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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

The Session

THE INFORMATION GUIDE FOR PLENARY SESSIONS OF PACE

21-25 June 2010

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The 47

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



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

The Parliamentary Assembly

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

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

Applications for membership: Belarus (12 March 1993).

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

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

The political groups



211

Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD)



182

Socialist Group (SOC)



96

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)



94

European Democrat Group (EDG)



21

Group of the Unified European Left (UEL)

The Assembly committees

84 seats

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

27 seats

Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs



1. Throughout this text, all reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Monday 21 June 2010

☞ Morning (11.30 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Opening of the third part of the 2010 Ordinary Session**

Parliamentary Assembly President Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu opened the third part of the 2010 Ordinary Session and made an opening statement.

The Assembly examined credentials, including of any new members notified by national delegations, and dealt with changes in the membership of committees. The Assembly also elected Márton Braun (Hungary, EPP/CD) a Vice-President with respect to Hungary.

Adopting its agenda, the Assembly decided to hold an urgent debate on "The flare-up of tension in the Middle East" and a current affairs debate on "The situation in Kyrgyzstan".

Finally, the Assembly adopted the minutes of proceedings of the Standing Committee (21 May 2010, Skopje, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia").

◆ **Address by Ivo Josipović, President of Croatia**

Following his address, the President answered questions from members of the Assembly.

Monday 21 June 2010

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-5.20 p.m.)

◆ **Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly presented by Antonio Milošoski, Minister for Foreign Affairs of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers**

Following his presentation, the Foreign Minister will answer questions from members of the Assembly.

◆ **Budgets and priorities of the Council of Europe for the 2011 financial year**

Doc. 12280

Report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

Rapporteur: Erol Aslan Cebeci (Turkey, EPP/CD)

The Economic Affairs Committee fully supports the process for reforming the Council of Europe which has been launched by the Secretary General, which it hopes will give the Organisation fresh ambition in fulfilling its aims, as well as greater political effectiveness and influence. But success will require substantial and ongoing dialogue with the Assembly and the Council's other entities, as well as with staff, who should be kept fully informed and involved. Staff may have to show solidarity and understanding when the reforms affect them directly.

The committee supports the proposed new four-pillar budget structure, but considers that the Assembly itself – as a statutory organ dealing with many areas – should not appear under the “democracy” pillar alongside technical assistance programmes, but rather under the fourth general pillar. It regrets that the Assembly's repeated proposal for a biennial or multi-year budget has not been taken up.

The problem of adequate ongoing funding for the European Court of Human Rights remains, but the idea of a separate budget for the Court should be considered, the committee suggests. Allocating more money for the Human Rights Commissioner and existing monitoring mechanisms is welcome. Communication – in order to enhance the Council of Europe's impact – will be a vital area for reform, although the committee has reservations about new “liaison offices” in Geneva, Vienna and Warsaw on cost grounds.

Finally, commenting on areas targeted for cuts, the committee believes the Council of Europe should continue to carry out work on medical counterfeiting and the subject of migration should not be marginalised.

Contact in the secretariat: Yann de Buyer, tel. 2911.

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

Doc. 12292 Parts I and II, and Addendum

Rapporteur: Tiny Kox (Netherlands, UEL)

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

Tuesday 22 June 2010

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Germany and Malta**

Doc. 12240

Voting takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., in the area behind the presidential rostrum.

According to the European Convention on Human Rights, judges are elected by the Parliamentary Assembly from a list of three candidates nominated by the High Contracting Party concerned.

To assist it in making its decision, the Assembly invites its sub-committee on the election of judges to make confidential recommendations based on personal interviews with all the candidates and assessments of their CVs. The document containing these recommendations is made available only to members of the Assembly.

An absolute majority of votes cast is required in the first round of voting. If this is not achieved, a second round of voting will take place on Wednesday 23 June from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., for which a relative majority of votes will be sufficient.

Contact in the secretariat: Andrew Drzemczewski, tel. 2326.

◆ **Legal remedies for human rights violations in the North Caucasus Region**

Doc. 12276

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Dick Marty (Switzerland, ALDE)

Opinion of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Anne Brasseur (Luxembourg, ALDE)

From the standpoint of safeguarding human rights and upholding the rule of law, the situation in the North Caucasus is "the most serious and most delicate situation" in the whole Council of Europe area, according to the Legal Affairs Committee.

In Chechnya, despite impressive reconstruction efforts, the authorities continue to nurture a climate of pervading fear: opponents disappear, reprisals are taken against the families of suspected fighters, the media and civil society face intimidation, and judicial organs do nothing about the misdeeds of the security forces, all in an atmosphere of "personalisation of power". There are also strong indications that the Chechen power, or at least circles close to it, were directly implicated in the murder of Umar Israilov in Vienna. In Ingushetia, constructive dialogue has grown up between the ruling power and civil society, but there has still been an alarming upsurge of violence, including unsolved murders and disappearances. In Dagestan, a fresh outbreak of terrorist acts has prompted responses from the security services which are not always lawful and productive.

Meanwhile, the European Court of Human Rights has been compelled to assume a role of "last-ditch protection" for many victims in the region, the committee points out, frequently condemning the Russian authorities for failing to fully investigate cases where security forces are suspected of abduction or torture. On the other hand Russia has paid compensation promptly, and is trying to re-examine neglected cases, though with few results so far.

Terrorism can only be fought effectively if basic rights and the rule of law are respected, the committee reiterates. It suggests that Russia be guided by the example of other countries who have had to deal with terrorism, and work with other member states, the Council of Europe and civil society to achieve this aim. For its part, the Committee of Ministers should directly monitor Russia's actions in the region, and set up a system for keeping records of human rights violations there.

Statement by Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, President of the Republic of Ingushetia (Russian Federation)

Contact in the secretariat: Andrew Drzemczewski, tel. 2326.

◆ Address by Milo Đukanović, Prime Minister of Montenegro

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

Tuesday 22 June 2010

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-8 p.m.)

◆ **Election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Germany and Malta (continued)**

Doc. 12240

Voting takes place from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., in the area behind the presidential rostrum.

◆ **The situation in Kosovo¹ and the role of the Council of Europe**

Doc. 12281

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Björn von Sydow (Sweden, SOC)

Opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Pieter Omtzigt (Netherlands, EPP/CD)

The Council of Europe applies a policy of status-neutrality towards Kosovo, although 33 of its 47 member states have so far recognised Kosovo's independence. The Political Affairs Committee believes the focus of the Assembly's attention should not be on status but on standards: irrespective of its status, Kosovo should be a place where standards of democracy, the rule of law and human rights of an equivalent level to that upheld by the Council of Europe are fully enforced.

Respect for the rule of law in Kosovo is poor, undermining people's trust in the political system and hampering economic development. Firmer action is needed on combating corruption and building a robust and efficient judicial system. Although the security situation is calm, different communities live separately and some of them, such as Roma and Kosovo Serbs, face discrimination and practical difficulties in their everyday life, including access to basic services and documents. More needs to be done to protect minority rights, promote dialogue and reconciliation between different communities, and address with pragmatism their practical problems.

In co-operation with other international partners, in particular EULEX and the OSCE, the Council of Europe should be more involved in Kosovo. In particular, it should broaden the range of its activities and demonstrate flexibility and imagination in finding formulas to apply its monitoring mechanisms to Kosovo, while maintaining status-neutrality. For its part, the Assembly could initiate a dialogue with representatives of the political forces elected to the Kosovo Assembly on issues of common interest, while taking Serbia's legitimate interests into account.

Contact in the secretariat: Sonia Sirtori, tel. 2370.

1. Throughout this text, all reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

◆ **The situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe**

Doc. 12174

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: József Berényi (Slovak Republic, EPP/CD)

Doc. 12207

Opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Rapporteur: Nursuna Memecan (Turkey, ALDE)

Doc. 12236

Opinion of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Rapporteur: Elvira Kovács (Serbia, EPP/CD)

The Roma are the largest minority in Europe and present in virtually all Council of Europe member states, yet they continue to be victims of intolerance and discrimination based on deep-seated prejudice. The Legal Affairs Committee says it is shocked by recent outrages against Roma in several member states, reflecting what it calls "an increasing trend in Europe towards anti-Gypsyism of the worst kind" reminiscent of the darkest hours in Europe's history. Extremists scapegoate Roma by capitalising on popular fears that they are involved in criminality, while 20 years of efforts to integrate Roma have achieved almost nothing, a record which the committee denounces as shamefully poor.

All Council of Europe member states must tackle this issue with determination. Existing national strategies for integrating Roma need better funding and coordination, especially at local level, and should be properly integrated across government. Statistics based on ethnicity, provided they are collected in a way which avoids abuse, would help with evaluating the true extent of the problem and measuring the impact of any action taken. Roma themselves need to become more involved in elected bodies and public life. International organisations can help – the Council of Europe's *Dosta!* campaign currently under way is one example – but ultimately individual governments must take bold, practical steps to provide Roma with the schooling, jobs, medical care and housing they need.

Statement by Fanny Ardant, patron of the Council of Europe *Dosta!* campaign

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

◆ **Joint debate**

Readmission agreements: a mechanism for returning irregular migrants

Doc. 12168

Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Rapporteur: Tineke Strik (Netherlands, SOC)

Readmission agreements are bilateral arrangements between countries – often brokered by the EU, which is a driving force behind them – setting out the conditions under which a country is obliged to readmit its own citizens, and sometimes also third-country citizens who have passed through its territory, when they are being expelled as irregular migrants. Hundreds have been drawn up so far, codifying the administrative procedures to be used during a return, the paperwork required, who bears what costs, and so on.

Advocates of such agreements see them as enabling quicker, more humane returns, and argue that they are neutral in terms of human rights, merely putting into practical effect a return decision that has already been taken. Yet such agreements can be used to enforce flawed decisions, the Migration Committee points out, and the speeded-up procedures at borders can prevent migrants from

exercising their rights fully. Rising numbers of "third-country nationals" are at particular risk from them, potentially ending up in "transit" countries far from their homes, often in an unsustainable situation.

Such agreements should specify that returnees only go to safe countries where social rights are guaranteed, if possible their home country rather than countries through which they have transited, and only once they have been able to exercise their full rights, for example to claim asylum. These agreements should be public, their effects regularly evaluated, and statistics collected on their use. Above all, the committee says, they should be drawn up to fully reflect Council of Europe and other human rights standards and guidelines.

Contact in the secretariat: Carl Ekström, tel. 3456.

Voluntary return programmes: an effective, humane and cost-effective mechanism for returning irregular migrants

Doc. 12277

Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Rapporteur: Özlem Türköne (Turkey, EPP/CD)

It is estimated that there are around 10 million irregular migrants in Council of Europe member states already, with 500,000 more added every year. Many will have to be sent home, but this can be done in two different ways: either they can be *forced* to return, which may entail lengthy detention, heavy costs and suffering for the families concerned, or they can be *invited to return voluntarily*, in dignity and with help to reintegrate when they get home. This second method, the Migration Committee points out, is more humane, more likely to endure, and cheaper. It is also more likely to be welcomed by countries of origin, being a form of development aid.

Assisted voluntary returns have been taking place for more than 30 years, often with the valuable guidance and oversight of the International Organization for Migration, and more than 1.6 million people have successfully been sent home to over 160 countries worldwide. The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers already encourages member states to give preference to voluntary returns over forced returns, but much more can be done to promote their use, the Migration Committee believes.

Assistance to returnees can take the form of counselling before departure, help with travel costs, and practical aid once they are home, such as temporary housing, new training or job placements. If returnees face the same problems as when they originally left, they are likely to leave again. For its part, the Committee of Ministers should supplement its successful "Twenty guidelines on forced returns" with a similar set of guidelines on assisted voluntary returns.

Contact in the secretariat: Mark Neville, tel. 2341.

Wednesday 23 June 2010

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Germany and Malta (possible second round)**

Doc. 12240

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

An absolute majority of votes cast is required in the first round of voting. If this is not achieved, a second round of voting takes place, for which a relative majority of votes will be sufficient.

◆ **Islam, Islamism and Islamophobia in Europe**

Doc. 12266

Report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Rapporteur: Mogens Jensen (Denmark, SOC)

Opinion of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Michael Hancock (United Kingdom, ALDE)

Opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Rafael Huseynov (Azerbaijan, ALDE)

Opinion of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Rapporteur: Nursuna Memecan (Turkey, ALDE)

Muslims in Europe, despite their presence for centuries, still have a hard time: not only do they encounter stigma and discrimination for their customs and beliefs, they are also prey to religious radicalism which threatens democracy and respect for human rights. In short, they must face both Islamophobia on the one hand, and Islamism on the other. European governments, meanwhile, must try to find a balance, protecting the right to free worship, as long as it is compatible with common European values, yet also permitting criticism of Islam, provided it does not spill over into hate-speech.

Much more could be done to foster the social inclusion of Muslim communities and fight Islamophobia, the Culture Committee believes. It deplores in particular political parties which actively try to exploit fear of Islam. On the other hand, Muslims should not seek to isolate themselves in a "parallel society" or uphold traditional interpretations of Islam which deny gender equality. The committee sees the wearing of the full veil and headscarf, for instance, as a threat to women's dignity and freedom. Nevertheless, while some legal restrictions on wearing the *burqa* and *niqab* may be justified – for security purposes, or where the wearer's public or professional functions require that her face can be seen – the committee is opposed to a general ban, which is currently being considered by some member states.

Greater understanding is one way forward: knowledge of Islam should be taught in schools, and Islamic studies courses made available in universities, while exchanges involving young people from different religious backgrounds should be encouraged. At international level, the UN's Alliance of

Civilisations initiative should be invited to co-operate more closely with the Council of Europe, including joint programmes, and there should be more contact with Islamic organisations and the Arab League.

Finally, the committee calls on Switzerland to repeal its ban on the construction of minarets for mosques, which it says discriminates against Muslim communities.

Statement by Jorge Sampaio, High Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations

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

Wednesday 23 June 2010

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

◆ Joint debate on the state of democracy in Europe

Extra-institutional actors in the democratic system

Doc. 12278

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Hendrik Daems (Belgium, ALDE)

Governments, parliaments, political parties and judges are no longer the only participants in a modern democracy, the Political Affairs Committee points out. Trade unions, advisory bodies of various sorts, business and other special interest groups, lobbyists and the media all play an increasingly important part in the push and pull of politics. Worryingly, groups involved in illegal activities can also wield political influence in some countries. These extra-institutional players are not new, but their scale and influence has considerably increased in recent years, partly due to the spread of new forms of communication.

The activities of some of these groups can be good for democracy, the committee points out, insofar as they encourage greater public participation, widen representation, feed expert knowledge into the public domain or provide new forms of oversight. But some forms of influence – especially when they stem from opaque special interests – are a matter for concern. Corruption or influence-peddling within political institutions is one damaging example. “Bought” media which circulate biased information to manipulate public opinion, or to serve narrow party or business interests, is another.

The answer, as always, is greater transparency, the committee believes: the people have a right to know how decisions are being made in their name, and by whom. Plurality also acts as a check on special interests: the more voices there are in the national conversation, and the more pairs of eyes watching each other, the better. The whole issue, according to the committee, needs more thought. The Venice Commission – the Council of Europe’s group of independent legal experts – should be asked to look into it, to kick-start a process of in-depth reflection within the Assembly and the Council of Europe’s own special think-tank, the Forum for the Future of Democracy.

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

The political consequences of the economic crisis

Doc. 12282

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Emanuelis Zingeris (Lithuania, EPP/CD)

Doc. 12299

Opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

Rapporteur: Anna Lilliehöök (Sweden, EPP/CD)

A year ago, the Assembly warned that the economic crisis could possibly threaten to undermine the very foundations of democracy, and appealed to governments not to let the focus on the economy undermine social and human rights. Yet it has now become clear that many European governments

face an unprecedented period of tight budgets and freezes on spending. The damage to the social fabric, the Political Affairs Committee warns, will be much greater than first thought. Moreover, extremist political parties on left and right have been handed a golden opportunity to curry public favour by blaming failure on the mainstream parties.

Turning to the EU and the crisis in the euro-zone, the committee regrets the fracturing of views among EU members on budgetary and fiscal policy, and points out that countries should have stuck to the terms of the stability and growth pact. Emergency funding of 750 billion euros from the IMF and others to defend the euro-zone is more than welcome, but the on-going crisis has revealed division and disunity, and shown that Europe is far from being a continent without dividing lines.

Council of Europe governments should be less narrowly national and try to take a coordinated European approach, stamping down more effectively on corruption in state bodies and boosting democracy within the EU. For their part, national parliaments should look harder at the long-term consequences of legislation, especially its costs, and do a better job of monitoring financial governance.

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

Democracy in Europe: crisis and perspectives

Doc. 12279

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Andreas Gross (Switzerland, SOC)

Democracy in Europe has been ailing for some time, according to the Political Affairs Committee, but the world economic crisis has only made things a lot worse. A lack of financial regulation, centralised decision-making with little parliamentary or public scrutiny, too much power and money in the hands of a few, a corrupt media, extremist rhetoric, bored electorates and almost unlimited data-snooping have conspired to leave European democracies looking battered and fragile.

Merely representative democracy is losing ground, and a dramatic shake-up in the relations between governments and the governed is long overdue, the committee believes. Expanded public participation in the decision-making process at all levels – local, regional, national and European – as well as a whole new way of “discussing and living together in dignity, respect and solidarity” is required. Transparency in politics, and civic and political responsibility, will be needed too. A more human globalisation process, stronger transnational networks, citizen-initiated referenda, freshly-empowered ombudspersons and enhanced education in democratic citizenship will all play their part.

The right to participate in the conduct of public affairs should be guaranteed as a human right and a fundamental political freedom in a new Protocol to the European Convention of Human Rights. Finally, a Strasbourg Democracy Forum – as a laboratory of new ideas and a barometer of the scale of the challenges to be faced – should be set up, and a high-profile personality, a “Delegate for Democracy”, appointed to lead it.

Contact in the secretariat: Despina Chatzivassiliou, tel. 3075.

Statement by Alain Touraine, sociologist

◆ **The state of democracy in Europe and the progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure**

Doc. 12275 and Addendum

Report of the Monitoring Committee

Rapporteur: Dick Marty (Switzerland, ALDE)

In the latest of its annual reports, covering the period June 2009 to June 2010, the Monitoring Committee draws on its assessments of the functioning of democratic institutions in seven monitored member states (Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monaco, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia) and one country engaged in post-monitoring dialogue (Bulgaria), as well as its major report on "The war between Georgia and Russia: one year after".

Taking up the twin themes of this year's democracy debate, the committee concludes that election laws have generally been upgraded, but says that in some countries election processes still show serious shortcomings. In some parliaments, dialogue has been jeopardised by small or fragmented oppositions, abusive boycotts or curtailed opposition rights. In certain places, the main opposition is even to be found outside parliament altogether. In another group of monitored countries, only further constitutional reform will solve the problems, while in yet another group lack of media freedom remains a major concern.

Finally, the committee continues its second three-year cycle of reports on member states not subject to monitoring or post-monitoring dialogue by assessing the next group of eleven countries (Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta and the Netherlands), based on reports from the full range of Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms.

Contact in the secretariat: Agnieszka Nachilo, tel. 2905.

Thursday 24 June 2010

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

♦ **Urgent debate: the flare-up of tension in the Middle East**

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

This Political Affairs Committee is due to approve this report during its meeting at 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday 22 June.

♦ **Address by Gjorgje Ivanov, President of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**

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

Thursday 24 June 2010

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-6.30 p.m.)

◆ **Current affairs debate: the situation in Kyrgyzstan**

The opening speaker is due to be David Wilshire (United Kingdom, EDG). No report is prepared for a current affairs debate, and there is no vote.

◆ **The handling of the H1N1 pandemic: more transparency needed**

Doc. 12283

Report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Paul Flynn (United Kingdom, SOC)

In June 2009 the World Health Organization – on the advice of a secret expert committee – declared the highest possible level of pandemic alert for the H1N1 flu virus, triggering the ordering of large quantities of vaccines by national governments, amid scare headlines and dire predictions of many deaths. Yet a year on, global mortality rates are comparatively very low, and millions of vaccines and antivirals have had to be stockpiled, returned or sold off.

In short, according to the Social Affairs Committee, the handling of the H1N1 pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), EU health authorities and national governments distorted public health priorities, wasted large sums of public money and unduly scared Europeans. There is overwhelming evidence that the seriousness of the pandemic was vastly overrated by the WHO, yet it has been highly defensive in reacting to criticism and has still not revised its position. Above all, there were grave shortcomings in the transparency of decision-making about the pandemic, raising concerns about the influence of the pharmaceutical industry which stood to profit greatly from those decisions. Plummeting confidence in such advice could prove disastrous in the case of a severe future epidemic, the committee warns.

While welcoming the review processes currently under way within the WHO and elsewhere, the committee calls for greater transparency, an appropriate definition of a pandemic, new ways to guard against undue influence by vested interests and better communication to avoid sensationalism and scaremongering. It also calls for a public fund, possibly paid for by a levy on drug company profits, to conduct medical research and trials and give independent advice. The aim, the committee concludes, is to rebuild confidence in the advice given by public health authorities.

Contact in the secretariat: Maren Lambrecht-Feigl, tel. 4778.

◆ **The functioning of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan**

Doc. 12270

Report of the Monitoring Committee

Co-rapporteurs: Joseph Debono Grech (Malta, SOC) and Andres Herkel (Estonia, EPP/CD)

Several months ahead of the 10th anniversary of Azerbaijan's membership in the Council of Europe, the Monitoring Committee believes that the country's democratic credibility is again at stake as the November 2010 parliamentary elections approach. These elections are all the more important in a country where the constitutionally-guaranteed principle of the separation of powers is still not fully applied in practice, and where the parliament's role vis-à-vis the executive needs to be stronger, the committee points out.

The authorities must ensure the necessary conditions are met for the full compliance of the November parliamentary elections with European standards, and pass on a clear message at the highest political level that electoral fraud will not be tolerated. All political parties are also urged to take part in the forthcoming elections.

Finally, concerning the situation of the media, the committee condemns the arrests and ongoing intimidation and harassment of journalists, reiterates its call for the decriminalisation of defamation, and again demands the immediate release of imprisoned journalist Eynulla Fatullayev, as ordered by the European Court of Human Rights.

Contact in the secretariat: Marine Trevisan, tel. 3716.

The Joint Committee, which is the organ of co-ordination between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, meets at 6.30 p.m., or at the end of the sitting, in Room 5.

Friday 25 June 2010

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **The need to avoid duplication of the work of the Council of Europe by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights**

Doc. 12272

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Boriss Cilevičs (Latvia, SOC)

Four years ago, the Assembly expressed its concern that the new EU Agency for Fundamental Rights might duplicate the work of the Council of Europe. Despite safeguards, the risk of confusion and unnecessary overlap still exists in principle – at least as long as the EU has not acceded to the European Convention on Human Rights. That step has now become indispensable, in the committee's view.

However, things have changed in the intervening years. The two bodies have established new ways of working together, and it has become clear that each uses different tools which complement each other: the Agency collects data and carries out analyses, while the Council sets standards and monitors. But this fruitful co-operation will only continue, the committee warns, as long as the Agency uses the Council's *acquis* on human rights in Europe as its main point of reference. The committee also points out that the Agency's remit has grown following the Lisbon Treaty, and the European Commission now has a commissioner whose responsibilities includes "fundamental rights".

It will continue to be mainly up to EU member states to make sure duplication does not occur, by avoiding work already done by the Council of Europe, by faithfully sticking to the agreed co-operation arrangements, and by consulting the Council early on its strategy. For its part, the Committee of Ministers needs to keep reminding the Agency about the dangers of duplication by meeting its top managers regularly, by keeping Council data flowing to the Agency and by making sure staff members from both bodies are in close contact.

Contact in the secretariat: Agnieszka Szklanna, tel. 4141.

◆ **Combating sexist stereotypes in the media**

Doc. 12267

Report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Rapporteur: Doris Stump (Switzerland, SOC)

Women in the media are under-represented, if not at times invisible, according to the Equal Opportunities Committee. A worldwide survey of 13,000 TV, radio and print news stories appearing on one day in 1995 revealed that there were four men for every woman featured in the news. Even when they do appear, women are often stereotyped as passive and lesser beings, mothers or sexual objects. Such simplistic caricatures legitimise everyday sexism, encourage discrimination and hinder progress towards true gender equality, the committee believes.

Awareness-raising, training and education, for example in how to critically evaluate sexism on TV or in lifestyle magazines, could help in the longer term, backed up with firm laws to penalise sexist insults or

group defamation. Government watchdogs should be set up to crack down on the worst examples. But it is also up to journalists, producers, directors and editors to ensure balance in their output, by introducing quotas if necessary, and to honestly reflect the full range and richness of both men's and women's experience.

The Committee of Ministers should prepare guidance for both governments and the media on how to combat this injustice, while the future Council of Europe convention on preventing violence against women and domestic violence could also contain provisions against gender stereotypes, which can in turn feed gender-based violence. But the most effective step, the committee suggests, would be a new protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights which establishes – once and for all – gender equality as a fundamental human right.

Contact in the secretariat: Sylvie Affholder, tel. 3551.

◆ **Decent pensions for women**

Doc. 12274

Report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Rapporteur: Anna Čurdová (Czech Republic, SOC)

Opinion of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Bernard Marquet (Monaco, ALDE)

In most Council of Europe member states, women's pensions are appreciably lower than men's, the Equal Opportunities Committee points out. Women have frequently played a role in raising children or caring for other dependents and these periods are not, or only partially, taken into account in calculating retirement allowances. Even when they are working, discrimination has meant women are obliged to accept part-time jobs or have advanced slowly in their careers, leading to lower personal incomes than men, and hence smaller pensions. Furthermore, pension systems were originally built around the linear career paths of men, yet society has changed: divorces, remarriages and single-parent families headed by mothers are much more common, while other forms of allowance such as "survivor's pensions" are becoming obsolete.

It is time to eliminate these inequalities, the committee believes, and provide fair and equitable pensions for all, based on public pension systems. These should be more favourable to women, guarantee a personal pension entitlement, and offer both men and women a reasonable standard of living. A first step would be to ensure that equal pay for equal work is written into domestic law, and employers forced to comply. Secondly, pension laws should be revised to give a measure of "positive discrimination" in favour of women: they should receive pension credits for raising children or caring for dependents, for example, as well as credits during periods of unemployment, parental leave or part-time work.

There needs to be greater solidarity between women and men when pensions are non-existent or too meagre to live on, and elderly persons in particular should be provided with enough to keep them at least out of poverty.

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

◆ **Forests: the future of our planet**

Doc. 12284

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

Rapporteur: Vyacheslav Timchenko (Russia, EDG)

Forests are often referred to as “the lungs of our planet”, the Environment Committee points out, recycling oxygen from carbon, countering global warming, protecting the soil against erosion, and controlling water balance. They are also a haven for wildlife and rare plants, offering a vast range of habitats and hosting a myriad of ecosystems which help to preserve biodiversity. In some countries they are economically important, not least as places of recreation.

Yet they are under threat: illegal logging and other human activities have led to a decrease globally in the area covered by forests, particularly in developing countries. In Europe, while the reverse is true – the surface area covered by trees is increasing as reforestation takes place – this often results in monocultures with little biodiversity, made up mainly of alien species. The vast, gloomy and remote “old growth” forests so beloved of European myth and legend are becoming increasingly rare.

The committee believes it is time for deforestation to be curbed more effectively, through binding international agreements if necessary, and for forestry laws across Europe to be harmonised. Other ideas include recognising the role of forests as “carbon sinks” by paying countries for every unit of greenhouse gas absorbed by their forests, new techniques for reducing the impact of forest fires, and more sustainable and scientifically sound ways of managing timber.

Contact in the secretariat: Bogdan Torcătoriu, tel. 3282.

◆ **Closure of the third part of the 2010 Ordinary Session**

Practical information

1. Meetings of committees and political groups

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

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

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

2. Languages

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

3. Assembly documents

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

Official documents

The main official documents are:

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

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

Amendments: Amendments to draft texts must be tabled in keeping with the relevant rules of procedure, particularly Rule 33 (see section 4 below). They are distributed at the document counter. They must be signed by at least five Representatives or Substitutes, unless they are being submitted on behalf of a committee seized for report or opinion.

Agenda: For each part-session the Bureau prepares a draft agenda listing the sittings at which the items will be examined. **The draft agenda** is made available to members of the Assembly two weeks before the opening of the part-session. The Assembly is required to adopt the draft agenda (Rule 26.4 of the Rules of Procedure). A member may propose an

amendment to the draft agenda drawn up by the Bureau. The adoption of such a motion requires a majority of the votes cast (Rule 26.5). Once adopted, the agenda can be altered only by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast.

Once it has been approved by the Assembly at the first sitting of the part-session, the agenda is published (Rule 26) and made available to the members at the document counter.

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

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

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

The texts adopted by the Assembly are:

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

The other official documents (Rule 23 of the Rules of Procedure) are:

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

Other documents

Twice a day a "**notice paper**" is produced, setting out the agenda for the sittings of the day. It also contains other useful information relevant to the proceedings and procedure.

For each part-session the following lists are published:

- List of Representatives
- List of Substitutes
- List of national delegations

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

The latest edition of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly was published in April 2010 in two parts, the Rules and complementary texts in one part, and the Statute of the Council of Europe in another part. They are available in bilingual versions (English/French).

4. Tabling amendments

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

Under the provisions on the organisation of debates (page 90 of the Rules of Procedure and forward), the **time limits for tabling amendments** are the following (where appropriate the Bureau may decide to change these limits, in particular for urgent debates or debates on general policy):

- for debates on the afternoon of Monday 21 June: Monday 21 June at 12 noon;
- for debates on Tuesday 22 June: Monday 21 June at 4 p.m.;
- for all other debates (except urgent debates, unforeseen debates or as otherwise indicated on the agenda): 23 and a half hours before the opening of the sitting at which the debate is to begin.

Sub-amendments must be tabled at least one hour before the scheduled end of the sitting preceding that in which the debate begins.

The procedure for tabling, examining and voting on amendments and sub-amendments is set out in Rule 33 of the Rules of Procedure.

5. Motions for resolutions and recommendations

A motion for a recommendation or resolution, not exceeding 300 words, must be signed by at least 20 Representatives or Substitutes belonging to at least five national delegations (Rule 24.2). The President decides which motions are admissible.

Any motion considered admissible is printed and distributed as soon as possible. The Bureau then decides whether it should be referred to one or more committees, or forwarded to one or more committees for information, or that no further action should be taken. The Bureau's decision must then be ratified by the Assembly.

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

A document may be referred to only one committee for report but to any other committee for opinion (Rule 25.2). The opinion of the latter concerns the report of the former committee. The report concerned must therefore be made available to the committee whose opinion has been sought in good time for it to prepare its opinion. Committee opinions may be presented orally or in writing. An opinion presented in writing must contain a chapter at the beginning entitled "Conclusions of the committee" and an explanatory memorandum by the rapporteur (Rule 48.3 of the Rules of Procedure).

6. Written declarations

Written declarations may be tabled provided that they:

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

They are neither referred to a committee nor debated in the Assembly (Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure).

Any Representative or Substitute may add his or her signature to a written declaration up to the close of the next part-session, after which no further signatures may be added. The declaration shall be issued with the names of all members who have signed it.

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

According to the Statute of the Council of Europe, or to other texts of a statutory character, the Committee of Ministers seeks the Assembly's opinion on such matters as the accession of new member states, draft conventions or the Council of Europe's budget. These requests for opinions are debated in the Assembly, following which the Assembly votes on the opinion to be transmitted to the Committee of Ministers (Rule 56).

8. Changes in the membership of national delegations or committees

Members of the Assembly are appointed for the whole Ordinary Session. Following parliamentary elections, the national parliament concerned or other competent authority shall make appointments to the Assembly within six months of the elections. If the national parliament cannot make all such appointments in time for the opening of a new Ordinary Session, it may decide, for a period of not more than six months after the election, to be represented in the Assembly by members of the existing delegation (Rule 10.2 and 3).

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

The chairperson of a national delegation informs the President of the Assembly of any proposed change(s) in committee membership concerning that delegation's members. The President of the Assembly submits the proposed change(s) to the Assembly, the Standing Committee or, failing that, the Bureau for ratification (Rule 42.6).

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

At the request of the Committee of Ministers, of the committee concerned, of one or more political groups, or of twenty or more Representatives or Substitutes, a debate may be held on an item which has not been placed on the Assembly's draft agenda. Requests for debates under urgent procedure must be addressed to the President of the Assembly. The President

submits them to the Bureau, which makes a proposal to the Assembly. The adoption of urgent procedure requires a two-thirds majority of the votes cast (Rule 49.4).

An urgent debate is based on a written report and gives rise to a vote, whereas a current affairs debate is not based on a report.

At least twenty members, or one political group or national delegation may request a current affairs debate (Rule 51) on a subject which is not on the Assembly's draft agenda. The request must be made in writing to the President of the Assembly in time for the last meeting of the Bureau before the opening of the part-session. The possible choice between several requests is made by the Bureau, a decision which needs to be endorsed by the Assembly. A current affairs debate may not exceed one and a half hours. The debate shall be opened by one of the members who requested it, chosen by the Bureau. The first speaker has ten minutes speaking time, other speakers five. Although there is no vote on any text, the Bureau of the Assembly may subsequently propose that the subject be referred to the appropriate committee for report.

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

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

11. Voting cards

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

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

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

12. Notification of Substitutes

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

Notice of substitutions has to be given before the opening of the sitting concerned (if possible by the previous day and at the latest before 8.30 a.m. for a morning sitting and before 1 p.m. for an afternoon sitting). For the first sitting on Monday at 11.30 a.m., the deadline is 10 a.m. This notification, including the names of Substitutes, the names of Representatives to be substituted and the length of substitution, must be given in writing for each sitting to the

Secretariat of the Assembly (Beejul Tanna, Room 1074, fax during session weeks +33 3 88 41 27 27, fax outside session weeks +33 3 88 41 27 33).

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

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

13. Register of attendance

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

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

14. Speakers' register

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

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

Speaking time is limited to a total of 13 minutes for committee rapporteurs (to present the report and to reply to the debate). Rapporteurs for opinion, to present the opinion or to reply to the debate, shall have the same speaking time to present their opinions as the speakers registered for the debate concerned. Other speakers on the list normally have a maximum of 5 minutes, although this may be reduced depending on the number of speakers on the list. At the start of each sitting the President announces the speaking arrangements.

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

15. Questions to invited guest speakers

For most invited guest speakers, the draft agenda indicates whether there is the possibility for members to ask questions. Where there is that possibility, members are encouraged to register their names with the Table Office as soon as the draft agenda is published and the name of the guest speaker appears, unless the draft agenda specifies that there is only one question from each political group. For most guest speakers other than the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, members are invited to submit the subject of their question.

For the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, the name of the member wishing to ask a written question is registered if accompanied by the full written text of the question. In this context, a deadline is specified in the draft agenda. The written questions to the Chairperson are published as an Assembly document.

In accordance with established practice, the Bureau has agreed that written questions will receive a written reply from the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers. These replies will be published in the report of the sitting. The Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers has indicated that he or she is prepared to give an oral reply to spontaneous questions at the end of his address. Rule 57.2 of the Rules of Procedure states, however, that "No Representative or Substitute may table more than one question for oral answer at any one part-session." Members may therefore register on one of the two lists by completing and returning the appropriate form (either "written question for oral reply" or "spontaneous question").

For the other guest speakers, there is no formal deadline as such, as the questions are "spontaneous". However, members have an interest in registering their names as early as possible, as there is usually not enough time to answer all questions.

16. Electronic voting

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

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

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

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

Rule 38.9 indicates that a member cannot modify his or her vote after the voting is closed.

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

17. Quorum

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

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

The quorum is one third of the number of Representatives of the Assembly authorised to vote (Rule 40.3).

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

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

18. Majorities required

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

19. Mobile phones

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

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(Speakers' lists, questions and amendments)

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Audiovisual Service, tel. 3500.

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Head of Protocol
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Services

Internet access

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

Badges

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

Bars and restaurants

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

Bank

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

Bus

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

Bookshop

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

Philatelic agency

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

Post office

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

Medical centre

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

Newsagent

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

City of Strasbourg information desk

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