the future of Europe depended in the 60th anniversary celebrations rather than figures from the past. The Organisation should listen to what young people had to say about their aspirations for the future of Europe as they had done at the Youth Parliamentary Assembly during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**The Deputy Secretary General** pointed out that, given the budgetary constraints imposed by the Ministers' Deputies, it would be impossible for the Council of Europe to hold such an event. However, young people would be invited to celebrate the 60th anniversary by taking part in a competition.

**Mr Seyidov** thought that the guest speakers at the 60th anniversary celebrations should be guarantors of ethical conduct and moral independence. Mr Gorbachev was a highly controversial figure in some post-Soviet states, which did not remember him in a very positive light because of the massacres and deportations that had been carried out on his orders.

**Mr Mignon** fully endorsed Mr Hancock's suggestion. The first European Youth Assembly had been the flagship event during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary should also be a youth event, to which the European Youth Parliament, an association composed of young representatives of some thirty member states of the Council of Europe, should be associated.

**Mr Eörsi** also agreed with Mr Hancock on the need to listen to what young people had to say, and with Mr Zingeris. With regard to the guest speakers, they should not enter into detailed considerations of the achievements of various political figures. Gorbachev was *a must* because he embodied change in the East.

**Ms Hurskainen** said that the Finnish parliament would celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Europe, which coincided with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Finland's accession to the organisation, by holding a special session on 18 May.

**Mr Wilshire** thought that the discussion needed a dose of realism: the Council of Europe was admittedly important but they needed to ask themselves how many Europeans had never heard of it and did not even know it existed. Making the organisation known was the challenge to which they must rise.

**Mr Kosachev** acknowledged that Mikhail Gorbachev was a controversial figure but without him the Council of Europe would not have 47 member states. It was thanks to him that civil war had been avoided in the Soviet Union.

**Mr Gross** thought that, irrespective of whether they were talking about the consequences of the economic crisis or the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the most important thing was to promote the idea of Europe itself and the values it stood for.

**Mr Kox** thought that there was no point in discussing the past. They should focus more on the future and on increasing the effectiveness of the organisation rather than thinking about celebrating an anniversary, which could be publicised in the member states by involving governments and national parliaments. In the current context it was much more important to hold a major debate on the future of Europe.

**The President** endorsed this proposal. He noted that the members unanimously agreed to give greater impact to the celebration, in particular by involving young people. He welcomed the initiatives taken by some countries to commemorate the event at national level. However, the Assembly could only take decisions concerning its own programme and had no influence on the Committee of Ministers' decisions regarding the events it intended to organise.

**The Secretary General of the Assembly** pointed out that the organisation of a youth event was one of the initial proposals made by the Assembly but that the funding required had not been accepted by the Committee of Ministers. The plan to hold a youth assembly on the Friday of the October part-session, for example, would require a financial contribution from the parliamentary delegations. The Bureau would have to discuss this matter at its next meeting.

With regard to the idea of holding a debate on the future of the Council of Europe, **the Deputy Secretary General** underlined the importance of the Declaration which the Committee of Ministers would adopt at the 119<sup>th</sup> ministerial meeting in Madrid under the auspices of the Spanish Chairmanship.

**The President** thought that it was important that the Assembly Bureau be informed of the draft Declaration prior to its adoption by the Committee of Ministers. The Assembly should have the opportunity to give its opinion and to make proposals in due time.

#### **6. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY'S SITTINGS HELD ON 29 JANUARY (AFTERNOON) AND 30 JANUARY (MORNING) 2009**

AS (2009) PV 8, 9

The minutes of the sittings of the Parliamentary Assembly of 29 January (afternoon) and 30 January (morning) 2009 were **approved**.

#### **7. REFERENCES, TRANSMISSIONS AND MODIFICATIONS OF REFERENCES TO COMMITTEES**

AS/Bur (2009) 25

**The Secretary General of the Assembly** referred to document AS/Bur (2009) 25 which contained proposals concerning references, transmissions and modifications of references to committees, which the Bureau had examined at its meeting on 12 March, and informed members that an extension of a reference had been added.

The Standing Committee **approved** the modification and extensions of references as set out in Appendix 1 of Appendix II below.

#### **8. CO-OPERATION WITH PACE'S INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS IN ELECTION OBSERVATION**

AS/Bur (2009) 26

**The President** said that at its meeting the previous day, the Bureau had been informed of the conclusions of the meeting of the chairs and members of the ad hoc committees for the observation of elections, which had taken place on 27 January 2009. The Bureau had taken note of the conclusions of the meeting and had authorised their distribution to members of the Standing Committee (document AS/Bur (2009) 26). The Bureau had also held an exchange of views with Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, Director of the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The exchange had provided all the parties with the opportunity to have a free and frank exchange of views on co-operation between the two organisations in the context of the observation of elections. The dialogue with Mr Lenarcic had been very frank and open and, although there had been some tension, it had proven to be useful and productive.

**Mr Wilshire** welcomed the way in which the exchange of views with Mr Lenarcic had taken place and the prospect of improving relations with the ODIHR/OSCE and the way in which election observation was conducted. The Parliamentary Assembly observer delegations tended to be tolerated rather than really involved in the observation. Although there was no problem in acknowledging that the ODIHR/OSCE had considerable expertise in the logistical and administrative organisation of observation missions, they were incapable of making a political analysis as they did not look at how elections were conducted from the standpoint of a politician.

**Mr Popescu** pointed out that numerous observers had encountered problems with the ODIHR, as they had the impression that it sought to impose its political analysis and a pre-prepared assessment of the elections, irrespective of the facts and the conditions in which the elections actually took place. What the ODIHR perceived as fraud or a breach of electoral laws was not necessarily perceived in the same way by the Parliamentary Assembly. One clear example was the presidential election in Azerbaijan: the ODIHR had focused entirely on gathering evidence that there had been breaches of the electoral laws and the Parliamentary Assembly observer delegation had had no say in the conclusions of the final report. All the delegations taking part in an international election observation mission had to have an equal say.

**Mr Herkel** noted that there was no clear procedure with regard to the responsibility for and endorsement of the final declaration of international election observation missions. It was therefore necessary to work together with the ODIHR on improving the election observation process and to agree on a joint procedure, and that required a constructive approach.

**Ms de Pourbaix-Lundin** also thought that it was necessary to continue the discussion with the ODIHR so as to clarify the procedure. When there was too much compromise between the various observers, the final declaration was rendered ineffective.

**Mr Seyidov** welcomed the exchange of views the previous day as, despite the tension between those taking part, it had been a first step in seeking a joint approach between the organisations observing the application of electoral norms. This was crucial particularly from the standpoint of the countries organising elections, which expected the international observation mission to make a clear, coherent and consistent evaluation of the arrangements for the election and the actual election itself. For example, with regard to the presidential election in Azerbaijan, Mr Lenarcic had been unable to explain why there were such differences between the conclusions of the pre-electoral mission – which had been positive – and the negative conclusions set out in the ODIHR's final report. The ODIHR's evaluation had seriously tarnished the country's image.

**Mr Hancock** thought that the way the ODIHR had conducted its observation exercise in Azerbaijan was particularly instructive. The Assembly observer delegation should simply have refused to have anything to do with the final declaration. He fully endorsed the recommendation set out in the memorandum distributed to members (document AS/Bur (2009) 26) stating that in the absence of consensus with the ODIHR the Assembly should be able to publish a separate press release.

**The President** noted that the ODIHR had difficulty in understanding the Assembly's role and stance. However, the final declaration of the international observation mission was a political conclusion. It was also a joint position, accepted by all the delegations involved, irrespective of any differences of opinion they might have. Observing elections necessarily entailed differing points of view because it was based on findings which were necessarily different, according to where the observers had been deployed. Although the ODIHR was involved at a much earlier stage of the proceedings, because it had long-term observers, the same could be said of the Assembly with its pre-electoral visits which enabled it to make a full evaluation of the electoral process over a certain length of time. The members of the Parliamentary Assembly were also present on the ground and were familiar with the situation in the country. It was necessary to engage in dialogue with all the institutions involved in election observation and to foster the idea of a joint and complementary approach. Taking different approaches on the ground could only have a negative effect on the promotion of democratic values.

*Mr Mignon, Vice-President of the Assembly, took over from Mr de Puig in the chair.*

## 9. ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT

### Mobilising parliaments for Africa's development

Doc. 11636

*Rapporteur of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development:  
Mr Vidar Bjørnstad (Norway, SOC)*

**Mr Bjørnstad** presented the report "Mobilising parliaments for Africa's development". Africa's economic development depended on two factors: making African countries responsible for their own development and providing European support in promoting the UN millennium development goals in Africa. There was still a lot of ground to cover and the current economic and financial crisis was not helping matters. Good governance was essential – by stepping up efforts not to waste resources and to combat corruption. Not only the role of civil society and NGOs had to be reinforced, but also the political role of parliaments, in particular by defining genuine development strategies and controlling development aid and funding.

**Mr Kox** regretted that the Standing Committee had to discuss a report adopted nine months earlier and which was outdated in terms of its socio-economic relevance. However, numerous pressures were being exerted in European parliaments, which were working to counter the economic and financial crisis, to ensure that financial efforts focused on the national situation, to the detriment of development aid. There were fears that African countries would suffer as a result.

**The President** was also of the opinion that the current crisis could lead to negative changes in respect of Africa.

**Ms McCafferty** said that the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee would shortly be presenting a report on the implementation of the action programme of the 1994 International Population and Development Conference, in particular the health and medical aspects and include the latest statistics available on AIDS/HIV.

**Mr Braun**, Chair of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, congratulated the rapporteur on his involvement in drafting this very important report, which the Committee had unanimously approved. The Committee was also continuing its discussions in the context of future reports.

**Mr Bjørnstad** replied to the comments. The main aim of the report was to encourage parliaments to contribute to development in Africa and to invite them to renew their commitment to providing development aid.

**The President** closed the debate. He put the draft resolution set out in Doc. 11636 to the vote. The text was unanimously **adopted** [Resolution 1656 (2009)].

## 10. ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE AND LOCAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS

**Environment and health: better prevention of environment-related health hazards** Doc. 11788  
Amendments

*Rapporteur of the Committee on Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs:*  
*Mr Jean Huss (Luxembourg, SOC)*  
*Rapporteur of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee (for opinion):*  
*Mr Michael Hancock (United Kingdom, ALDE)*

**Mr Huss** presented the report "Environment and health: better prevention of environment-related health hazards". All countries were confronted not only with the current economic and financial crisis but also with fundamental environmental and climatic challenges and the former should not eclipse the latter. There were obvious links between environmental pollution and health. Environment-related pathologies were increasing and included not only respiratory problems such as asthma, cardiovascular diseases, allergies or specific types of cancer but also chronic pathologies and new syndromes, linked for example to electromagnetic pollution or to exposure to toxic substances. These were insidious forms of pollutions, which were present in small doses in the air, water, food and building materials, but to which people were constantly or regularly exposed. It was therefore essential that specific, independent and transparent scientific surveys and expert appraisals be conducted and that the public be informed of the results. The problem of environmental health covered a wide range of fields on which further reports would subsequently be drafted. A general approach to the issue was therefore advocated in the recommendations set out in the present report, which called on member states to take determined action by adopting an effective preventive policy, based on the principle of precaution.

**Mr Hancock** presented the oral opinion of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, which could but subscribe to the rapporteur's general analysis of the situation, although he was preaching to the converted. How could negligent or reluctant states be persuaded to adopt measures which had been in force in some countries for years but which they continued to ignore? What use was it for some countries to have good practices if their neighbours ignored what they were doing? Pollution did not stop at borders. It was therefore necessary to question governments which ignored the seriousness of the situation. The report presented should be a framework report which would allow the Assembly to continue and fine-tune its work.

**Mr Kox** congratulated the rapporteur on his fundamental report. Asbestos, which paradoxically was not mentioned in the report, had caused tens of thousands of victims in Europe. Although it had taken time and it had been necessary to wait for scientific proof of the cancers and illnesses caused by asbestos,

organisations and states had demonstrated their ability to respond and had adopted the necessary measures.

**Mr Matušić** agreed. Asbestos presented a serious public health problem in Croatia.

**Mr Agius** observed that, in addition to the humanitarian aspects of the issue, there were also economic and financial considerations which states took into account before adopting prevention or prohibition measures. It was essential to identify prevention measures for young people, who were more exposed to environment-related health risks. It was also necessary to consider very coercive action against polluters, in particular industrialists and farmers.

**Mr Ivanić** also welcomed the report, which, he agreed, required specific follow-up in each of the areas mentioned. The Assembly should also address the issue of weapons and munitions, and the contamination of people by some substances used in the production of ammunitions, which presented a grave problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Mr Huss** responded to the comments and pointed out that the report constituted a general framework and specific problems would be subsequently be addressed individually. The Committee on the Environment therefore intended to continue its discussions, including on subjects such as asbestos and munitions.

**The President** said that the Assembly had adopted a recommendation on the dangers of asbestos in 1998, which now needed to be updated. Four amendments had been tabled to the draft resolution.

**Mr Hancock** presented amendments 1 to 4, which were unanimously **adopted**.

**The President** put the draft recommendation set out in Doc. 11788, as amended, to the vote. It was unanimously **adopted** [Recommendation 1863 (2009)].

## 11. SOCIAL, HEALTH AND FAMILY AFFAIRS

### a. Riots in European cities: lessons and Council of Europe response

Doc. 11685  
Amendments

*Rapporteur of the Committee on Social, Health and Family Affairs:*

*Mr Roland Blum (France, EPP/CD)*

*Rapporteur of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population (for opinion):*

Doc. 11745

*Mr Michael Hancock (United Kingdom, ALDE)*

*Rapporteur of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and*

Doc. 11736

*Regional Affairs (for opinion): Mr Daniel Ducarme (Belgium, ALDE)*

**Ms McCafferty** presented the report on “Riots in European cities: lessons and Council of Europe response”, in the absence of the rapporteur. The terms “riots” referred to organised or spontaneous collective violence, against individuals or the State represented by its institutions, taking place in a public area and taking the form of attacks, destruction or vandalism, sometimes accompanied by looting. The problem did not always follow one fixed pattern, despite the fact that it was the consequence of the combined factors of poverty, social exclusion, unemployment, racial discrimination, or inappropriate urban development. The report identified the causes of the phenomenon and advocated a number of prevention measures, with a view to strengthening the role of public services and enhancing relations between the State and people living in the areas concerned.

**Mr Hancock** presented the opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population. It was a pity that the report, which had been written following the explosive situation in 2005-2007, no longer needed to be debated by the Assembly with the same urgency. The question of media coverage of such events was interesting, in particular the use which some “inner city groups” made of the media and journalists. It was clear that the phenomenon of rioting revealed a fundamental problem in integrating immigrants into the community. The relevant authorities probably needed to be more responsive to the problems of these populations and to consider giving them more rights, for example the right to vote at local elections.

**Mr Huss** presented the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, in the absence of the rapporteur for opinion. Citizens’ security must remain central to governments’ concerns. However, there was still no synergy in member states between authorities and the public population with regard to the need to rebuild the link between the state and its citizens, which was essential to reduce the existing malaise – as was intercultural and inter-faith dialogue.

**Mr Greenway** thought that rioting was the way in which young people living in inner cities expressed their malaise with regard to the lack of prospects for the future. There was a risk that the deterioration of the current economic situation, and its consequences on employment and wages, would have a more serious impact on the communities concerned. He agreed with Mr Hancock that there was a lack of democracy in these communities. There was a striking similarity between the preventive and repressive approach to the problem of rioting and the response to terrorism.

*Mr de Puig, President of the Assembly, resumed the chairmanship of the meeting.*

**Mr Mignon**, who was the Mayor of a French town, had been directly confronted with the problem of rioting. He thought that they should avoid responding in a simplistic fashion and not confuse the problem with that of the integration of immigrants. There was obviously a problem of town planning and overcrowding, which meant that the solution would be to renovate these districts and the buildings there, to reduce overcrowding and encourage a mix of social groups in these neighbourhoods. It was also necessary to foster cultural education and sports. He wondered whether the Council of Europe Development Bank could not play a role in this field to help European municipalities promote such policies. However, there was no panacea and the measures taken in one municipality were not necessarily successful in another.

**Mr Kox** endorsed the recommendations set out in the report but did not agree with its analysis of the problem to the extent that linking rioting with immigrants was misleading.

**Mr Cavuşoğlu** pointed out that the original intention had been to refer the issue of rioting in some European towns to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population precisely because it involved immigrant communities.

**Mr Reimann** also thought that the Council of Europe Development Bank could play a role. The Committee on Economic Affairs and Development could make proposals on this point.

**Ms McCafferty** replied to the comments and said it was up to all stakeholders, at both national and local level, to focus their efforts on very vulnerable sectors of the population.

**The President** said that eleven amendments and two sub-amendments had been tabled to the draft resolution.

**Mr Hancock** presented amendment 3 on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, and **Ms McCafferty** seconded sub-amendment 1 to amendment 3. The sub-amendment was unanimously **adopted**, as was amendment 3 thus sub-amended.

**Mr Hancock** presented amendments 4, 5 and 6, on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population. They were unanimously **adopted**.

Amendment 11, presented by **Ms McCafferty**, was also unanimously **adopted**. Amendment 1 therefore fell.

**Mr Huss** presented amendment 2, on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs. It was unanimously **adopted**.

Amendment 7, presented by **Mr Hancock** on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, was unanimously **adopted**, as sub-amended by sub-amendment 1 presented by **Ms McCafferty**.

Amendments 8, 9 and 10, presented by **Mr Hancock**, were also unanimously **adopted**.

**The President** put the draft resolution set out in Doc. 11685, as amended, to the vote. It was unanimously **adopted** [Resolution 1657 (2009)].

#### **b. Promoting the participation of children in decisions concerning them**

Doc. 11615

*Rapporteur of the Committee on Social, Health and Family Affairs:  
Ms Minodora Cliveti (Romania, SOC)*

**Ms McCafferty** presented the report "Promoting the participation of children in decisions concerning them", in the absence of the rapporteur, who was no longer a member of the Assembly and to whom she paid



tribute. Children were citizens of the world and participation was a fundamental right of citizens. Policy-makers ought to give serious consideration to the opinions, wishes and aspirations of children, in the fields of education, health, family life, in matters concerning adoption or access to justice. Member states' governments should prepare national strategies to increase children's participation in decisions concerning them. They should also abolish laws which denigrated children, place a ban on corporal punishment and degrading treatment of children, reconsider the restrictions on voting rights and introduce a children's ombudsman.

**The President** put the draft recommendation set out in Doc. 11615 to the vote. It was unanimously **adopted** [Recommendation 1864 (2009)].

## 12. RULES OF PROCEDURE, IMMUNITIES AND INSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

### Questions to the Committee of Ministers

Doc. 11821

*Rapporteur of Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs:  
Mr Andreas Gross (Switzerland, SOC)*

**Mr Gross** presented the report on "Questions to the Committee of Ministers", which was aimed at reframing the rules on questions to the Committee of Ministers and to bring the Rules of Procedure into line with the recently established practice of spontaneous questions. This was an improvement which had been requested by the members of the Parliamentary Assembly and which would make the communication by the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers more lively and attractive.

**Mr Greenway**, Chair of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, welcomed this change which would introduce more spontaneity into the exchanges with the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, as desired by all.

**The President** put the draft resolution set out in Doc. 11821 to the vote. It was unanimously **adopted** [Resolution 1658 (2009)].

## 13. OTHER BUSINESS

**Mr Popescu** referred to the decision which the Bureau had taken the previous day, concerning the action taken in response to Resolution 1583 (2007) on "improving the participation of members in Parliamentary Assembly plenary sessions and committee meetings", to invite the President of the Assembly to forward the statistics concerning participation to the chairs of the national parliamentary delegations and drawing the attention of those whose delegations had a low rate of participation. However, it was necessary to take account of the fact that many delegations were faced with sometimes drastic budgetary restrictions, which had been decided by their national parliaments and prevented their members from taking part in the regular activities of the Assembly and its committees.

**The President** did not think that budgetary restrictions offered a comprehensive explanation for the low level of participation by some delegations. There was a variety of reasons, including small parliamentary majorities, which meant that members were obliged to attend national parliamentary meetings as regularly as possible, or the workload of members who held several elected mandates simultaneously. Each situation needed to be examined individually and the presidents of national parliaments needed to be persuaded to take more account of the Assembly's activities.

**Mr Gross** noted that the economic and financial crisis had an impact on public finances and consequently also on parliamentary activities. Each delegation presented specific situations which would have to be studied. It would subsequently be for the Bureau to consider proposals to deal with these situations.

**Mr Mignon** wished to raise the question of the election of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the procedure and the calendar, given the fact that the Committee of Ministers would be involved in the procedure.

**The President** said that this question would be on the agenda of the Joint Committee during the April part-session. He shared Mr Mignon's concerns and hoped that the procedure would be fully complied with.

#### **14. NEXT MEETING**

The Standing Committee **decided** to hold its next meeting in Ljubljana (Slovenia) on 29 May 2009.

**Ms Latvizar-Bebler**, chair of the Slovenian parliamentary delegation, welcomed the opportunity given to the Slovenian parliament to host the Standing Committee meeting.

The meeting **rose** at 1.15 pm.

## APPENDIX I

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

**President of the Assembly**

Mr Lluís Maria de PUIG i OLIVE Spain

**Vice-Presidents of the Assembly**

Mr Paul WILLE Belgium  
 Mr Jean-Claude MIGNON France  
 Mr Luigi VITALI Italy  
 Mr Mladen IVANIĆ Bosnia and Herzegovina  
 Mr Frano MATUŠIĆ Croatia  
 Mrs Anna ČURDOVÁ Czech Republic  
 Mr Andres HERKEL Estonia  
 Mr Konstantin KOSACHEV Russian Federation  
 Mr Davit HARUTYUNYAN Armenia  
 Mr Michael Aastrup JENSEN Denmark  
 Mr Samad SEYIDOV Azerbaijan  
 Mr Mevlüt ÇAVUŞOĞLU Turkey

**Chairpersons of Political Groups**

Mr Andreas GROSS Socialist Group  
 Mr David WILSHIRE 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 Sinikka HURSKAINEN Finland  
 Mrs Anna BENAKI (replacing Mr Aristotelis PAVLIDIS) Greece  
 Mr Zoltán SZABÓ Hungary  
 Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS Lithuania  
 Mr Marcel GLESENER (replacing Mme Lydie ERR) Luxembourg  
 Mr Francis AGIUS Malta  
 Mr Jean-Charles GARDETTO Monaco  
 Mrs Darja LAVTIŽAR-BEBLER Slovenia  
 Ms Marietta de POURBAIX LUNDIN (replacing Mr Göran LINDBLAD) Sweden  
 Mr Maximilian REIMANN Switzerland  
 Mr Ivan POPESCU Ukraine

**Chairperson of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development**

Mr Márton BRAUN Hungary

**Chairperson of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee**

Mrs Christine McCAFFERTY United Kingdom

**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

Mr Jean HUSS

Luxembourg

**Also present:**

**Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe**

Mr Valery LEVITSKIY, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe

**Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly**

Mr Mateo SORINAS, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly

Mr Wojciech SAWICKI, Director General

Mrs Jane DINSDALE, Director of Political and Legal Affairs

Mrs Valérie CLAMER, Secretary of the Standing Committee

Mr Alfred SIXTO, Head of the Table Office

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

**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 13 March 2009 in Paris with Mr de Puig, President of the Assembly, and then Mr Mignon, Vice-President of the Assembly, in the chair:

- ratified the credentials of new members of the Assembly submitted by the delegations of Belgium, Latvia, the Netherlands, Serbia and Spain;
- ratified the changes in the composition of Assembly committees in respect of the delegations of Belgium, Latvia, the Netherlands, Serbia, Spain and Switzerland;
- ratified the modification and extensions of references proposed by the Bureau which are contained in Appendix I hereafter;
- held an exchange of views on the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Europe, with the participation of the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe;
- held an exchange of views on the Parliamentary Assembly's co-operation with its institutional partners in election observation;
- at the request of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, decided to withdraw the report "Women in Prison" (Doc. 11619 rev) from the agenda, for debate at the Assembly's April 2009 Part-Session;
- unanimously adopted, on behalf of the Assembly, the following texts:

**Recommendation 1863 (2009)      Environment and health: better prevention of environment-related health hazards**

**Recommendation 1864 (2009)      Promoting the participation by children in decisions affecting them**

**Resolution 1656 (2009)            Mobilising parliaments for Africa's development**

**Resolution 1657 (2009)            Riots in European cities: lessons and Council of Europe response**

**Resolution 1658 (2008)            Questions to the Committee of Ministers**

- decided to hold its next meeting in Ljubljana (Slovenia), on 29 May 2009.

## APPENDIX 1

### Decisions on documents tabled for references to committees

#### A. MODIFICATION OF A REFERENCE

##### 1. The state of human rights in Europe : the need to eradicate impunity Bureau decision

*Reference to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights for report and to the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for opinion*

**B. EXTENSION OF REFERENCES**

1. **The situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe  
Motion for a recommendation presented by Mr Cilevičs and others  
Doc. 11206  
Ref. no. 3340 of 20 April 2007 – validity : 20 April 2009**

*Extension until 31 January 2010*

2. **An internationally recognised status of election observers  
Bureau decision  
Ref. no. 3322 of 16 March 2007 – validity: 16 March 2009**

*Extension until 31 December 2009*

3. **Request by the Parliament of Kazakhstan for observer status with the Parliamentary Assembly  
Bureau decision  
Ref. no. 3318 of 16 March 2007 – validity: 16 March 2009**

*Extension until 31 January 2010*

4. **European code of conduct on lobbying including guidelines for politicians, lobbyists and corporations  
Motion for a resolution presented by Mrs Gacek and others  
Doc. 11105  
Ref. no. 3335 of 16 April 2007 – validity: 16 April 2009**

*Extension until 31 October 2009*